

PALGRAVE HISTORICAL STUDIES IN WITCHCRAFT AND MAGIC

# Witchcraft and Demonology in South-West England, 1640–1789

Jonathan Barry



*Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic*

Series Editors: **Jonathan Barry, Willem de Blécourt and Owen Davies**

*Series foreword*

The history of European witchcraft and magic continues to fascinate and challenge students and scholars. There is certainly no shortage of books on the subject. Several general surveys of the witch trials and numerous regional and micro studies have been published for an English-speaking readership. While the quality of publications on witchcraft has been high, some regions and topics have received less attention over the years. The aim of this series is to help illuminate these lesser known or little studied aspects of the history of witchcraft and magic. It will also encourage the development of a broader corpus of work in other related areas of magic and the supernatural, such as angels, devils, spirits, ghosts, folk healing and divination. To help further our understanding and interest in this wider history of beliefs and practices, the series will include research that looks beyond the usual focus on Western Europe and that also explores their relevance and influence from the medieval to the modern period.

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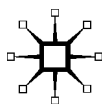
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# Witchcraft and Demonology in South-West England, 1640–1789

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palgrave  
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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2012 978-0-230-29226-0

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First published 2012 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

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ISBN 978-1-349-33230-4      ISBN 978-0-230-36138-6 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1057/9780230361386

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12

*To Nicole*

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# Abbreviations

BCL	Bristol Reference Library, Bristol Collection
BUL	Bristol University Library
CSPD	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic: Edward VI to Anne 1547–1704</i> (1863–1950)
HMC	<i>Reports of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts</i> (1870–1980)
NDRO	North Devon Record Office
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Oxford, 2004 and revised online)
SP	State Papers
SRO	Somerset Record Office
TNA	The National Archives

# Acknowledgements

Many people have helped me, both practically and intellectually, in the writing of this book.

Outside Exeter, and in rough chronological order, they are Roy Porter, Keith Thomas, Charles Webster, Margaret Pelling, David Harley, Michael MacDonald, Stuart Clark, Willem de Blecourt, Peter Elmer, Robin Briggs, James Sharpe, Lyndal Roper, Michael Hunter, Ian Bostridge, Ronald Hutton, Owen Davies, Malcolm Gaskill, Peter Maxwell-Stuart, Peter Marshall, John Newton, Scott Mandelbrote, Alan Roberts and Jacqueline Wheeler (for information on the Wake family) and Mike Slater.

During my 25 years at Exeter University, I have been helped and inspired by many staff, including Colin Jones, Marianne Hester, Gareth Roberts, Todd Gray, Joe Melling, Marion Gibson, Jeremy Black, Alex Walsham, Henry French, Sarah Toulalan, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, Catherine Rider and Chris McCullough.

I also owe a great debt to students of the MA course in the History and Literature of Witchcraft at the University of Exeter (notably Emma Wilby, Nancy Cooper, Jean Jenkinson, Christine Corey, Jason Semmens and Dave Evans) and to other students of my undergraduate and post-graduate modules on witchcraft, who have helped me to understand what my research meant.

A number of research students I have supervised helped me with information: Ruth Fisher, Stuart Walsh, Priscilla Flower-Smith, Matthew McGuinness, David Reeve, Ian Mortimer, Andrea Davies and Tom Blaen.

I would like to thank the Earl of Dartmouth for permission to quote from the Dartmouth papers in Staffordshire Record Office and the ever-helpful staff of the Bristol Record Office; Bristol Central Library Local History collection; West Country Studies Library, Exeter; University of Bristol Special Collections and University of Exeter Special Collections.

Sadly, during the writing of this book I lost several people dear to me, including my friends Gareth Roberts and Roy Porter; my mother, Frances; and my first wife, Harriet. Two sets of people have particularly sustained me in the completion of this book. The first are my fellow series editors, Willem de Blécourt and Owen Davies, whose productivity has shamed me while their personal kindness and patience have

given me hope. The second are my children, Elizabeth and Alexander (whose scepticism and impatience about the project has kept me on guard) and, above all, my new partner Nicole Bolleyer, whose belief in me and loving presence has brought me to the finishing line with renewed strength. The book is dedicated to her.

# 1

## Introduction

This book uses a region, south-western England, as a focus for considering the continued place of witchcraft and demonology in provincial culture in the period between the English and French revolutions (1640 to 1789). Traditionally seen as the period of the 'decline of magic', a time when such beliefs ceased to be of interest to the educated, this period has recently been recognised as a much more complex and interesting one, in which changing legal, social and religious contexts for belief affected different groups and individuals in complex ways. Through close consideration of a series of writers, some caught up in specific witchcraft episodes, others using demonology (within which I include a range of non-human 'spirits' or intelligences: one of the developments of this period is a declining tendency by the learned to classify these as 'demons', but for convenience I will use this as shorthand here) as a means to address contemporary issues, the book seeks to tease out the private and public motivations for continued engagement with the culture of magic. In this introduction I will place this approach in the context of the historiography of witchcraft and demonology, and then place the specific case studies chosen in the context of the south-western region and its experience of witchcraft during this period.

As I have noted in other surveys of the historiography of witchcraft, few topics have been more intensively, or fruitfully, reflexive than this, and it is not my intention here to repeat what I and others have written elsewhere about the development of the subject.<sup>1</sup> For a long period it was marked by the successive application of a number of very different theories which sought to explain witchcraft as the result of a single broader development in European or British history (religion, social change, state formation, gender relations etc.). But the recent literature has adopted a much more multi-causal approach, more inclined to offer

a nuanced overview of the varied features of the history of the subject than to tie it down to a specific model. We now have a number of excellent British and European surveys, as well as an ever-deepening body of research on specific places, periods and themes.<sup>2</sup> This book contributes to this specialist research, addressing episodes which, with one exception (the Bideford case), have never been subject to close academic scrutiny. In doing so, however, it also adopts some specific approaches (and, equally importantly, does not adopt others), and it is important to make clear what these are.

Let us start with what this study is not. It is not, primarily, a work of social history (or history from below), whose main interest would be in reconstructing the social position and experience of the ordinary people caught up in witchcraft accusations (accused, accusers, victims and witnesses), often benefiting from anthropological insights into how this might happen.<sup>3</sup> There is some material of this kind considered in several of the chapters, but I have not attempted in any case to offer an explanation of what was occurring in terms of, for example, social tensions or conflicts between accusers and accused, or the changing position of poor or vulnerable women in local communities. Equally, I have not made gender relationships a focus of my study. My cases largely reflect the English position, in which the great majority, but not all, of those accused of witchcraft were women, many of them older women; but I have not particularly sought to explain that phenomenon, or its implications for gender relationships more generally.<sup>4</sup> Two of the cases involved legal proceedings, and I have discussed the impact of this on the sources in some depth, but I am not approaching this subject as part of the history of crime or of legal processes. Later in this introductory chapter I sketch out the pattern of prosecution in the region and make the point that formal trials appear to have occurred more often here in the post-1640 period than in the south-east, but I am not seeking to explain this.<sup>5</sup>

It might seem that, in excluding these three areas of investigation as my primary focus, I am removing much of what has been most important in the historiography of the subject. I would certainly agree that all these areas are fundamental to the proper understanding of the history of witchcraft and that they continue to underpin much of the best work on it. Indeed, I hope that the evidence presented here will help others to extend these areas of study, which have tended to be better developed for the pre-1640 period and for other regions. I trust that the detailed account offered here of the development of the sources will assist anyone trying to use them to offer accounts based on social, gender or

legal history, not least by making clear how problematic it may be to rely on any one source or to regard the information they contain as 'facts' about people's social position, rather than (contestable) claims about them as reliable (or unreliable) witnesses or other participants in a controversial event.

Instead, the emphasis here is on understanding the nature of the texts which have survived, the conditions of their creation, and how these both relate to and reveal the attitudes and interests of those who wrote about witchcraft and demonology. These texts, it should be stressed, vary from large-scale works by learned writers to the letters, diaries and trial documentation of ordinary people, but they are all approached in a similar way. This seeks to achieve two related but distinct aims. The first is to understand what it was about the episodes studied that interested those writing and how the episodes fitted into the writers' broader views of the world, in particular what one might call both their ideologies and their cosmologies (often closely related to each other through religion) – that is, how they understood the workings both of society and of nature and related these to their views of God and human identity. The second is to underline the degree to which these interests shaped what was written (or not written) and hence the status of each text as a partial representation of a case, not a straightforward statement. One implication of this may be to suggest that in many cases it is very hard to extract from these sources, as historians often do, statements of 'fact' about what precisely occurred. However, I am less interested in 'what really happened' in the episodes discussed (whether someone was actually attempting to harm others or practise witchcraft, in any sense, or whether someone experienced extraordinary symptoms or phenomena and, if so, how) than in how they were understood and experienced by those participating in them, and how and why people wrote about them, and with what purposes and audiences in mind.

Hence the main focus in most of these chapters is on one or more 'authors' of particular texts and, considering them both biographically and ideologically, trying to contextualise what they have written in terms of what we know of their lives, values and ideas. This has, inevitably, given who they are, led to a focus on a series of (mostly) educated men, whose social status varies from lawyers and gentlemen of some political importance, through intellectuals in the professions and related fields, to members of the middling sort in Bristol and elsewhere. While I hope that I have been sensitive to the social and gender assumptions and implications of their writings, I have offered a world largely seen through their eyes.

In adopting this approach, my work aligns with three recent trends in the historiography of witchcraft and magic in general and British witchcraft in particular. The first is a much greater focus on what is acknowledged as 'the most baffling aspect of this difficult subject' by Keith Thomas in *Religion and the Decline of Magic* in 1971, namely that of its decline. It used to be assumed that the period of witchcraft prosecution was a time of irrational aberration or superstition, bound to be superseded by the rise of reason and modernity; thus the decline of interest in witchcraft hardly needed explanation. By rendering early modern witchcraft beliefs intelligible, historians have highlighted the issue of why and how far they ceased to have meaning (or function); many have regarded his explanation of this decline as the least satisfactory feature of Thomas's account.<sup>6</sup> Several explanations on which Thomas relied, including the impact of the scientific revolution (and enlightenment more generally), now look highly questionable. It is now seen as much harder to separate the 'occult' from the scientific, or indeed the enlightened, both in the gestation of scientific changes and in their development during the long eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

There has been greater support for a second approach arising from Thomas's work, which has been to contrast the 'survival' of witchcraft beliefs among ordinary people in rural society with their decline among the educated or elite and in urban settings. Yet this model has also been challenged, both theoretically and methodologically. Our heavy reliance, after the period of trials, on folklorists and other commentators who themselves looked for and described witchcraft as part of a dying rural culture, may well have distorted our impression of where such beliefs actually remained strong and also their changing significance: the work of Owen Davies, in particular, by using the full range of available sources, has given us a very different sense of the later period. Rather than simply 'survivals' of an older tradition, witchcraft beliefs have been seen as constantly evolving, reflecting the needs of changing societies and capable of embracing, for example, the growth of the popular press and a consumer marketplace, in urban as well as rural settings.<sup>8</sup>

Equally, the notion of 'decline' has taken on new meaning as historians have begun to emphasise the partial hold of witchcraft beliefs even in the most intense periods of witch-hunting, breaking down stereotyped polarities between 'believers' (the great majority) and 'sceptics' (a beleaguered minority) and helping us to see how problematic and disputed it always was to demonstrate clearly that a specific episode was a case of witchcraft, even in a culture in which the general presumption

was that something called witchcraft was a reality. In England, in particular, even those cases which led to formal prosecutions were always more likely than not to result in the acquittal of the accused, and many other people must have been suspected of witchcraft without anyone taking the drastic step of formally accusing them. Instead, those who suspected members of their community of witchcraft may well have adopted other ways of dealing with those whom they feared, including the use of countermeasures – some based on traditional beliefs, others based on the professional advice of cunning folk, whose significance in sustaining and shaping witchcraft is becoming ever clearer (in this case, reinforcing the initial claims of Thomas and Macfarlane).<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, throughout the early modern period, the coexistence of alternative (and in some respects conflicting) understandings of what witchcraft might be and how it might operate was always a key factor. Was the primary issue one of the actions of the devil (or devils) in the world, and how humans might access his power and worship him; or was it one of harm caused to other humans (and animals, crops etc.), possibly by demonic action or by the power inherent either in the evil-doers or in the magical rituals they performed or the objects they used to inflict harm? Or was it both, and, if so, how were they related? If witchcraft and magic operated occultly and apparently in contradiction to the normal processes of nature, did that make their effects illusions (whether generated solely in the minds of those affected, or imposed on them by the skills of the devil or other humans) or merely unusual (or preternatural) events, perhaps illustrating hidden powers of nature, or were they truly ‘supernatural’, even miraculous, and what would each of those understandings imply for the nature both of religion (especially the power and justice of God) and of natural philosophy? At no time was there any settled consensus among any group in society about the answers to these questions, and every case of witchcraft tended to rely on fears generated by a mixture of these concerns while also being rendered problematic by the different agendas and concerns associated with those different fears.<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, in exploring these complex issues, while some historians (notably Stuart Clark and Wolfgang Behringer) have sought to map out very broad patterns (in intellectual and socio-anthropological history respectively),<sup>11</sup> a more common response in historical writing has been to adopt a case-study approach, or what is sometimes labelled as ‘micro-history’. It is broadly agreed that witchcraft must be studied as a conjunctural phenomenon, operating at a whole series of levels and affected by the interplay of a variety of institutions, interests and



languages. While these can all be analysed separately, it is equally crucial to study their interrelationship and this, for the moment at least, is best done in specific settings where the evidence survives to allow a full reconstruction of the development and resolution of a witchcraft episode. Historiographically, witchcraft has led the way in such micro-histories, and several theorists of historical writing (for example the Italians Carlo Ginzburg, Giovanni Levi and Guido Ruggiero and the Annaliste Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie) have written on witchcraft. The subject has also lent itself well to this approach because such micro-histories have been able to capture a broad public interest, allowing historians to combine detailed narratives (stories, in fact) of particular episodes which fascinate a wide readership with often profound consideration of their historical significance.<sup>12</sup>

Third (though hard to separate in practice from the development of micro-history) has been the impact of the so-called linguistic turn in history, and of postmodern questioning of traditional historical approaches. Historians (as well as other textual scholars, notably historicists within literary and cultural disciplines) have become particularly interested in witchcraft as a linguistic phenomenon and one embedded in narrative. This prioritises the reconstruction of the role played by conflicts over the use of contested terms (such as 'witch', 'spirit' and 'devil') and the provision of alternative stories of a specific case (whether produced by an interrogation, a trial pamphlet, a learned demonology or whatever). But it also leads to an emphasis on the intertextuality of witchcraft cases. This involves relating them both to the past and to the future, considering their shaping by reference to previous stories, authorities or cultural models of how, for example, a possession might develop and be resolved but also how these episodes are then appropriated and altered over time as they are retold (or forgotten, in whole or part) by subsequent generations, including our own. In principle, these linguistic and postmodern approaches can be taken to any aspect of the past, however 'real' the phenomena being described, but they have proved particularly fruitful when dealing with a concept such as witchcraft, when even those who might otherwise be suspicious of such a relativising approach to the past are generally willing to agree that we are dealing, fundamentally, with stories passing through time not with fixed realities.<sup>13</sup>

Here once again the fact that past witchcraft events and beliefs have always been of fascination and use to a broad range of people, not just or even primarily professional historians, has made this a very rich area of study. This has become particularly significant in the last

50 years for contemporary Wiccan, esotericist and feminist communities, whose self-understanding has been shaped by, as well as shaped, their representation of the past behaviour and treatment of those labelled witches – whom they can claim, in varied ways, to be their predecessors, whether in an unbroken chain of tradition or merely in sharing similar interests or sufferings. Although initially the interest in (even sense of ownership of) the history of witches by these groups led to hostility between them and professional historians who questioned their approaches (especially assumptions that past witches had a shared collective identity), in recent years it has led to a much more respectful awareness that historians are treating issues that can be as controversial today as they were in the periods being studied: the work of Ronald Hutton is particularly important here. More broadly, there are powerful but contradictory tendencies in our own society, each of which feeds off and informs narratives of the witch in history. There is what we label ‘witch-hunting’ (as something to be avoided), concern about which requires us to challenge (and perhaps to judge) those people (and ideas) in the past who caused the hunting of innocent people. Yet there is also the pressure on (or should that be ‘of’?) the state to uncover hidden agents of abuse (or terrorism, or other occult acts against society), which feeds our fascination with past conspiracies and occult movements. Together these ensure that witchcraft historiography is deeply entwined in our memories, which makes it an ideal subject for such postmodern studies.<sup>14</sup>

What follows, therefore, is a series of case studies or micro-histories of what specific witchcraft episodes, or attempts to understand or deploy a language of demons and witches, meant to a range of people during the period of ‘decline’ (here understood to run from 1640 to 1789) and in subsequent accounts. Their other common feature is that they are all drawn from the same region, namely south-western England. They arise out of my broader work on provincial culture during this period, which has concentrated particularly on Bristol and its hinterland but also other towns of the south-west. The last two chapters focus largely on Bristol and its immediate hinterland in north Somerset, while the others deal with cases based in Devon (the Bideford trials, and aspects of the Bovet case) and in Somerset. I have not chosen to look in any detail at Cornwall, and although both Dorset and Wiltshire feature as significant influences on the Somerset cases considered, they are not explored in detail. This partly reflects the availability of good studies of some of the key episodes in those other counties. For the cases studied here, only the Bideford trials have attracted significant historical

analysis previously. Somerset and Devon have also featured in Peter Marshall's brilliant recent study of *Mother Leakey and the Bishop*, which offers an extended example of the riches to be gained by adopting the kinds of perspective I have been describing and hope to follow here.<sup>15</sup>

During the period studied here, the south-west experienced a rather contradictory process of historical change. On the one hand, what had been since late medieval times one of the most prosperous, urbanised and important regions of the country became comparatively less significant as a region, with the rapid industrial growth of other regions in the north and midlands as well as the ever-increasing size and power of London. On the other hand, specific places within the south-west grew rapidly, partly fed by the same trends which arguably lessened the overall significance of the region. So, the urban centres of Bristol, Plymouth and Bath (and smaller ports such as Bideford) all rose to prominence, fuelled by the growth of the Atlantic economy and industry based on colonial goods, by the growth of naval power and by the rise of a national market for leisure and refined culture respectively. Their growth was at the expense of many of the older urban centres (Salisbury, Wells, and eventually Exeter) and many of the smaller towns (such as most of the towns on the borders of east Somerset and Devon and west Wiltshire and Dorset). But the south-west in this period was not a sleepy rural backwater, as nineteenth-century changes or twentieth-century tourist images might suggest. The region had a major cloth industry with considerable dynamism until the mid-eighteenth century, a strong pastoral and mixed arable economy, a growing coastal and overseas trade and an expanding mining sector (in Devon and north Somerset as well as Cornwall), all of which were reinforcing both its internal linkages as a region and its role in the imperial economy and state. It continued to be at the centre of the ideological struggles of the period. It played a pivotal role in the divisions and fighting of the civil war, and it experienced the religious factions which that conflict both reflected and strengthened (the south-west being a stronghold of some forms of nonconformity, notably Presbyterianism and Quakerism). These in turn fed the party conflicts after 1679, which were of particular significance because the region had so many parliamentary seats. The rise of the provincial press, the spread of leisure at spas and seaside resorts, and new forms of culture all featured as much in this region as in any other (and indeed often earlier: many of the earliest newspapers were founded here), and so did the growth of Methodism and other forms of evangelical religion in the mid-eighteenth century. There is therefore no reason to regard the south-west as an unrepresentative area to study, if one wishes to

understand provincial culture in general, and the changing history of witchcraft within that culture in particular.<sup>16</sup>

To date, regional studies of witchcraft have tended to adopt a county basis, rather than a wider area focus, and have been heavily concentrated on the south-east, not least because of the much better survival of trial records for the Home Circuit. Attempts to construct a chronological account of witchcraft in England have largely been based on these Home Circuit materials, which show an intensification of cases in the later sixteenth century, a reduction before the civil war, a revived level of prosecutions in the 1640–60 period, and then a steady decline after 1660, with almost no cases by 1700, three decades before the repeal of the acts against witchcraft in 1736 (after which the offence that remained was false pretence to magical powers). As noted above, of those cases which came to secular courts (largely to assizes, though sometimes to quarter-sessions or borough courts) a very high percentage led to acquittals (75% even in the sixteenth century), but after 1660 almost all cases resulted in acquittal.<sup>17</sup>

The south-western region was covered by the Western Circuit of the assizes, and for this there are much poorer records. Before 1670 we have only some bail books (1654–77) and the orders of the court (largely administrative, though occasionally mentioning witchcraft cases), and even after 1670, when we have the gaol books, we do not have indictments or depositions, so we have only a minimal amount of information about each case.<sup>18</sup> Absolutely no legal records survive that can tell us what actually went on during the trials. The legal material was first studied by Inderwick in 1888, who listed (very inaccurately, in terms of spellings) the gaol-book material from 1670 to 1707 and noted some patterns, for example that only 7 of 52 trials led to conviction (one later reprieved) and that all 18 accused of murder were acquitted; he claimed that there were no cases which were rejected initially by the Grand Jury, but this probably reflects a lack of evidence about such cases: we know that the case against at least one of those accused in the Bideford episode was rejected by the Grand Jury in summer 1682. The region has the dubious privilege in national history of being the scene of the last definite executions (Exeter in 1682), the last probable execution (Exeter in 1685) and the last recorded guilty verdict (Taunton in 1689, though the witch was reprieved), as well as cases running into the 1700s and perhaps even to 1715.<sup>19</sup>

This, together with the evidence of the pamphlet literature and other sources, led Notestein in 1911 to observe that, having been ‘little troubled’ before, after 1660 Somerset, Devon and Cornwall became

'the storm centre of the panic': in fact he also picks out, at different moments, these three counties as also experiencing 'vigorous' activity during the 1650s as well.<sup>20</sup> Following Ewen's work in the interwar period, which not only established the pattern of prosecutions in the Home Circuit, but also laid out all the known evidence of trials across the rest of the county, Thomas confirmed Notestein's suggestion that the Western Circuit did indeed seem to deal with more witchcraft cases in the post-1670 period than other areas and certainly the south-east.<sup>21</sup> Janet Thompson, while focusing on women witches in Devon, also used Ewen's work and other sources to tabulate data about witchcraft cases across the south-western region. She noted that the major upturn in cases in the south-west came during the 1650s (particularly in Devon), continuing (though at a much lower rate) in the subsequent decades, and that there was also an intensification of the focus on women as the accused after 1640. Thompson interpreted this as evidence of the impact of Puritanism and as part of a wider patriarchal campaign of moral purification aimed primarily at controlling women.<sup>22</sup> James Sharpe has studied some individual Devon cases, but his overall model of the pattern of cases is based on Ewen's work and the Home Circuit data, as is that of Malcolm Gaskill in his 2008 overview, while Valletta's work, though focusing on the 50 years after 1640, and purporting to summarise all the cases he has noted by county, is frequently inaccurate in details of names and dates and adds nothing to Thompson's much more accurate appendices.<sup>23</sup>

There has been no systematic research into county and borough sessions records of the region, though archivists and historians have noted particular cases: the largest number coming from Exeter, particularly in the 1650s, but later examples would include the Grimmerton case at Lyme Regis in 1687.<sup>24</sup> The best-recorded case, because of the survival of legal materials at Harvard University, is the Dartmouth one in 1604 which forms the subject of the opening chapter of George Kittredge's *Witchcraft in Old and New England*.<sup>25</sup> To date, all the ecclesiastical court material regarding witchcraft identified is from the pre-1640 period: some of the primary material for Devon has been published by Gray and Draisey, while Thomas, Stieg and Quaife for Somerset, and Ingram for Wiltshire, briefly discuss some of the cases.<sup>26</sup>

To a very considerable extent (and almost totally for Cornwall, which has no quarter-sessions material before the mid-eighteenth century) historians of witchcraft have had to rely on references to witchcraft trials in printed materials or in contemporary letters or diaries. These are the sources which will be used in the six case studies below, so their

characteristics will not be discussed here in detail, but it is worth noting the types of such printed material available for the region. Apart from the Bideford case in 1682, the only south-western trial to attract its own substantial pamphlet literature was that of Anne Bodenham at Salisbury in 1653 (two pamphlets and a ballad, as well as discussion by Henry More in his *Antidote against Atheism*), though there is less extensive material for the Gloucestershire trial of Joan Perry in 1662 and the 1690 Beckington case.<sup>27</sup> But a number of other cases which did not apparently lead to trials were also the subject of individual pamphlets, including several late-seventeenth-century Cornish cases in which Presbyterian clergy were involved. Peter Marshall has noted the publishing of Devon cases of demonic temptation by another dissenting minister, Francis Quick of Plymouth, and an Exeter Presbyterian minister, George Trosse, also recorded his own dramatic struggles with the devil in his *Life* (written in 1692–3, though published only posthumously in 1714).<sup>28</sup> Another Cornish case, that of Ann Jefferies, whose alleged dealings with ‘fairies’ were interpreted by her opponents as witchcraft, was also first published as a pamphlet by Moses Pitt in the 1690s, even though it described an episode back in the 1640s.<sup>29</sup>

As well as more substantial pamphlets, cases of witchcraft, encounters with the devil or spirits and similar reports were also contained in various chapbooks and ballads. Some of these report independently verified cases. Others have to be treated very cautiously, especially eighteenth-century ones, in which the same story is sometimes found in different editions said to have happened to somebody from a different town/region, and at no specified date: encounters with the devil are particularly prone to this uncertainty. Some of these cases may also have a religious or political tone, but others seem to be purely sensationalist and intended to sell copies. The only study of this material for our region is that provided by the pioneer Somerset bibliographer Emanuel Green for Somerset chapbooks: it should be possible to extend his analysis further now with the improved resources of the short-title catalogues and digitised collections.<sup>30</sup>

Overlapping with this category is the coverage of such episodes in the newspapers and related news-focused items published in London in the seventeenth century and both there and in the provinces themselves after 1700. Joad Raymond’s studies and anthologies of the early newspapers have included several cases from the 1640–60 period, including material from Cornwall, some of which, concerning Anne Trapnel, is also covered in her own account of her prosecution as a witch when she attempted to act as a prophet in Cornwall.<sup>31</sup> Similar trials faced George

Fox and other early Quakers, as reported in his journal and other early Quaker literature about their sufferings.<sup>32</sup> Another group who recorded their sufferings were the dissenting clergy after the Restoration, both in contemporary 'prodigy' literature such as the 'Annus Mirabilis' series of 1662–3 and later, in the biographical collections that culminated in Calamy's *Nonconformist Memorial*. Contained within these series were several reports of 'judgements' on persecutors.<sup>33</sup>

These traditions tapped into a providentialist mentality, recording stories of God's providences for human edification, which also played a large part in shaping the growth of another genre, namely the collection of stories of the actions of witches, spirits and the like, to prove the existence of a world of spirits in the face of growing scepticism. Publications of this kind drew on extensive collection and circulation of such stories, often by Anglican clergy but also by some dissenters and sympathetic laymen, including some Royal Society members. The south-western region hosted a number of key figures who have been placed in this tradition. Apart from Glanvill, Bovet and Beaumont, discussed below, these would include John Aubrey in Wiltshire, Andrew Paschall in Somerset, Edward Fowler the bishop of Gloucester and the Gloucestershire judge Matthew Hale, while Richard Baxter corresponded with several of these and other south-western people.<sup>34</sup> The most compendious outcome of this was William Turner's 1696 *A Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences*, which was published by John Dunton, whose periodicals such as the *Athenian Mercury* and other publications took this tradition forward into the eighteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Examples of south-western cases can be found in all these sources: sometimes with interesting variations among them, reflecting the different sources, audiences and intended uses of these stories in each case.

Although all of these genres continued vigorously into the eighteenth century as book-trade staples, they failed to develop as sources for our region – in some respects getting less helpful, as most publications in this last genre became hack works merely recycling the seventeenth-century classics, or their authors (like Defoe) combined such stories with others of their own which were probably fictional.<sup>36</sup> Newspapers equally, while occasionally recording details about popular action against witches, do not generally contain a great deal on the subject except during a few major controversies (the two Bristol cases discussed here are prime examples of these), and when they do, they are largely dependent on letter-writers for generating news information about the cases, since the papers did not have their own reporters at this stage, and it is quite likely that much of the regional news reported is in fact

recycled from London papers, which also relied on letters and oral reports.<sup>37</sup> It is not really until the nineteenth century that one finds full reporting of local cases or the revivification of the genre of supernatural stories with a new flow of extraordinary cases.<sup>38</sup> By then, the tradition of interest established by men like Aubrey had also spawned both antiquarianism (and the publication of county and town histories, some of which discussed witchcraft cases) and then the growth of local history societies, one of whose specialities was local folklore. By and large, this folklore tended to focus on the documentation of contemporary beliefs, including magical and witchcraft beliefs and stories about witches and cunning folk. The south-west was no exception in this respect, and its rural nature and a romantic sense of its Celtic and non-metropolitan identity (especially in Cornwall and Dartmoor, but also 'Wessex') made it a particularly fertile area for such activity, often still carried on by Anglican clergy, such as Sabine Baring-Gould. By and large these folklorists showed little interest in identifying the precise historical setting of the stories they collected, content with locating them in a pre-industrial, pre-urban past, and this has remained a characteristic of locally produced collections of local folklore into recent times, even as professional folklorists have become aware of the need for different approaches.<sup>39</sup>

Most of these sources cast only fragmentary light on the episodes they record, often without precise details of people and places. I have chosen from the south-western material the six cases which are most fully documented. This may well mean that they are not typical of the others, precisely for the reason that they attracted considerable attention and left substantial sources: the creation of those very sources will have helped shape their development, both while the original events were occurring and in their later transmission. However, I hope that the approaches taken here will inspire others to attempt similar accounts, both for the south-west and for elsewhere in the country. The chapters are in rough chronological order, although the first four overlap in timing and to some extent in personnel, and each is designed to be read separately. Although some conclusions specific to each case are given in each chapter, I have left broader considerations of the issues raised earlier in this introduction to the conclusion.



## 2

### Robert Hunt and the Somerset Witches

It is generally agreed that Joseph Glanvill's writings, notably his posthumous *Saducismus Triumphatus* of 1681 (edited and expanded by Henry More), were the most important defences of witchcraft in post-Restoration England, as reflected in their numerous editions, and Glanvill has been intensively studied by modern historians.<sup>1</sup> Yet there has been almost no interest in Robert Hunt, the Somerset magistrate to whom Glanvill addressed his first publication on the subject and whose 'book of examinations' formed the basis of a substantial part of Glanvill's evidence for the contemporary activity of witches. Where Hunt is mentioned at all, he is assumed to have been a 'zealous' witch-hunter, pursuing a one-man campaign against local witches. Notestein describes one witch as 'ferreted out in Somerset by the aggressive justice Robert Hunt' adding that in 1664 (actually 1665) 'a zealous justice of the peace, Robert Hunt, had for the last eight years been on the lookout for witches'. He later ascribes the 'wild confession' of Elizabeth Style to the probability that she had been 'watched' like Hopkins's witches.<sup>2</sup> Glanvill's (regretful) statement that 'had not his [Hunt's] discoveries and endeavours met with great opposition and discouragements from some then in authority, the whole clan of those hellish confederates in these parts had been justly exposed and punished' is mirrored by Francis Hutchinson's (gleeful) confirmation: 'His searches and discoveries were opposed and checked by a higher authority, by which means the poor people were saved and the consequence was, that the country was quiet'.<sup>3</sup> Sir Walter Scott opined that if this 'pragmatical justice' had 'been allowed to proceed, Mr Hunt might have gained a name as renowned in witchfinding as that of Mr Hopkins', and both Thomas Wright and George Kittredge echo this comment.<sup>4</sup> Ewen labels the cases (which he summarises, assuming without evidence that the 1665 ones

were tried at the Lent and Summer sessions) as a series of 'discoveries' by Hunt, and Thomas calls him a 'witch-hunting' JP who 'personally uncovered a "hellish knot of witches"'.<sup>5</sup>

Since Scott, historians have focused on the detailed descriptions of the witches' night-time meetings, led by the devil, as the distinctive feature of these cases. They were extensively used by Margaret Murray in her attempts to portray such meetings as part of an underground fertility cult involving a 'coven' of 13 people, led by a man disguised as the devil. (Murray's interpretation is followed by Ruth Tongue in her *Somerset Folklore* and also permeates a recent pagan website account of the episode, although this contains many interesting details based on local research.)<sup>6</sup> Those who reject Murray's reading have assumed these unusual features of the evidence to be the product of Hunt's interrogations, suggesting that he was, like Hopkins and Stearne in East Anglia in the 1640s, imposing his own demonological fantasies onto cases which probably began with maleficial concerns among neighbours. Kittredge claims 'it requires no great acumen to perceive the real source' of such details, namely the questions of 'the educated examiners', though he concludes that 'Hunt left enough on record to prove that by Restoration times the witches's Sabbath had at length achieved a place in the witch-tradition of England', even if such sabbaths were but a 'feeble reflection of the foreign original'. Ewen notes the similarity between two confessions, concluding 'clearly the same leading questions put by the same justice produced the same answer in each case'. Quaife considered the 'continental type' of the Hunt cases to be abnormal, so chose instead the 1653 Glastonbury case recorded by Hunt's fellow JP Robert Morgan as typical of the maleficial fears underlying normal Somerset cases.<sup>7</sup>

However, there has been no detailed historical account of Hunt or the cases he uncovered. Frederick Valletta uses the *Saducismus* material to compare the 1665 Somerset cases to those in East Anglia in the 1640s and King's Lynn in 1664, but his account is unfortunately riddled with factual errors and misreadings. He is unaware of the survival of alternative versions of the examinations to those published by Glanvill, so he claims that the 'Somerset testimonies are all hearsay, in the sense that we only have Glanvill's word that he transcribed them from the original records made by Richard [sic] Hunt', and later suggests that the sabbath material may be 'hearsay; a popular account written by Glanvill for a mass audience familiar with such stories', which is hardly an accurate description of the purpose and audience of the weighty *Saducismus*.<sup>8</sup>

On the question of Hunt's responsibility for the particular character of these cases, Valletta differs from the consensus. He rightly identifies

that the 'unusual feature' of the cases is that the witches 'confessed to attending Sabbaths presided over by the devil', and he gives lengthy extracts from these, noting correctly that the cases seem 'to have been pretty tame by comparison to the popular portrayal of such scenes. There were no sacrifices of babies or wild orgiastic scenes. Instead English witches between 1640 and 1670 seemed content to stick some thorns into some wax dolls and sit down to a meal of beef and beer'. Although he is aware that the evidence may reflect that the witches had been 'interrogated by a witch hunter' and that lack of differences between the testimonies may indicate that they had not been 'freely given', his main aim is to present the material as evidence that those 'tried as witches actually practised sorcery', concluding that 'the Somerset cases, if genuinely recorded from the trial depositions, would certainly indicate that witches had confessed to using these types of sorcery'. He also wishes to see the sabbath details as arising, at least in part, from popular culture, being 'a return to the popular perceptions of what witchcraft was all about – Sabbaths, sticking pins in wax dolls and flying on broomsticks' (only the broomstick in fact occurs in a different Somerset case, that of Julian Cox in 1663). This leads him to an odd discussion of the notion of a coven: while rejecting Murray's account of actual meetings of 13 devil-worshippers, he claims 'this did not mean such groups did not exist in people's imagination' and so concludes that the fact that Style actually named 14 people at her meeting (not 13, as Murray thought) means 'either she or her interrogator had got a bit muddled here, as it would seem likely they had intended to portray a meeting of thirteen witches but failed to get their sums right'.<sup>9</sup>

Given the importance of the Hunt evidence, as used by Glanvill, to the history of witchcraft, the absence of a detailed account of Hunt seems a serious lacuna. This chapter will consider what we actually know about Robert Hunt and his views on witchcraft and how his material was used by Glanvill, to see how far we can identify Hunt's own interests and how far the evidence may reflect these. In particular, we will consider the distinctive focus in the 1665 cases on collective meetings with the devil. What sort of meetings were these, and should we explain them primarily through Hunt's questioning, or might they indeed reflect the witchcraft beliefs of those he was examining or perhaps of other people involved in the trials? In trying to answer these (very difficult) questions, we will draw on evidence from other cases occurring in the region during Hunt's lifetime, which may have influenced those involved in these cases. I will suggest that, although one of Hunt's daughters was herself briefly bewitched (in Hunt's view), the

evidence does not suggest a man obsessed with witches or the devil and that he investigated witches as a magistrate concerned with causers of maleficium, not with devil-worshippers. Hunt may well be regarded, as Michael Hunter has taught us to regard others involved in similar cases in this period, as a perplexed man trying to make sense of strange events, rather than as a zealot imposing his own vision.<sup>10</sup>

\* \* \*

Most historians using Hunt's materials have used the texts given in *Saducismus*. These cover two sets of cases, namely those of Jane Brooks and Alice Coward of Shepton Mallet, tried at the Chard Assizes in March 1658, leading to Brooks' execution on 26 March, and those involving Elizabeth Style and other witches of Stoke Trister and Brewham in 1665. Style was apparently tried at Taunton and found guilty but died in prison before execution, but we have no evidence that the other witches accused then went to trial. The only other account of the event is a letter by James Hickes to Williamson dated 17 March 1665, reporting 'It is written from Ilchester the 14<sup>th</sup> instant as followeth. The prisoners being all taken out of the gaole to goe to go to Taunton to their try-all, the under-keeper desired the old witch to show the people one of her prancks before she went thence, which desire she readily complied and the people bidden to stand round the yard, the old witch tooke up all her coates round and immediately the under-keeper fell downe of his knees and kissed her britch round with such an ardent affection that there was much adoe to get him upp.' The reference to 'the old witch' may imply that there was more than one witch, or simply that the only witch was old; we cannot be sure if the 'old witch' was Style. The 1658 material was first published in Glanvill's *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* in 1668. The other material was not published until 1681, based on text Glanvill had prepared for publication before his death in November 1680; this may have been further edited (and commentary added) by Henry More, but for convenience I will refer to this as Glanvill's work.<sup>11</sup>

We can compare Glanvill's version of Hunt's evidence with that surviving in three other texts. These are: some extracts from the Style case, sent in by W.L.W., published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in September 1837; a manuscript volume that appears to have been given to the Dorset writer William Barnes before 1879; and a transcript (c. 1906) now in the Somerset Record Office. W.L.W. describes what he sends in as 'copies of depositions....the originals appear to have been wholly written by

the magistrate before whom they were sworn' (i.e. Hunt). Barnes writes: 'Many years ago I was told by a man of this neighbourhood that a corner of Leigh Common was called Witches' Corner and long again after that a friend gave me some old depositions on witchcraft taken before Somerset magistrates from about the years 1650 to 1664. The cases were of Somerset, and located in some points in Dorsetshire and one of the witches' sisterhood said that they sometimes met in Leigh Common'. (In fact, the Leigh Common in question was that in the parishes of Stoke Trister and Penselwood in Somerset, not Leigh in Dorset as Barnes thought.) Barnes' volume came into the library of the Plymouth artist Robert Lenkiewicz, where it was studied by Nancy Cooper before it was auctioned after Lenkiewicz's death; its present whereabouts are not known.<sup>12</sup>

Cooper's analysis of all these texts established that the Lenkiewicz and Somerset Record Office texts are identical save for very minor differences of spelling, implying that the latter is probably an attempt at an exact copy of the former; both versions end abruptly at the same point in the middle of the last confession recorded in Glanvill. I shall therefore treat the Somerset Record Office text as a version of Barnes. However, they both contain material not included in Glanvill, which shows that they are not, as others have supposed, simply transcripts of Glanvill's publication; similarly they differ from the 1837 material. The 1837 text, while containing some startling misreadings (Hunt is read several times as Stunt, though once correctly as Hunt) also contains several passages not included in any of the other texts which provide details corroborated elsewhere, as well as material included in the other two texts but not in Glanvill. It may well be that W.L.W. had access to Hunt's book of examinations or to the original transcripts from which Hunt wrote up his book (Glanvill describes Hunt's book as 'fairly written').<sup>13</sup> However, as we shall see, Hunt's book contained material relating to at least one other case, that of Julian Cox tried in 1663, which is not reproduced in any of these versions, so none of them can be a full version of Hunt's book of examinations. Hereafter I shall refer to the Somerset Record Office text as 'Barnes', the 1837 extracts as 'W.L.W.' and the various versions of Glanvill's text as *Blow* or *Saducismus* accordingly. When quoting from these cases I shall cite the 1681 edition of *Saducismus* (rather than Barnes or W.L.W.) unless otherwise indicated, but where the texts have important variants, these will be given.

It is not clear how much of Hunt's material Glanvill had seen in 1666 when he published his initial work on witchcraft. He had discussed with Hunt 'the late and frequent dealings you have had in the examination

of witches' on which Hunt had 'so critically conversed' and offered his book to suggest to Hunt's 'better thoughts, a way of accounting for some of those strange things you have been a witness of; and contribute to the defence of the truth of matters which you know by experiments that could not deceive against the little exceptions of those that are resolved to believe nothing in affairs of this nature'. Although the title page calls this *A Philosophical Endeavour towards a Defence of the Being of Witches and Apparitions*, the main body is entitled (and the running heads read) 'Some Considerations about Witchcraft' (the second edition in 1667 was retitled *Some Philosophical Considerations about Witchcraft* but is otherwise unchanged). These and the 1668 version all have the subtitle 'in a letter to the much honoured Robert Hunt esquire'. This is dropped in the reprint of the work as essay VI of *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion* (1676), which omits the passage about Hunt and retitles the work 'Philosophical Considerations against Modern Sadducism in the matter of witches and apparitions', but in *Saducismus* the title returns to 'Some Considerations about Witchcraft in a Letter to Robert Hunt esq.' though the first paragraph, while reinstated, is altered to be less directly addressed to Hunt, apologetically declaring 'though what I have to say, be but the unaccurate product of a little leisure; yet I hope it may afford you some, not unreasonable, accounts of the odd phaenomena of witchcraft and fascination'.<sup>14</sup>

Though Glanvill's comments in 1666 make no specific reference to anything in the Hunt cases, one can relate some of his assumptions about the nature of witchcraft cases to the details of the cases as published later. Glanvill assumes that the witches are 'poor and miserable old women, who are overgrown with discontent and melancholy, which are very imaginative', and that their victims are 'for the most part children or people very weak'.<sup>15</sup> He speculates that the harm may be caused through venomous breaths or poisonous taints coming from the witches' bodies and conveyed to their victims 'by striking, giving apples and the like'. The 'poisonous ferment' may have been infused in the witch by the sucking of familiars, whom Glanvill speculates (unorthodoxly) might be spirits of the dead, perhaps of former witches or sorcerers.<sup>16</sup> The witches are transported 'through the air to the place of general rendezvous', possibly in a trance after anointing their bodies, but there are few details of what occurs at such meetings, though there is a reference to ceremonies being 'used in enchantments' to raise faith in the devil.<sup>17</sup> The focus is largely on causing harm to the weak, though there are references to raising storms and tempests and to the transformation of witches into the shapes of other animals, in which form they

might receive wounds which affected their original bodies, and there is also a reference to the conveying of pins and nails within the skin.<sup>18</sup>

All of these features, of course, could be found in many other accounts of witchcraft, but several of them accord with aspects of the Hunt evidence, notably the references to children as victims (a boy of 12 in 1658, a girl of 13 and other children in 1665), the giving of apples (in both 1658 and 1665 and in the Kilmington case discussed in Hunt's letter below), the 'general rendezvous' of witches (see the discussion below of the use of this term), and the transfer of wounds from her apparition onto the body of the witch (in 1658), while the discussion of animals evokes the 1663 Julian Cox case, in which Hunt was also involved. All of the witches who are actually examined in 1658 and 1665 are women, and some are widows, although not all are old (Christian Green is a wife of 'about 33 years');<sup>19</sup> several men are named amongst those who supposedly attended witches' meetings in 1665, but there are no further details about them. However, other distinctive aspects of the Hunt cases, such as the christening of wax images of the victims, which are then stabbed with thorns, do not appear in this account at all; victims such as Elizabeth Hill have thorn marks appear in their skin, but there are no references to pins or nails in these cases.

Whatever was the case in 1666, by the time of the fourth edition, newly entitled *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (preface dated Bath June 8 1668), Glanvill had decided to expand his text by providing an account of the Drummer of Tedworth case of 1662–3 (which he had investigated himself), and following this with 'another narrative of the Witch of Shepton [i.e. Jane Brooks in 1658] attested by the Justices that took the examinations upon oath, containing several very remarkable particulars'. Glanvill tells Lord Brereton (president of the Royal Society), to whom this edition is dedicated, that this is 'the other narrative which I promised your Honour, and which I received from the Justice of Peace who took it upon oath; Tis the same Gentleman to whom I directed my letter about WITCHCRAFT and a very judicious, searching and sagacious person. He was pleased to give me his own copy of the Examination; the sum of which is in the following relation'.<sup>20</sup> He concludes the case 'this My Lord is the sum of M. Hunt's narrative, which concludes with both the Justices attestation thus, The aforesaid passages were some of them seen by us, and the rest, and some other remarkable ones not here set down, were, upon the examination of several credible witnesses, taken upon oath before us, subscribed, Rob. Hunt, John Cary.'<sup>21</sup> Glanvill states: 'here are the testimony of sense, the oaths of several credible attestors, the nice and deliberate scrutiny of quick-sighted and judicious

examiners and the judgement of an Assize upon the whole',<sup>22</sup> the last referring to the fact that 'Jane Brooks was condemned and executed at Charde Assizes March 26 1658'. Here, however, Glanvill has amended the text as given in Barnes, which states, 'The said Jane Brooks and Alice Coward were tryed before Sir John Glyn then judge at Chard Assizes 26<sup>th</sup> March 1658 when the before-mentioned particulars were given in evidence with many other considerable ones not here set down. Jane Brooks was found guilty, condemned and executed'.<sup>23</sup> In shortening this, Glanvill has not only removed the distracting idea of other evidence, but also made it easier for the reader to overlook the fact that Alice Coward (Jane's sister) was apparently not found guilty.

I shall focus largely on the 1665 cases in the rest of this chapter, but several features of the Hunt/Cary report of the Brooks case are worth noting. The case started on 15 November 1657, when Brooks stroked 12-year-old Richard Jones and gave him an apple, which when boiled and eaten led him to be extremely ill and speechless and have recurrent fits. The boy had not recognised the woman, so all the women of Shepton were invited to visit him in his house; when Brooks and her sisters arrived the next Sunday (22 November), Jones identified her, at which point his father 'immediately scratched her face and drew blood from her', after which the boy recovered for seven to eight days, until he met Alice Coward and fell ill after she asked him, 'How do you my honey?'. After that 'Coward and Brooks often appeared' to him in spectral form. It was only on 8 December that the boy and the two accused witches first appeared before the two JPs at Castle Cary and, although they examined them all again twice at Shepton Mallet, on 11 January and 17 February 1658, it was not until 10 March that the two witches were sent to gaol, ahead of the assizes later that month.<sup>24</sup> We learn that the 17 February examination was attended by 'many gentlemen, ministers and others' and that the justices attempted to test the boy's genuineness, for example by seeing if he would really fall into a fit only if touched by Brooks and not others pretending to be her. The account presents a series of witnesses who could prove that the witches had really come to the boy as spirits and afflicted him: by confirming the accuracy of his descriptions of what they were wearing; by an injury to the spirit of Brooks being found reproduced on her own hand shortly afterwards; by giving the boy a coin which, if heated (even without his knowledge, as witnessed by a minister) made him ill; by the conveyance of the boy 'three hundred yards' (Barnes, misprinted as 'thirty yards' in *Saducismus* and 30 'years' in the 1726 edition!) through the air over a garden wall; and by his hanging two or three feet off the ground,



this last being witnessed by nine people.<sup>25</sup> We have no account of any statement by the witches, nor is there any sign that the case led to any other accusations against these witches or any further suspects, and its lengthy gestation hardly suggests an intense witch-hunt.

It seems likely that Glanvill had seen Hunt's 'book of examinations' by 1668, to copy the Brooks case, but if so he did not keep it. In 1681 More, introducing the new material that was to supplement the Drummer of Tedworth and Brooks cases, cites 'Mr Glanvill's transition to fresh evidence, out of Mr Hunt's examinations, which is thus. Thus far, saith he, the evidence of fact went in the former editions, but having resolved upon this reinforcement [probably in late 1677, in response to John Webster's attack on him in his *Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* that year], I writ again to my honoured friend Mr Hunt, knowing that he had more materials for my purpose, and such as would afford proof sufficient to any modest doubter. In answer he was pleased to send me his book of examinations of witches, which he kept by him fairly written. It contains the discovery of such a hellish knot of them, and that discovery so clear and plain, that perhaps there hath not yet anything appeared to us with stronger evidence to confirm the belief of witches ... Out of that book I have collected some main instances, the clearness of which I think will be enough to overcome and silence any indifferent prejudice.'<sup>26</sup>

This makes clear that Hunt's book contained other material not selected by Glanvill, and this is confirmed later in *Saducismus*, when More publishes an account of the trial and execution of a 70-year-old woman, Julian Cox, at the 1663 Taunton summer assizes, given by 'Mr Pool', an official of the assize judge, Sir John Archer, in a letter to Mr Archer of Emmanuel College Cambridge (nephew of the judge) on 24 October 1672. After giving the Pool version More reproduces a letter he wrote Glanvill on 26 December 1678 regarding Pool's account, offering his own explanation of the details, including the wounding of the 'astral spirit' of Cox, which he compares to Jane Brooks' wound 'which you yourself note in your Book of witchcraft'.<sup>27</sup> In this letter More urges Glanvill 'concerning the truth of the relation' (which many doubted) 'to write to some or other in Taunton etc' for further confirmation of its accuracy. More then reports that Glanvill 'wrote to Mr Hunt who was then busy in some court, yet made shift to read the narrative and wrote two or three lines to him back to this effect, That one principal evidence was omitted in the narrative, but that is nothing against the truth of the rest. But he adds also that some things were false'. In trying to explain away this unwelcome evidence that part of the evidence was,

according to Hunt, 'false', More conjectures that Cox had not confessed so freely to Hunt as she had 'to some other Justice, whose examination therefore was made use of in the court' 'for he also having some time examined her, and she making no such confession to him (as Mr G. himself says in a letter to Dr M. that he perused the examination in Mr Hunt's book and there was not anything considerable therein)'.<sup>28</sup> This proves that there was material in Hunt's book (his examination of Cox) not used by Glanvill, and presumably not available to More in 1680–1, when he edited Glanvill's work, or he would have referred to it directly. None of our other texts contain this information.

It is also clear that Glanvill felt able to edit Hunt's account for publication. He tells us that he is going to do so: 'I have shortened the examinations and cast them in such order as I think fittest for the rendering of the matter clear and intelligible'. Comparing the published version with Barnes and W.L.W., we can see Glanvill rearranging the material to produce a more compelling narrative, for example by separating the examinations of the local clergyman and a yeoman into two separate accounts so that they can each corroborate material in the witch's confession: in doing so he introduces at least one dating error.<sup>29</sup> He also rephrases some passages, for example preferring the term 'baptize' to either 'christen' or 'name' (both found in Barnes) to describe the naming of the wax 'pictures' or images of their intended victims that the devil and the witches carried out at their meetings. Presumably, while recognising this practice as a blasphemous inversion of Christian baptism, Glanvill thought it inappropriate to call it 'christening' (as we shall see, the term 'christening' may have been taken by Hunt from the writings of Richard Bernard); in Barnes there is evidence that Hunt felt the same concern as he refers to 'the christening of a picture (if it may be so called)'. Glanvill also adds some linking passages explaining or commenting on the sequence of events not found in Barnes. These are: the crucial passage reporting Style's trial and death, already quoted; how Hunt noticed Richard Vining while examining Style at Wincanton, got him to give evidence against her and began to get her confession, before sending her to the constable's house at Bayford overnight before obtaining her main confession the next day, accompanied by two other JPs; and about her free confessions.<sup>30</sup>

If text is added, it is also removed. *Saducismus* omits Walter Thick's testimony (recorded by both W.L.W. and Barnes, with minor variations) taken on 30 January (according to Barnes; W.L.W. says 11 March), accusing Style of cursing to death two oxen and a cow, because she was angry with him for 'denying her pease'. Thick claimed that she had

confessed this to him after she had been examined and committed and that when he asked her 'why she had not hurt his person she replied that she had no power to do it'. Alice Duke's confession in *Saducismus* omits the admissions (in Barnes) that 'she did hurt Richard Garrett's coves by touching them and she did it because Garret refused to write a petition for her...she did harm Grace and Magdalen Gilbert the daughters of Thomas Gilbert by giving them two apples...she bewitched William Botwell the son of William Botwell of Wincanton'. Christian Green's confession omits its final claim, namely that Mary Warberton of Brewham had told her 'she had power from the Devil both to hurt and to help'. *Saducismus* also lacks several passages in Barnes indicating that the afflicted had consulted physicians who suggested witchcraft might be to blame, for example Richard Hill 'believeth that his s[ai]d daughter is bewitched by the s[ai]d Style and is the more confirmed in his beliefe because the physician told him that he could not find any naturall cause of his s[ai]d daughter's distemper'. Thomas Conway 'sent to severall physicians for relief who said that this exam[inan]t had bad neighbours' and his wife Mary adds 'one Thomas Cole who was sent to the physicians for her s[ai]d husband told this exam[inan]t that the physicians said they could do her husband no good for that he had bad neighbours. And this exam[inan]t saith that the physick her husband took did not work.' He also omits statements by the witnesses that they believe themselves bewitched by the accused – as well as the Hill quotation above, this is true also of Richard Vining, Thomas Conway and Edward Watts.<sup>31</sup>

The most significant omissions, however, come in the statements of Elizabeth Foarwood and Nicholas Lambert, both of Bayford, where we can compare all three texts. Foarwood (wrongly transcribed as Torwood in *Saducismus*, but correct in both other texts, as we know from numerous other sources listing Foarwoods living in the parish) was one of five women who had searched Style for the devil's mark 'a little after Christmas last'. After describing their search (discussed later) she continues, in W.L.W.'s text only, 'the said Style did likewise confess to this exam[inan]t she had signed her covenant w[i]th the Devell by a dropp of her bloud and that she had promised the Devell to forsake God and Jesus Christe, and all the wayes of God; and the said Style sayd yt she had more to say, but that she had not the power to bringe it out; and farther sayth, that if she could speake w[i]th her brother and sister in Shasbury [probably Shaftesbury in Dorset, only 7 miles from Stoke Trister, but possibly a mistranscription of Salisbury, as discussed below]

they could tell her of more witches then she knew, whoe had sealed but had not yet been at any randvoes'.

Lambert was one of three men set to watch Style overnight in the constable's house on 26/27 January, 'being ordered by Francis White the tythingman of Bayford' according to W.L.W. (a detail not found in the other two texts, but correctly naming White and his office, so presumably authentic). His deposition largely reports observing flies sucking her during the night, and in all three versions Style confesses to him that the fly was her familiar. But W.L.W. continues, 'then the sayd Eliza. Style confessed she had made a covenant with the devill; and that she had signed it with her blood, which the devill had out of her finger next her little finger on her right hand. And that a man in blacke did usually appeare to the sayd Eliz. Style, Alice Duke and Anne Bushop, when they did meet at their randevouse, which sayd man in blacke was the devil as she thought, and that the man in black brought the picture of Richard Stile's [*sic*, but presumably a transcription error for Richard Hill, whose name is given earlier as 'Still'] daughter in wax; and the sayd Elizabeth Style confessed that she put a thorne into the handwrest of the sayd picture and that the man in blacke put in more, and every one stuck in some'. William Thick and William Read of Bayford both then confirm the truth of Lambert's statement.<sup>32</sup>

Why did *Saducismus* omit these statements, many of which might appear to corroborate the evidence included, and also, in Foarwood's evidence, tie this episode into a wider conspiracy? Maybe Glanvill was trying to limit his account to what he saw as the best-attested accusations, excluding marginal accusations or extraneous details. More likely, he was chary of including statements by the witnesses which suggested that they had prior reason to suspect the witch (including the physicians' reports) or that she had confessed to these witnesses what she had done before they had been interviewed for their evidence by Hunt. This might have raised doubts as to whether their evidence was not tainted by prior suspicions and hearsay and also perhaps call into question the leading role of the justice, Hunt, in obtaining the confessions. Of course, it may be that Hunt was himself conscious of these problems and that his 'book of examinations' had already tidied up the cases to avoid such problems; Glanvill may have been unaware of this extra evidence. But if it was Glanvill's editing, then he was simply treating Hunt's material in the same fashion as Michael Hunter has shown he did the material he was given on the Drummer of Tedworth.<sup>33</sup> He worked closely with evidence provided for him but

was happy to change the wording when he wished and to reshape it as fitted his own requirements.

Equally, it is impossible to judge whether any of the editorial comments on the cases found in *Saducismus* draw on Hunt's own views (or indeed whether they are Glanvill's views, written before his death, or those of Henry More as editor). Even in *Philosophical Endeavour* there is no indication of what Hunt might have suggested himself, simply a virtuoso display by Glanvill of how one might reconcile witchcraft phenomena with both scriptures and the latest ideas in natural philosophy and use them to oppose atheistic materialism (or 'modern Sadducism', as he was calling it by 1668). Glanvill and More, while believing in maleficial witchcraft, were primarily interested in the metaphysical issues raised by the actions of spirits and in using such cases as well-attested evidence against Hobbesian materialism and atheism, and they selected, shaped and commented on Hunt's material to reflect this.

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Given the several layers of editing between what has survived and Hunt's original 'book of examinations', what other evidence do we possess to help us to understand the circumstances and attitudes that might have led Robert Hunt into action as a hunter of witches? Hunt's biography offers no reason to regard him as an eccentric zealot. Born in 1608 or 1609, the son of a successful Dorset lawyer who had risen to enter Somerset gentry circles, he attended Cambridge and the Middle Temple, where he was called to the bar and practised in chambers until 1642. He became a Somerset JP in 1639/40 and was elected MP for Ilchester in the Long Parliament, defecting to the Royalist Parliament at Oxford but eventually avoiding sequestration. From 1654 until his death on 20 February 1680 he was a leading figure in Somerset local government as sheriff (1654–6) and a JP (except briefly 1659–60). He was several times elected as an MP both for the county (in 1659) and for local boroughs (Milborne Port in 1659, when he took the county seat instead and Ilchester again in the Convention Parliament in 1660; he petitioned (unsuccessfully both times) when he was not re-elected for Ilchester in 1661 and in 1679).<sup>34</sup> His son John Hunt, his wife's brother John Browne of Frampton (Dorset) and his sons-in-law Henry Bull of Shapwick, William Lacy and Richard Brodrepp (or Broderip) of Mapperton (Dorset) were all also elected to Parliament, as well as serving as sheriffs, justices and deputy lieutenants for Dorset or Somerset.<sup>35</sup>

Fortunately we possess a reasonable amount of documentation by and about Hunt. In particular, we have the memorandum book which he kept during his two years as sheriff and his post-Restoration letters to the Bulls of Shapwick, both his son-in-law Henry and Henry's father William Bull, who, like Hunt a lawyer and landed gentleman, had become a JP in 1629, having risen from a prosperous trading family in the cathedral city of Wells and bought an estate at Shapwick. In addition, Hunt appears frequently in the Somerset quarter-sessions records during his 23 years as a (very active) JP.<sup>36</sup> In itself, this level of evidence reflects the fact that Hunt was hardly a marginal figure, but rather a well-established member of Somerset's gentry elite, related to numerous other families and continuing in a position of influence well beyond his supposed rebuff by authority over witch-hunting in 1665. Not only was he made a deputy lieutenant for the first time in 1666, the very next year, but he kept this and all his other positions until his death, by which point his son John had taken over his electoral and magisterial roles (being MP for Milborne Port six times 1677–89, once with William Lacy and three times with Henry Bull).<sup>37</sup>

Hunt emerges from these sources as either an apolitical figure or, perhaps more accurately, one who held a set of views that put him, sometimes uncomfortably, right at the centre of the political spectrum. So, in the early stages of the civil war Hunt earned the opprobrium of Parliament and the attempted sequestration of his goods by transferring to the Royalist Oxford Parliament, but he was eventually cleared of delinquency by Parliament and, like his relatives the Bulls, he made his peace with the parliamentary regime.<sup>38</sup> In particular, the Protectorate saw his full return to Somerset politics, initially as sheriff, when he was trusted enough to be given two successive terms (the only example of this in the period 1625–60) and to survive without punishment (or even examination for complicity in treason) the escape of a prisoner he was holding after the Penruddock uprising who was a namesake of his (though not a relation). From February 1657 he became one of the most active justices and in 1659 (the year after Brooks and Coward were tried) he was elected an MP for the county. He was then purged from the bench and militia in summer 1659 by the radicals of the recalled Rump Parliament and not restored to these posts until March 1660.<sup>39</sup> Hunt served in the Convention Parliament and signed the loyal address of Somerset gentry in summer 1660 and henceforth remained on the bench (and in the quorum of senior justices) until his death. He does not appear to have held strong views during any of the crises of the next two decades, but he was excluded from election on petition by the first

Exclusion Parliament, suggesting he was regarded by then as a court supporter. John Hunt and William Lacy appear to have been regarded as exclusionists in March 1679, but by October 1679 John Hunt and Henry Bull seem to have gone over to the court side. Both were regarded as opponents of James II's efforts to repeal the test acts and penal laws, but both voted in the Convention that the throne was not vacant and were regarded after 1689 as Tories, though John signed the Association in 1696. So there is nothing to associate Hunt or his family politically with radicalism or republicanism or with later Whiggism, but equally they were not zealous Royalists or Tories.<sup>40</sup>

As sheriff in 1656, Hunt urged his fellow countymen to elect as MPs 'pious, sober, prudent and peaceable men', 'persons of worth that are grave, sober and discreet, such as are the guides and lights of your country; men of good experience and greate integrity; that lead an honest and exemplary life and have done you service in their country'. They should *not* elect any 'person that is not sound in religion and none that is an enemy to government'.<sup>41</sup> In November 1660 he wrote to William Bull 'I wish the places of Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum may not make a faction in our country: we have been formerly very unhappy in that. I wish unity.' A month later he thought England 'very happy in having a good kinge whose moderation I hope by God's blessing will keep all in quiet notwithstanding the prattling of fools', and in April 1661 he added, 'I pray God new Lords may give no new Lawes but that we may enjoy our good old laws our Protestant religion and a happy peace'.<sup>42</sup> His relatives the Bulls seem to have held similar views. In 1679 Henry Bull expressed his dislike for the partisan politics of the exclusion crisis: 'we are between two millstones and shall be ground to powder betwixt them', although by 1682–3 Bull was county sheriff and found himself writing to Secretary of State Jenkins in December 1683 to defend his undersheriff from 'the odious character of Whiggism'. Bull, if labelled a Tory, strongly supported a bill of comprehension in 1689 to broaden the national church, as 'such a union will gave as great and fatal a blow to popery and all the mischiefs of arbitrary power that attend it', and he hoped for 'a union between all who profess the protestant religion'.<sup>43</sup>

If Hunt and his relatives were resolutely moderate in politics, there might be a better case for seeing Hunt as a puritan in religion and morality, but if so, then again this is probably only in a way that was true of many gentry. Hunt had married the daughter of the leading Dorset Puritan gentleman, John Browne of Frampton, but he appears to have conformed happily to the church establishment of each period,

dissenting neither as an Anglican in the 1650s nor as a Presbyterian (let alone any other kind of nonconformist) after 1660; his family monuments stand at the west end of the church at Compton Pauncefoot.<sup>44</sup> His sheriff's notebook suggests that he was religious, as well as moralistic, keenly interested to provide preaching for prisoners in the county gaol, for example. His letters suggest that he was conventionally anti-Catholic, though he assisted his recusant relatives, the Ewins of Wincanton, during the 1650s.<sup>45</sup> In November 1660 he wrote, 'I heartily wish that all ministers would be moderate and forbear to meddle with any civill affayers in their pulpits'. On 18 July 1663 he reported wearily on 'very longe and troublesome imployment' as the gaol was full with 'a numerous company of the westerne parte for conventicles of An[abaptists], Qua[kers] and Pres[byterians] some of whom might have been left at home', adding, 'I suppose I may bee complained of for houldinge to the rule of lawe, but I will not complaine if I am left out of the commission'.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, he is recorded on several occasions as a firm opponent of the Quakers. He gained notoriety with them for his treatment of Thomas Salthouse (a travelling preacher) and his local supporters in 1657, and their books of sufferings then record several later occasions when he supported legal action against them including, intriguingly, Joseph Glanvill's prosecution of Quakers in 1677 for tithes owing to him as rector of Street. He signed the warrants against the conventicle held in the barn of John Cary of Bruton (a Quaker, and not, to my knowledge, related to Hunt's JP colleague discussed below) in 1673.<sup>47</sup> It seems that Hunt shared Glanvill's ecclesiological position, which involved a strong defence of the rights of the established church, sympathy for Presbyterians (such as Richard Baxter) and for a Protestant comprehension against both popery and radical sectarianism, and an emphasis on morals and sober worship as the essence of true religion.

How might these attitudes have affected Hunt as a prosecutor of witches? Hunt became involved in the cases he reported in his capacity as a JP. All of them arose in the area of east Somerset, bordering on Wiltshire and Dorset, where he was himself based, close to his family estates at Compton Pauncefoot and Speckington between Wincanton and Ilchester (site of the county gaol). The surviving quarter-sessions records show Hunt handling hundreds of cases in this area, mostly involving thefts, with a minority dealing with sexual offences or violence, and we also know he was very active as an administrator, both following up quarter-sessions business and in numerous other tasks.<sup>48</sup>

In this area Hunt worked closely with several other magistrates, the most active of whom (apart from his brother-in-law William Bull) was



John Cary of Castle Cary. They were, for example, the two magistrates who interrogated the Quaker Salhouse in 1657. Cary, a master of chancery, who practised in Somerset (acting as associate clerk of the western circuit assizes 1655–7), was one of a number of lawyers whose loyalty was questioned by Somerset Parliamentarians in July 1649; but later that year he joined the bench, and from 1653 he was a very active justice, sometimes acting with the radical Richard Bovet (unlike Hunt), and (unlike Hunt) he remained a militia officer when it was radicalised in summer 1659. However, Cary was one of the two justices who cleared Hunt of involvement in the Penruddock rebellion, and unlike Bovet he remained in the militia and a JP after the Restoration, his name being officially removed from the bench only in 1672, which may have been years after his death (possibly in early 1669).<sup>49</sup> Cary (with Bovet) was one of the justices at the Ilchester sessions of 19 April 1653 who recommended to the assize judge Wilde a pardon for Dorothy Chapple, ‘who stands condemned for witchcraft’, following a petition in her favour from several inhabitants of Ilchester.<sup>50</sup>

When Hunt and Cary became involved in the Brooks case in Shepton Mallet in 1658, it must have seemed a standard part of their role as magistrates for the area. Similarly the 1665 cases in Stoke Trister and Brewham were close to Wincanton, and Hunt was the most active magistrate in the area and so the most likely to be involved in taking informations and pursuing the cases. There is no evidence (pace Notestein) that he sought to hunt out witches elsewhere in the county or to set up any alternative means to deal with them other than the regular judicial process, and as we shall see he often took evidence over a lengthy period. Hunt was certainly a highly conscientious, even ‘zealous’, magistrate, as reflected both in his statements about the duties of magistrates and other officers in his period as sheriff and in his record of activism as a JP, but there is no reason to think that he took the search for witches any more seriously than the hunt for other moral and criminal offenders.

Indeed, it seems likely that Hunt regarded witches as very much part of the general criminal underworld he was seeking to defeat, rather than as uniquely dangerous or satanic opponents. Even though his examinations are unusual in the detailed accounts of witches’ meetings which they elicited, it is notable that the focus of these meetings, and of the details about them which he obtained, are the preparations to do harm to other people, through the ‘baptizing’ of images of their intended victims. The evidence is thus tied in with the accusations by the victims of specific maleficial actions by the witches, which had

led to Hunt's involvement; this is even clearer in the Barnes version, which, as we have seen, includes other maleficial accusations omitted by Glanvill. Any other details about the meetings, such as feasting or worshipping the devil, are very brief and undeveloped. Hunt was building evidence to tie the witches into legal charges for maleficial witchcraft on named victims, not proof of a satanic conspiracy against church and state.

This emphasis is echoed in his comments in his letters to William Bull about his work. The first reference to witches is a very matter-of-fact statement on 8 March 1664 that he is 'much troubled in the examination of a bad woeman, whoe hath don much evill, and I have at length mett wth evidence enough to send her to goale', followed by an account of a 'great theife' he has sent to gaol. Assuming this refers to a witch, she may have been tried and 'condemned' at the spring Assizes. Edward Phillipps the younger reported to Henry Muddiman from Montacute on 11 April 1664, 'Our assizes ended but last weeke being very long; seven were condemned, one was a witch, who hath in p[ar]t confessed that she had some power and skill that way.' Ewen places this under Hampshire, because the letter is endorsed 'Hampshire', but Montacute is in Somerset, and in his other letters to the court from Montacute, Phillipps describes events in Somerset and in Dorset (Dorchester), not Hampshire.<sup>51</sup>

While he was dealing with the 1665 cases, the only possible reference comes in a letter of 26 February 1665, in which he reports a series of 'ill prognostickes' in the shape of deformed births (one 'a child borne with a heade like a pigg's snowte'), before mentioning 'a young mayde dyed at Killmington on Wenseday, bewitched by an apple, lay 3 weekes in great torment and dyed Wenseday, her body broake and her bowells came out'. (There are several Kilmingtons, but this is probably the parish, now in Wiltshire but in Somerset until 1896, which lies three miles east of Brewham.) He continues: 'The story is too longe for this paper. This unhappy business of witches hath given me very much trouble and they have done very much mischeife both to cattle & people, but I suppose some of them will receive their reward & they well deserve it.' He goes on to discuss the taking of three men for a murder committed three years earlier. None of these men would confess, but 'I have drawne one of them from his fellowes upon hopes to have him confesse, but the prooffe is soe full agst them as may bee. God seldom lets blood be buried but at length brings it to light and this came strangely out, as I shall tell you when we meete'. Hunt was clearly a providentialist who saw God assisting his work as a magistrate against evildoers of all sorts,

but witch-hunting was only one expression of this view, widely held among such justices.<sup>52</sup>

The same measured tone is even found in the letter of 16 December 1667 in which he reports to the Bulls the affliction of his eldest daughter Catherine (died May 1679), who in 1663 had married Richard Brodrepp (c. 1639–1707) of Mapperton in Dorset (the family came from Somerset and retained property there).<sup>53</sup> The letter begins by explaining that he had had the ‘luck to kill a fatt dowe’, and is sending a side of it, before continuing:

My daughter Brodrepp I thanke God, came hither well on Saterdag, After the three weekes or more greate torments shee had indured, one whiles in her throate, another tyme at her harte, some tymes in her belly, & at other tymes in her backe, such strange paines as if shee was thrust wth nayles or needles & at two of the clocke every morninge the torment enforced her to ryse, and found noe ease in any place, on Sunday last was sennight about two of the clocke, she had a violent fitt and some tyme dead & about 4 of the clocke shee was assaulted more violently, Her eyes stretcht & swollen out her teeth clencht, her lipps open her chin gatherd upp like a button, and her hands & armes turned backward, & leggs and armes soe stiff & distorted that they could not bee bowed. For an hower shee remayned as dead, and lookt most gastly, but in this fitt she softly groaned only once, Alice Knight hath made mee guiddy upon this they sent for Alice Knight whoe thoe very unwillinge yet came to the house but when she came neare the house she fell a tremblinge, assoone as she came in she prest to see my daughter and the childe, but instead of that, they after much adoe drewe some blood from her arme by a bramble & then made her kneele & pray that neyther the divell nor any of his instruments might doe her any more hurte, but this she was unwillinge to do, but at last did. Assoone as the blood came, my daughter had ease, and fell into a fyne sleepe & ever since hath beene in ease and well I thanke God. In her pillow severall Knackes were found, made upp in feathers & bound wth red silke. I have 3 of them hear 2 they burned. This Alice Knight, my daughter never suspected her nor had seene her in 3 quarters of a year before the particulars are too longe for a l[ette]re. She tould one 2 dayes before that Mrs Brodrepp would dye shortly &c.<sup>54</sup>

Several features of this letter are interesting. The focus throughout is on the daughter’s suffering, rather than the witchcraft, and although it is clearly taken for granted that this is the devil’s work, carried out by a witch, there is no metaphysical speculation or religious comment, nor, interestingly, any sign of intended legal action against the suspect – and

there is no record in the Dorset archives of this case going to court (but we do not have assize records until 1670). There is also the willingness of the family (like the Jones family in the 1658 case) to use the violent counter-remedy of scratching the witch, which many demonologists would have condemned as at least superstitious, if not itself diabolical in its agency, but which Hunt clearly regards as justified by its efficacy. Furthermore, the case took place in late 1667, more than two years after Hunt's examinations of the witches, so there is no possibility that this personal experience fuelled his hatred of witches. If anything one might wonder if family discussion of the witchcraft cases with which he had been involved as a magistrate, and maybe even reading Glanvill's book dedicated to Hunt, with its attempts to explain what had happened, might have rendered members of the family more susceptible to fear that they might be targets of witchcraft.

Hunt's letters are, as these examples suggest, prosaic in their content, offering little guide to his intellectual life, although this may not mean that he was unintellectual. In these letters he was writing to his close relatives about family news, leaving out material too long for a letter, which could be discussed in person. Glanvill had discussed witchcraft at length with him and was clearly impressed by Hunt's intellect; Glanvill's publications were otherwise all dedicated to influential and distinguished people, so the choice of Hunt must imply that he made a strong impression on the younger man. Perhaps it helped that Hunt had a personal connection to Glanvill's hero Sir Francis Bacon. Hunt's father, John, who died aged about 94 in 1660, had worked for Bacon as a lawyer, and Hunt's second son, Robert, who predeceased him in 1677, left several books to his uncle Thomas Browne, one of which was Sir Francis Bacon's works in Latin (perhaps inherited from his grandfather?), so maybe Hunt seemed to Glanvill a living link to the great man. On the other hand, John Aubrey's account of Robert's father, in his biography of Bacon, leaves a rather unfavourable impression. Bacon 'was wont to say to his servant Hunt (who was a notable thrift man and loved the world and the only servant he had that he could never get to become bound for him) "The world was made for man, Hunt, and not man for the world". Hunt left an estate of 1000 li per annum in Somerset.' <sup>55</sup> The Hunt-Bull correspondence certainly gives the impression of a man who, if not necessarily only a lover of this world, had his feet firmly on the ground.

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However, if we dismiss the idea of Hunt as a zealous continental-style witch-hunter, travelling the country to force confessions of demonic

'covens' out of the local inhabitants, and see him instead as a dutiful magistrate, concerned to punish maleficial witches in his area of responsibility, then this raises a number of problems concerning the cases in which he was involved. Why were his attempts to pursue the cases blocked 'by higher authority' in 1665, given that other Somerset cases regularly reached trial over the next few decades? Why did cases involving such relatively unusual evidence of nocturnal meetings surface in that particular area at that time? Was this because the ordinary people involved in the cases offered unusually imaginative evidence, or was it the result of the questions they were asked? If the latter, was this by Hunt, or might there be other educated people instead of (or perhaps as well as) Hunt who might have stimulated unusual accusations and fears in that region?

There is no real evidence to answer the first of these questions, and Hunt's own correspondence is silent on the subject, though it is possible that his record of collaboration with the Protectorate and his evident distaste in pursuing conventiclers might have made even an ex-Royalist like Hunt suspect as a Puritan to some of those in authority in 1665. Intriguingly, in April 1680 we have evidence given by two men against a John Lockyer of Ilchester, attorney, 'for words spoken against Robert Hunt esq. lately deceased to the effect that he was gone to hell'. This Lockyer may be the man (son of an Ilchester linen draper) who in 1672 served as undersheriff to Sir Thomas Gore, and it may suggest that Hunt was unpopular with at least some of his fellow gentry. However, Lockyer was one of those who signed the election return of the country candidates (the nonconformists William Strode and John Speke), who successfully opposed Hunt's efforts to be elected for Ilchester again in 1679, so he is hardly likely to have disliked Hunt as too 'puritan'.<sup>56</sup> As we have seen, Hunt was promoted as deputy lieutenant in 1666, so the central authorities do not appear to have harboured any ongoing suspicions of him. Equally, there was no long-lasting block on the trial of witches in the Somerset courts. As we have seen the Brooks case in 1658 and the Cox case in 1663, both led to executions (and there may have been another in 1664), and both judges in those trials were promoted and knighted shortly afterwards, in 1660 and late 1663 respectively. Witchcraft cases are reported in the gaol delivery books (which survive from 1670 only) for 1670, 1672, 1677 and 1679, and, after Hunt's death, in 1684, 1686, 1687, 1690 and 1707. In most cases we know the accused were found not guilty, but two outcomes (in 1672 and 1677) are unknown, though unlikely to have involved a severe penalty, as this would probably have led to comment.<sup>57</sup>

Given this, perhaps the opposition to Hunt's investigations in 1665 arose from the efforts of friends of those accused to prevent their prosecution. Intriguingly, the first person accused, the widow Elizabeth Style of Bayford (a hamlet in Stoke Trister parish on the main road from London), had the same name as a widow acquitted of witchcraft at the Somerset assizes in 1636, held before Chief Justice Sir John Finch (a judge who worked closely with the Laudian bishop Piers in Somerset at this period). Unprecedentedly, because 'it appeared to this court that she was maliciously prosecuted by her adversaries', she was admitted, at her request, 'in forma pauperis' and given four leading counsel and an attorney to 'bring her action against Nicholas Hobbes and all or any other of her prosecutors'.<sup>58</sup> We have no further record of what happened in 1636, but intriguingly a Nicholas Hobbes, gentleman, had been one of the inhabitants of the hamlet of Henton (just west of Wells) who in 1612–13 had petitioned the quarter-sessions for action against an Elizabeth Busher, whom they claimed was terrorising her neighbourhood in a range of ways and was 'both reported and feared to be a dangerous witch thorow the untimely death of men, women and children which she hath hated, threatened and handled'. On that occasion the court had also seemed reluctant to act, initially merely requiring Busher to 'humble herself to one William Bennett an honest man she had much abused' and be 'a little more sober and better governed' and then, when petitioned, only issuing a warrant for her good behaviour.<sup>59</sup>

When Style was first accused by Richard Hill in 1664, three fellow parishioners 'persuaded the said Style to complain to the Justice against this informant for accusing her' (Barnes: *Saducismus* says 'willed her to complain to the justice against him, for accusing of her'), although Hill claimed 'she having used several put-offs said, she would do worse than fetch a warrant'.<sup>60</sup> When he first examined her on 26 January 1665, Hunt promptly addressed her: 'You have been an old sinner, etc. You deserve little mercy', and again asked 'why then she would continue in such ill courses', suggesting that she had a previous reputation as a witch, possibly dating back to the 1636 trial, which Hunt might well have attended as a young Somerset lawyer.<sup>61</sup>

However, since Style was brought to trial and (according to *Saducismus*) found guilty, dying in prison before execution, it may have been others accused who had friends in court and prevented Hunt's investigations going further. Somerset's clerk of the peace at the time of the herald's visitation in 1672 was a Philip Bennett (aged 34 in 1672), son of a Philip Bennett gentleman of Brewham who

had married Mary, daughter of Richard Shute of Bayford, in 1657. If Bennett had been active seven years before (when admittedly he was only 27) he would have had family in both the affected parishes.<sup>62</sup> Intriguingly, although 14 people were accused of attending witches' meetings in the Style case, and there were repeated references to the activities of three Wincanton women, Alice Duke (alias Manning), Mary Penny and Anne Bishop, the last of whom is presented as the devil's particular favourite, Hunt appears to have collected evidence only against Style and Duke. They had both confessed, so perhaps the others proved harder to produce witnesses against or persuade to confess, or it may be the case was stopped from above by supporters of the others named before Hunt could deal with them. However, he collected evidence regarding the Brewham witches until early June 1665, almost three months after the last examination in the Stoke Trister case, which makes it very unclear when his activities were curtailed and what, if any, impact this had on the two cases.

If we ask why the cases spread from Stoke Trister and the town of Wincanton (next to Stoke Trister) to Brewham in March 1665, the answer may lie in the further acts of maleficia to which Duke referred at the end of her reported confession, which do not correlate with anything in Style's confession and so may be from the later phases of Duke's examination (on 10 and 21 February). Two acts of maleficia are then corroborated by witnesses in Wincanton, but the others are not. The last of these (from Barnes) is 'that being provoked by Mr Francis Swanton's first wife did before her death curse her with a pox on you & believes it did hurt her, but denyeth that she did bewitch Mr Swanton's cattle'. The Swantons were a leading Wincanton family, who named all their sons William or Francis! This may refer to Francis senior (c. 1605–61; he remarried in 1661 just before his death, but we do not know when his first wife died) or his younger son, Francis, both lawyers (see below), or his nephew Francis (who lived in Bath by 1672). In 1656 Francis senior had sold the family's half share in the manor of Wincanton to James Churchey, and one of the younger two had bought from the Churcheys their lordship of the manor of South Brewham, which in turn he sold to Philip Bennett in 1668, along with most of his estates in the parish. It therefore seems possible that the Swanton accusation drew Hunt's attention to Brewham, although we also need to recall the death of the Kilmington maid, reported in his letter to Bull on 26 February, as Kilmington was close to Brewham and that case may also have taken Hunt into that area.<sup>63</sup>

More crucially, however, Alice Duke's naming of Francis Swanton as a victim may have taken the whole affair into a different league. The Swantons, who were barristers of the Middle Temple like Hunt, held the clerkship of the Western Circuit of the assizes successively from 1637, when Francis senior was appointed, through his sons William (clerk 1656–67, d. 1681) and Francis junior (clerk 1668–88), and then his grandson (another Francis) until the end of the century. Francis senior, though suspected of royalism like others in his family, was a JP for both Wiltshire (1641–61) and Somerset (1648–57) during the interregnum, then MP for first Wilton in 1660 and then Salisbury in 1661, dying later that year. He had been forced to stand down as clerk after the trial of the Penruddock rebels in 1655, when he was accused of assisting those accused, but his son took over the post. William (who had acted as assize judge as well as clerk at the Chard assizes in March 1657) took over as Salisbury MP in 1673 and was its recorder 1673–8. Any assize case involving the Swanton family, therefore, was bound to attract the closest scrutiny: perhaps this was what led to its suppression by 'higher authority'?

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The second issue is whether, rather than Hunt imposing his own witchcraft fantasies on those whom he examined, the witnesses or the accused in these cases might themselves have offered unusually imaginative accounts of witches' meetings. There is nothing in any of the witnesses' accusations that implies that the witches acted collectively, except when they report confessions supposedly made to them by the witches that corroborated what they had told Hunt. Instead the witness statements all describe individual acts of maleficium following arguments with one of the witches: Richard Vining, for example, reports his wife falling out with Style 'about eggs and poultry' (Barnes: this detail is omitted in *Saducismus*). It is only in the confessions of the accused, therefore, that we find witches' meetings. In trying to establish whether these might reflect their own ideas of such meetings, we can look at a number of features of the meetings, the most prominent of which is perhaps their location.

Style first described meeting three other witches at 9 p.m. in the night 'in the common near Trister Gate', 'in a ground near Marnhull' and later in 'several general meetings in the night at Ligh Common, and a common near Motcombe, at a place near Marnhull and at other places' (all



quotations in this paragraph are from Barnes).<sup>64</sup> Alice Duke reported 'several meetings at Lye Common and other places in the night' and another time 'being carried to a meeting in the night to a green place near Marnhull as she was then told'.<sup>65</sup> Christian Green met the devil with Catherine Green 'in one Mr Hussey's ground in Brewham Forest about noon', then later 'at several meetings in the night at Brewham Common and in a ground of Mr Hussey's'.<sup>66</sup> Catherine Green admitted going in the evening to 'a ground called Hussey's Knapp'. Mary Green described several meetings 'at a place called Hussey's-knap in the forest in the night-time'.<sup>67</sup> It seems reasonable to locate these meetings as being at Trister Gate and Leigh Common in Stoke Trister, at a ground of Mr Hussey's in Brewham forest known as Hussey's Knap and at Brewham Common, and at both Marnhull and Motcombe. These last two places were both across the border in Dorset, about ten miles from Stoke Trister in each case, Marnhull being about five miles south-west of Shaftesbury and Motcombe about a mile north-east of it, between Shaftesbury and Gillingham (being a chapelry in the liberty of Gillingham).

Can we establish any reason why these locations might have been chosen? The 1665 cases took place in two parishes at the north and south ends of the area of Selwood Forest, a large expanse of wooded and common land, which had been partially enclosed and decommoned between 1627 and 1640, provoking some resistance at the time and then repeated rioting and the widespread destruction of enclosures from the early 1640s to the mid-1650s, as reported to the Council of State in 1655 by two JPs, one being John Cary.<sup>68</sup> Among those who purchased land in the former forest were John and Robert Hunt, who bought land for an entry fine of £415 in 1631. The meetings were at places in these parishes that were in the forest areas and were still held in common (80 acres of Leigh Common were not enclosed until 1821).<sup>69</sup> Perhaps the notion of subversive meetings held in such locations made sense to the women of the area, whose lives had been shaped by the violent struggle between local groups and outside landlords for control of these areas. Interestingly, Motcombe was within the neighbouring Gillingham Forest (part of the ancient Selwood Forest itself) which was also subject to deafforestation before 1640. This had provoked widespread rioting in 1626–8 and even greater disorder during the 1640s and 1650s.<sup>70</sup> Motcombe had also been the scene of a colourful popular custom, in which the people of Shaftesbury had come to Motcombe Green on Holy Rood Day in May to dance, as part of their claim to a right to use the water supplies from the common ground in Motcombe.

In 1663, only two years previously, this custom had been abolished, with Crown approval, on the grounds that it led to neglect of the Lord's day and other inconveniences. Perhaps the 'green in Marnhull' was also a site of popular custom or traditional rights: 300 acres at Marnhull were not enclosed until the late eighteenth century. David Underdown portrays this area of Somerset and Dorset as the centre of a vigorous popular culture, often expressed in Royalist or anti-Puritan demonstrations or festivals. In July 1656 a large crowd had attended a bull baiting at Stoke Trister, put on by John Thick the elder, a yeoman: the JP involved in prosecuting the case was John Cary.<sup>71</sup> So possibly all these locations evoked in the minds of the witches places of popular gathering, either to resist unwelcome authority or to celebrate customs targeted by reformers.

A second explanation of why Motcombe and Marnhull might have featured is provided by the reference to Mr Hussey's ground at Brewham. The Husseys were a well-established Dorset family, and in 1652 George Hussey (1622–77) had bought the manor of Marnhull and lived at Nash Court there, though he also served as a Somerset JP from 1668 onwards. Some of the Hussey family were recusants, although George seems to have had all his family baptisms and marriages in the local church. Interestingly, one of the two stewards who conducted the survey of Gillingham forest in 1633 was a William Hussey esquire, possibly the William Hussey of Shaftesbury gentleman mentioned in the 1672 Somerset visitation. A Presbyterian meeting was licensed in 1672 at the Motcombe house of a John Hussey, and he was described as a gentleman in his will of 1694.<sup>72</sup> The Husseys also seem to have had close dealings with another rising Dorset family, the Whitakers, and Henry Whitaker (1623–96), a barrister, was the lord of the manor of Motcombe, which he had bought in 1642, as well as recorder of Shaftesbury, for which he was an MP in 1659 and 1661–79; his father, William Whitaker, had been a leading figure in the suppression of the Gillingham forest riots in 1631 and 1643. A 1674 lease relating to land in North Brewham includes, as parties to the deal, both George Hussey of Marnhull and Henry Whitaker of Motcombe. Both families also owned manors in the parish of Henstridge on the Somerset/Dorset border.<sup>73</sup> It may be, therefore, that places associated with the Hussey family came to the minds of the women when they thought about the forest areas, and this is why Marnhull features, even though it is itself well outside the forest area, being in low-lying ground close to the Stour. On the other hand, it is Style (not the Brewham witches) who names Marnhull and Motcombe, ahead of the references to Hussey's ground. If, however, Style associated

witchcraft with her family in Shaftesbury, this might have turned her mind to places and people associated with that town and its hinterland, such as Motcombe and the Whitaker and Hussey families.

In trying to understand further what might have led to stories of clandestine forest meetings, it may be worth asking whether nonconformist meetings (or conventicles) in secret locations (sometimes in the woods, as at Axminster in Devon) to avoid prosecution, which were happening across the west country, might have played a part. A 1659 pamphlet had reported the uncovering of a meeting of nearly 200 witches about ten miles away at Sherborne, and in September 1660 the Dorset justices were asked to investigate the case and bind over any accused to the next assizes. They were said to be mostly Quakers and Anabaptists, five of whom had reportedly confessed to causing the death of Sherborne's former minister William Lyford (d. 1653) and trying to kill the incumbent, the controversial Francis Bampfield. They had renounced their baptism and made contracts with the devil, whom they worshipped and 'two Women confess to all, *that the Divil hath oft times had Actuell copulation with them in sundry shapes; but most commonly in the shape of Mr. Lyford and Mr. Bamfield, the Ministers of Sherburne, whom he and they most hated and endeavoured to destroy*'.<sup>74</sup>

Moreover, the devil at the witches' meetings in 1665 is described as a man in black clothes 'with a little band', resembling clerical costume, to whom the others 'did courtesie and due observance', or 'low obeysance', or 'very low obeysances'.<sup>75</sup> The early 1660s saw numerous ordained clergymen ejected from their livings in this part of the country, many of whom continued to offer alternative forms of worship. One such man was John Batt (d. 1684), an Oxford graduate from a Wiltshire family and rector of Stoke Trister from 1650 until 1662, who, in the words of his successor William Parsons in 1665, 'is quartered in the house of John Prankett farmer where (as I am informed) he doth usually preach'. A grammar school in the parish was run by 'John Bolster of noe degree of the university who is a common preacher in conventicles in my parish and parishes adjacent', and Bolster also preached at Prankett's farm, 'and many strangers out of other dioceses as well as this, to the corrupting and seducing my charge daily more and more to my great grieve'.<sup>76</sup> At Brewham, an equivalent figure was Edward Bennett (born at South Brewham in 1618, died 1673), who had been curate to both Richard Bernard and Richard Alleine at Batcombe in the early 1640s before holding a Dorset living from which he was ejected in 1662. He then returned to take up a base (like several ejected clergy, including Alleine) at the home of Thomas Moore esquire at Spargrove

in Batcombe, where he was arrested in March 1665. Bennett was sent to Ilchester gaol but imprisoned for only two months 'because of the respect one of the judges had for him'. By 1669 he was at Brewham, where his house was licensed in 1672 as a Presbyterian meeting house, though he also preached at Shepton Mallet and other places until his death in 1673. Intriguingly, Calamy tells us that his funeral sermon 'was preached by Mr William Parsons [i.e. the rector of Stoke Trister who objected to Batt!] at Brewham'.<sup>77</sup>

This reminds us that the dividing line between Presbyterians and Anglicans was often a fine one at this period. Another family that straddled the same line were the Sacheverells. John Sacheverell was curate of Wincanton at the Restoration and after being ejected in 1662 moved to Stalbridge in Dorset and died in 1664, following a period in prison for preaching at Shaftesbury. Intriguingly, in 1661 a riot occurred in Wincanton when many of his parishioners took offence at a Restoration Day sermon in which he had claimed, provocatively, 'wicked and profane men are the worst subjects'. This led the 'rude debauched multitude' to 'prepare an effigies made of straw and clothed it in black, which might represent Mr Sacheverel', draw it through the town on a sled 'demanding of it whether it would read the common prayer or no' and then try to burn it on a massive bonfire. According to *Annus Mirabilis*, the effigy refused to burn, whatever the crowd attempted, and this 'strange and miraculous providence' 'rebuked their barbarous and inhuman usage' and encouraged such ministers to hold to God against 'the tumult of the people'. However, Sacheverell's son Joshua conformed in 1662, and, though a low churchman himself, was father to the Tory hero of Anne's reign, Dr Henry Sacheverell.<sup>78</sup>

Possibly, therefore, the man in black of the witches' meetings, with 'his little band', was a figure of an ejected clergyman, an ironic evocation of one of those ministers who had previously preached Puritan morality but was now himself demonised in the great inversion brought about by the Restoration. The key feature of the meetings is the baptism of a wax image of the intended victim, with the devil acting as godfather and the witches as godmothers, after which the image is stabbed with thorns to cause hurt to the person represented. Increase Mather's summary in 1684 focused on the confessions that 'they had made an explicit league with the Devil and that he did baptize pictures of wax with oyl, giving them the names of those persons they did intend mischief unto'.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, there are no other signs of worship, inverted or otherwise, in the meetings as recorded. Instead, after the baptisms, they became occasions for eating, drinking, dancing and

music. There is no mention of any sexual activity of any kind. To the poor women involved, a meal of wine, good beer and meat, followed by dancing, was about as idyllic (or unlikely) a vision as they could imagine, for, as Alice Duke poignantly noted, although at his initial contract with them the devil had promised 'she should want nothing, but ever since she hath wanted all things'.<sup>80</sup>

There is, therefore, little in these reports of the witches' meetings which required detailed knowledge of the learned traditions of 'continental-style' witches' sabbaths. Instead they could have been fashioned from popular images of revelry in places associated with resistance to authority or popular custom, merged with a quasi-religious ceremony, led by a ministerial figure, that provided magic images with which to practise maleficium. To this extent, we might not need to imagine Hunt imposing his own agenda to explain the evidence as recorded. As Sharpe has argued, even before the civil war and the widespread publicity given to the East Anglian witchcraft cases, ordinary people were 'able to construct a notion of the sabbat. We are left to wonder how many other people similarly formulated individualistic, and folklorically based, conceptualizations of the sabbat when they discussed witchcraft'.<sup>81</sup>

On the other hand, there are also strong indications in their confessions that they were responding to a common series of questions from Hunt (or other examiners). As they survive, the confessions of Style and Duke correspond very closely indeed, down to the smallest details. Both describe anointing their foreheads and wrists before 'they are carried to their meetings' with 'oyl the spirit brings them (which smells raw)';<sup>82</sup> exactly the same phrases are used when they travelled through the air to meetings ('thout, tout, a tout, tout, throughout and about')<sup>83</sup> and when they tormented the wax images of their victims ('a pox on thee, I will spite thee')<sup>84</sup> and when they left their meetings to go home ('merry meet, merry part')<sup>85</sup> and then, when travelling back ('rentum tormentum'; Duke adds 'and another word which she doth not remember').<sup>86</sup> They each describe meetings at the same places and times and with the same participants, involving the use of wax images (normally called 'pictures', though Duke calls it 'a picture (or image)' in Barnes) to harm the same set of victims. Both report that, when they then ate and drank, the devil 'brings wine or beer, cakes, meat or the like. He sits at the higher end, and usually Anne Bishop sits next him. They eat, drink, dance and have musick'.<sup>87</sup> Style is fuller in describing the witches as acting as godparents when they baptized the images, and she describes 'wax candles like little torches' being handed out by the devil to use during the meetings and once reports, '[the man in black] sometimes

plays on a pipe or citterne, and the company dance'.<sup>88</sup> Duke goes into slightly more detail about ointments, with 'a feather dipp'd in oyl' used to anoint the witches before they flew to the meeting and the oil used on the forehead of the baptised images being 'a little greenish oyl'.<sup>89</sup> But otherwise the very close correspondence suggests that, at the very least, their confessions were brought into complete coherence. Whether this was by Hunt's pressure, or their ability to learn between examinations what the other had confessed, or a common repertoire of ideas, is impossible to ascertain.

The later confessions of Christian, Catherine and Mary Green of Brewham, though less extensive than Style and Duke's, contain the same details: of a man in black clothes<sup>90</sup> with a little band<sup>91</sup> to whom 'all made obeysances',<sup>92</sup> who speaks in a low voice;<sup>93</sup> the baptizing of wax images and sticking in thorns; and the devil's departure with a smell,<sup>94</sup> though it is here specified as 'a noisome smell of brimstone'.<sup>95</sup> Their accounts say nothing about food, drink, dancing or music, however, and in the confessions of Catherine and Mary Green the devil becomes 'a little man'.<sup>96</sup> This may, of course, reflect the fact that each was examined only once, according to the records, and over a lengthy period during which Hunt may have been losing control of the investigation, so that the opportunity to make all the accounts fully compatible was missing.

There are also strong signs in Style's evidence, as Kittredge noted, that she was being asked to comment on, or explain, features of her confession which would have interested learned examiners for their metaphysical implications, rather than as part of a legal case.<sup>97</sup> Such features include whether they were present at the meetings bodily or merely in spirit, whether they were clothed, and how the devil spoke ('his voice is audible, but very low'). One paragraph (quoted from Barnes), in particular, reads like a guided answer to such concerns: 'that they are carried to their meetings sometimes in their bodyes and cloathes on and sometimes without, And as this examinant thinks their bodyes are sometimes left behind and only their spirits are present, yet know one another'.<sup>98</sup> Later she adds 'That she never heard the name of God or Jesus Christ named at any of their meetings', but there is no other discussion of any worship of the devil, nor any blasphemous inversion of the sacraments other than the baptising of the images to do harm to the named victim.<sup>99</sup> As noted previously, Hunt seems much more interested in their maleficial preparations than anything else, and Style was made to confess the full range by which these could be achieved: 'When they would bewitch man, woman or child, they do it sometimes by a

picture made in wax, which the Devil formally christens ['baptizeth' in *Saducismus*]. Sometimes they have an apple, dish or spoon or other thing from their evil spirit, which they give to the party to whom they would do harm. Upon which they have power to hurt the person that eats or receives it. Sometimes they have power to do hurt ['mischief' in *Saducismus*] by a touch or a curse; and for cattle they have power to hurt them by touching and cursing and cursing without touching; but neither without the Devil's leave'.<sup>100</sup>

It is harder to be sure whether the other aspects of the women's confessions, not describing their joint meetings, reflect the same level of pressure from the justices, since they do not share the same requirement to agree in details to be convincing as legal evidence. Style and Duke each has an encounter with the devil, who promises them freedom from want in return for their souls, as sealed through a contract signed in their blood: each resists initially but gives in later, and each is marked by giving blood from the fourth finger of the right hand (the finger on which we wear engagement or wedding rings) between the upper and middle joint (Hunt claims the marks are still visible) to sign or mark the contract, then both are rewarded immediately with a sixpence, with the devil going off with the paper.<sup>101</sup> Both are given a spirit called Robin whom they can call up to do harm to their enemies.<sup>102</sup> Christian Green meets the devil when out in the forest with Catherine Green, but her experience is then similar, with blood again taken from the same finger, but there is no detail of signing a contract and she is given (in Barnes) 'fourpence-half-penny, which she after bought bread with at Brewton [i.e. Bruton]'.<sup>103</sup> Catherine and Mary Green do not confess to any individual contract with the devil, merely attending the meetings with him, though Mary reports that at one meeting 'they called out Robin, upon which instantly appeared a little man in black cloaths, to whom all made obeysance'.<sup>104</sup> It seems as if details of individual encounters with the devil and his familiars in the Stoke Trister cases get transferred, in the briefer Brewham cases, to become part of what happened at the witches' meetings.

Style, Duke and Christian Green also are visited by the devil as a familiar, to suck their blood (quotations from Barnes). Christian Green had contracted to let the devil suck her once in 24 hours, and 'doth usually suck her left breast about five of the clock in the morning, in the likeness of a hedgehog, bending, and did so last on Wednesday morning last; She saith it is painful to her and that she is usually in a trance when she is suck'd'.<sup>105</sup> Duke's familiar commonly sucks her right breast at about 7 p.m. 'in the shape of a little cat but of a dunnish colour and is

a want' [i.e. a mole] and 'when she is suck'd she is in a kind of trance'.<sup>106</sup> Style had seen 'Alice Dukes familiar suck her in the shape of a cat, and Anne Bishops suck her in the shape of a rat or the like'.<sup>107</sup> Style's familiar could be more varied, occasionally a man, 'but more usually he appears to her in private in the shape of a black dogg ['in the likeness of a dog' in *Saducismus*] and a cat and a fly like a millar, in which last he usually sucks her in the poll about four of the clock in the morning, and did so Jan 27<sup>th</sup>, and that it usually is pain to her to be so suck'd'.<sup>108</sup> The precise date given reflects the evidence provided by the three men who had watched her that night, when she was locked up in the constable's house at Bayford (after she had first started to confess at Wincanton the day before, but prior to her first major examination during the 27<sup>th</sup>).<sup>109</sup> They reported seeing several suspicious flies in the room in the middle of the night and then finding one which flew off from hair in her poll, leaving it 'very red and like raw beef', after which she confessed to them 'it was her familiar, and that she felt it tickle in her head ['poll' in *Saducismus*; 'pole' in W.L.W.] and that was the usual time when her familiar came to her'.<sup>110</sup> However, we know that suspicions that Style might have the devil's mark predated her examination by Hunt, as he collected the evidence of five Stoke Trister women who had searched her for a mark, with the approval of the constable, 'a little after Christmas last' (Hunt was not involved until 23 January), finding a 'little rising or nobb of flesh' ['or nobb of flesh' is also in W.L.W. but not in *Saducismus*] which felt hard like a kernel of beef' in her poll, which, 'suspecting it to be an ill mark', they tested by driving a pin into it several times, allegedly without Style feeling any pain 'nor did any blood issue out of the said place'. They added that Style had 'since confessed... her familiar did use to suck her in the place mentioned, in the shape of ['a flye' added in W.L.W.] a great millar or butterfly'.<sup>111</sup> As this suggests, by this date images of the devil, the familiar and the mark were well established in popular belief, and it is reasonable to suppose that all the women could have provided accounts of such dealings with the devil from their own narrative resources, without requiring close prompting from Hunt.

A few of the details of their encounter with the devil may be more distinctive. Style reports the devil promising 'her money, and that she should live gallantly, and have the pleasure of the world for twelve years', and this Faustian pact seems to have caught Hunt's (or Glanvill's) attention, as he prefaces his account in *Saducismus* by describing her death 'a little before the expiry of the term her confederate demon had set her for her enjoyment of diabolical pleasures in this life'.<sup>112</sup> Duke's lesser (if vain) ambition had been to want nothing, and that her curses



might be effective, and her devil wants her to 'be his instrument to do such mischief as he would set her about'.<sup>113</sup> Duke also reported that her first encounter with the devil was at night in Wincanton churchyard, where she was invited by Anne Bishop. They circled the church backwards three times, being joined (in Barnes) by 'a man in black cloaths which was the Devill' during the first round, meeting 'a thing in the shape of a great toad' which leapt up against her apron in the second round and 'somewhat in the shape of a rat, which vanished away' in the third. They then went home, but Bishop then told her a few days after 'that now she might have her desire', after which the devil appeared in man's shape.<sup>114</sup>

Overall, it is hard to see Hunt as a second Hopkins. After Style's confessions *Saducismus* claims: 'This confession of Style's was free and unforced, without any torturing or watching, drawn from her by a gentle examination, meeting with the convictions of a guilty conscience'. Hunt also notes that the confessions were 'taken in the presence of several grave and orthodox divines before me'.<sup>115</sup> Hunt was accompanied by Cary in the 1658 case, and by his brother-in-law William Bull and another local JP, Edward Court (who was William Bull's son-in-law), when he first interrogated Style on 27 January 1665, so it may be that some of these other people contributed to the questioning.<sup>116</sup> Hunt also records that several witnesses, including William Parsons (the rector of Stoke Trister), confirmed that parts of the confession were repeated to them separately, although we cannot tell whether this was before or after the confessions to him.<sup>117</sup> It is also notable that the confessions to Hunt occurred over a series of examinations, three in Style's case (between 26 January and 7 February) and five in Duke's case (27 January, 2, 7, 10 and 21 February).<sup>118</sup> We cannot tell from the surviving evidence which confessions were made at each date, or trace how they evolved, so it is hard to explore the process of questioning, but it seems likely that it was repeated examination, rather than extreme pressure, which produced common results, while the gaps between questioning may explain how each witch could come to tell a very similar story.

The Brewham cases proceed in an even more leisurely fashion. Christian Green's confession is the first event recorded, on 2 March 1665 (overlapping with Hunt's examination of witnesses against Duke, which goes on until 6 March) and Hunt then takes several depositions against Margaret Agar, whom Christian had named, between 7 and 15 March, but then there is a gap before Catherine Green (alias Cornish) is examined on 16 May 1665, and then Mary Green (not named previously) on 3 June, which is the final item.<sup>119</sup> Although Catherine had

been accused by Christian of being the woman who led her to the devil and of having killed her mother-in-law (also named Catherine Green), her examination by Hunt addresses neither of these serious crimes, but focuses on the misdeeds of Margaret Agar, as does Mary's confession, although, in the course of describing a large number of occasions when Agar stuck thorns into images at witches' meetings, Mary names a number of other people as attending these meetings. The heading of these testimonies in *Saducismus* reflects this emphasis on Agar's maleficia, by entitling them 'further testimonies of the villainous feats of that rampant hag Margaret Agar'.<sup>120</sup> This raises the possibility that Hunt's chief interest lay in the prosecution of Agar for maleficia: maybe Agar was the woman who had done much evil about whom he had complained in his letter of March 1664, or the woman held responsible for the death of the Kilmington maid given the apple in February 1665, although this case does not feature in the 1665 depositions.

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Once again, however, if we stress Hunt's concern with maleficia, we render problematic the focus in his evidence on the witches' meetings: he could have accounted for maleficial action through the devil's pact and familiar spirits without needing accounts of witches' meetings. One possible explanation is that Hunt may have been influenced by the writings, or even the personal opinions, of one of England's most influential commentators on the subject, Richard Bernard, as expressed in his *Guide to the Grand Jury Men*, published in 1627. For the second half of his life, from the 1610s to his death in 1642, Bernard was minister of Batcombe in Somerset, halfway between Shepton Mallet and Brewham. The *Guide* was written by Bernard as a result of participation in a Somerset assize case involving witchcraft, almost certainly that of Edmund Bull and Joan Greedie, tried at Taunton Assizes in summer 1626.<sup>121</sup> It seems very likely that he was personally known to Hunt; intriguingly Hunt's appeal as sheriff in 1654 to the county bench to subscribe to a fund for preaching to the prisoners is very close in sentiment and wording to Bernard's plea for funds to help poor prisoners, addressed to the same bench in 1627, as reproduced in his other work of 1627, *The Isle of Man: or the legal proceeding in Man-shire against sinne*, which was dedicated to members of the Thynne family (who were Glanvill's patrons in Somerset).<sup>122</sup> Bernard's successor at Batcombe, Richard Alleine (born at Ditchat, four miles from Batcombe, where his father was rector until his death c. 1655), was ejected in 1662 and settled in Glanvill's parish of

Frome Selwood, though in 1672 he was licensed to hold a Presbyterian meeting at nearby Beckington, scene of a 1689 case discussed below.<sup>123</sup> It is hard to believe that Hunt and Glanvill did not both know and discuss Bernard's writings on witchcraft, and Hunt might well have used it as a guide to his own work in examining witches. Alternatively, as Sharpe has shown, Bernard's ideas were incorporated wholesale into the editions of Dalton's *Country Justice* from 1630 onwards, so Hunt might have found them there. In addition, Bernard presents his account as a digest of what he has learned about witchcraft from reading all the previous literature, including all the English witchcraft pamphlets (particularly the trials of the Lancashire witches in 1612), so to some extent his recommendations are as much a description of how those examining witches had proceeded as a guide to how they might proceed. Hunt might have drawn similar conclusions himself from reading the same material.<sup>124</sup> However, certain features of Bernard's presentation do seem to fit particularly well with the Hunt material.

Bernard is particularly concerned with the need to establish that maleficial witches were relying on the power of the devil to carry out their harmful deeds. His account is neatly balanced between caution about unjustified accusations of maleficia (the theme of part one) and anxiety about the widespread influence of demonic magic (as practised by both 'good' and 'bad' witches), and he resolves this dilemma by stressing that the only clear evidence that a harm was the result of a witch's maleficia (as opposed to being natural, an imposture, God's punishment or the direct work of the devil) is to prove that the witch had a pact with the devil. In itself, that still did not require witches' meetings, but Bernard's clearest recommendations that could be adopted by someone trying to follow his advice in investigating a case are his guidelines for establishing such a demonic connection, which Bernard believed would be an inverted image of true worship. He concludes his guide by contrasting 'what God doth' with 'what Satan doth', a list which begins with 'So the Devil hath his set meetings for his magicians and witches to come together' and continues, 'Satan with his witches have their times which they call their sabbaths', 'the meetings of these are of good and bad witches, some learned and some ignorant, but of these [the ignorant] the greatest number' 'they meet to christen (as they speake) their spirits and give them names' 'Satan and the witches covenant one with the other', 'so doth Satan ratifie his covenant with blood', 'Satan marketh his' 'Satan giveth to his a familiar or spirit, and gifts to doe this or that tricke of witchcraft'.<sup>125</sup> In chapter 19, in which he discusses 'the manner of examining the suspected, thereby to bring him or her to confesse the

crime', he focuses on these issues. He distinguishes the 'presumptions' of witchcraft, identified in the evidence of the accusers about supposed maleficia ('the suspected cursings and threatnings', followed by inquiries as to their illness and boasting about it) from the topics on which the examination should focus, which begin with the familiar and the mark, which Bernard sees as the crucial proof of a demonic covenant. These are:

1. Whether they have seen him or her call upon any spirit, or to speake of it to them, or to have seen them feeding them, or found any secret place to be suspected and giving forth a noisome and stinking smell?
2. Whether they have heard the suspected to foretell of mishaps to befall any, or heard them speake of their power to hurt this or that, or of their transportation, to this or that place, or of their meetings in the night there? Or knowne them to have used charms or spels?
3. Whether they have seen them with any other suspected of witchcraft, and to have secretly received any thing from them and what it was? To have made any pictures? Or to have used any other tricks of witchcrafts? See Delrio l. 5. s. 3. p. 711
4. Whether they have desired something belonging to the afflicted, before the same party were afflicted? Or whether the suspected hee or shee did get any thing, to send or to carry to the foresaid afflicted, and what fell out thereupon? and what the suspected did at his or her returne;
5. Whether they ever found the suspected in any extasie or trance, when and where? And what he or she hath told them thereupon afterwards?
6. what he or she hath been heard to say or doe upon the afflicted? His or her crying out of the said suspected in fits or trances; & of his after accusing the suspected out of the fits? Whether before hearing they should be apprehended, fear of death surprised him or her, and being apprehended, if he or she sought to get out of the way?<sup>126</sup>

There are significant parallels between Bernard's writings and the cases presented by Hunt: the assumption of transportation to meetings in the night, the making of 'pictures' and the notion that they might 'christen, as they speake, their spirits, and give them names'. As we have seen, these three ideas underlie much of what one might see as distinctive

about Hunt's evidence in 1665, although the 'christening' of wax 'pictures' (what we would call images) to name those who are going to be harmed, before the pictures are then stabbed with thorns to bring about the injuries, does not appear to be what Bernard was talking about when he referred to the christening of spirits elsewhere in his text, where he means the giving of names to the familiar spirits given by the devil to the witches. So, if Bernard's questions did lie behind this distinctive aspect of the testimony, then either Hunt misunderstood what Bernard meant, or the witches in their replies managed to recast the question in a form which made sense to them, focusing on how they caused harm to their victims.

One might also note some absences in Bernard's treatment of witchcraft which are also paralleled in Hunt. Despite his emphasis on witches' meetings as inversions of the true worship of God, Bernard does not offer any detailed picture of what went on at such meetings and does not posit any elaborate inversion of divine service. Hunt's meetings were equally low-key, consisting simply of obeisance to the devil, followed by the christening of the pictures, and then, in some accounts, a simple feast and dancing with materials provided by the devil, before they all go home. Equally Bernard is completely uninterested in the notion of sex with the devil or the familiars: the covenant is sealed by the sucking of blood and that is what the familiars do, with no mention of sex with them or the devil himself. The same is true of Hunt.

On the other hand, there are other Bernard recommendations which seem much less evident in the Hunt testimony. Some aspects leave a faint trace, but not in the form Bernard anticipated: the 'noysome and stinking smell' of Bernard's familiars is recorded by Hunt only at the devil's departure from the night-time meetings. There is no reference to catching the witches in an 'extasie or trance', but two of the witches refer to feeling in a 'trance' while sucked by their familiars. There is no reference to witches obtaining the belongings of the afflicted to curse them (the wax pictures perhaps substitute for that), but there is a heavy stress on giving charmed items to the afflicted (apples, dishes and the like). Other aspects of Bernard's recommendations are missing. There is no sign in the evidence, for example, that he carried out Bernard's injunction 'to search the house diligently, for pictures, or powders, bones, knots, pots or places where their spirits may be kept, ointments, and for haire cut, books of witchcraft or charmes and such like' (though of course such searches may have occurred and proved nothing, or merely not be reported), nor of Bernard's notion of examining 'the suspected witches whole family', except perhaps in the examination

of three people called Green at Brewham (two were sisters-in-law; the third's relationship is unclear). Nor does Hunt comment much on the women's behaviour under examination, including whether they 'can be brought to shed teares', although he does note Style's response to the accusation by Vining at Wincanton on 26 January which led to her first partial confession, which may be seen to fit Bernard's prediction of 'downe-cast looks, feare, doubtfull answers' though there is no sign of the rest of his list ('varying speeches, contradictions, cunning evasions, their lying or defending of this or that speeche and deede, or excusing the same').<sup>127</sup> But here again, the nature of the evidence may elide such aspects: Hunt and Glanvill were interested in reporting the finalised confessions, as statements of what the witches had done, not tracing the process which had led to them or their individual responses to accusation.

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The other possibility is that the more diabolical aspects of these cases were introduced neither by Hunt nor by those accused, but by other educated people interested in witchcraft. If we abandon the assumption of Hunt the witch-hunter as the person driving the whole process, we can ask whether there might be any other people who might provide such connections, and who might posit a conspiracy of witches. Can we relate these cases to the other witchcraft episodes which attracted educated attention in the region? As we have seen, Hunt's cases were in a region of Somerset that bordered on both Wiltshire and Dorset, and among families with lands and relations spread across these counties. This area threw up a number of episodes in this period, some reported in *Saducismus* itself (as well as those discussed below, these include the ghost of Major Sydenham of Dulverton and a poltergeist case at 'Old Gast's house' at Long-Burton in Dorset).<sup>128</sup> We have already noted the possible impact of the 1659 Sherborne case. Connections between these stories may suggest that other educated people not identified by Hunt or Glanvill may have provided links between these episodes and encouraged those involved to see them as part of wider movements, even conspiracies, of demonic witches, not simply individual women carrying out maleficia on neighbours.

Three Wiltshire cases may have a particular bearing on the 1665 case in Somerset. The first chronologically is the 1653 case that led to the execution of Anne Bodenham of Fisherton Anger, a suburb of Salisbury, recently studied by Malcolm Gaskill.<sup>129</sup> The second is the Drummer of Tedworth episode in 1662/3. Finally, there is a 1674 ghost story,

in which a Marlborough man meets the spectre of his father-in-law, who confesses to a murder he committed many years before. The evidence linking these episodes with each other and with the 1665 cases is, admittedly, circumstantial, but there is enough to suggest that stories about such matters were circulating among educated people in the region and, in the Tedworth case, to suggest some people who may have connected them to the 1665 episode.

In the Bodenham case (quoted extensively by Henry More in his early *Antidote against Atheism*) the main protagonist, aside from Bodenham herself, was a maid-servant called Anne Styles, who worked for the family of Richard Goddard (c. 1590–1666, a lawyer and royalist, and later recorder and MP for Winchester in 1661) in Salisbury. Anne acts as a messenger as the family repeatedly consult Bodenham, a cunning woman, on a range of family issues, but then, by her own account, makes a compact with the devil using a book of Bodenham's. When she is later arrested, having been dismissed by the family and left Salisbury, she falls into a series of fits and accuses Bodenham, neatly turning the focus of attention and accusation from herself to Bodenham and ending up as the star witness in the assize trial against her, sympathetically portrayed in the lengthy pamphlet on the case written by a local court clerk, Edmund Bower (a Dorset lawyer from near Shaftesbury).<sup>130</sup>

The possible link between this and the other cases lies in the names Styles and Goddard. Elizabeth Style was the first witch accused in 1665 and, as we have seen, one source refers to her brother and sister at 'Shasbury' who have the names of many other witches; if Shasbury is a mistake for Salisbury (rather than Shaftesbury; remembering that the editor transcribes Hunt as Stunt), then could this sister be Anne Styles?<sup>131</sup> Meanwhile the name Goddard recurs in the 1674 case, in which a Marlborough shopkeeper, Thomas Goddard, is approached by the ghost of his late father-in-law (Edward Aven) to confess a murder he had committed many decades earlier.<sup>132</sup> Given that Thomas was travelling to Ogbourn at the time, he was probably a relative of Edward Goddard of Ogbourne St Andrew, who was MP for Marlborough in the first Exclusion Parliament: it is unclear how, if at all, they were related to the Richard Goddard of 1653.<sup>133</sup> One of the witnesses to the accuracy of Goddard's report was the rector of St Peter's Marlborough, Joshua Sacheverell, son of the ejected curate of Wincanton discussed above. A summary of the Goddard case forms 'relation IX' of the second part of *Saducismus*.<sup>134</sup> From More's discussion of the case we learn that the story had been reported to Glanvill by a 'Mr S.', who knew Goddard, and that Goddard 'was a constant frequenter of the church, till about a year

before this happened to him, he fell off wholly to the non-conformists', suggesting that Glanvill's correspondent was Sacheverell himself. In 1716 the case was reprinted in *The Drummer of Tedworth*, with the editor noting that it was 'attested before Dr [i.e. Henry] Sacheverell's father who, though a very low churchman and son of Mr Sacheverell a Puritan minister of Wimborne, was an honest modest man'.<sup>135</sup> It is possible that lawyers like Bower or divines like the Sacheverells were discussing and spreading ideas about such cases across the region.

This brings us to the most famous case, the Drummer of Tedworth, reported by Glanvill first in *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (1668) and then in revised form in *Saducismus*. This was the episode which first got Glanvill involved in the supernatural, as he rode over Salisbury Plain due east from his recently acquired living at Frome Selwood in Somerset (obtained in November 1662 by the patronage of Sir James Thynne and held until July 1672, when it was exchanged for Street and Walton, another living in the gift of the Thynnes; he was also rector of Bath Abbey from June 1666) to the hamlet of North Tidworth (its modern name) on 20 January 1663. There he witnessed a range of poltergeist phenomena at the house before riding back, a journey during which his horse behaved strangely and then died on his return.<sup>136</sup> It seems likely that Glanvill would have discussed this with his friend Hunt ahead of the 1665 episode, no doubt leading Hunt to tell him about the 1658 case in which he had been involved. Interestingly the account of the Drummer in *The Certainty of the World of Spirits* (1691) by Richard Baxter (a regular correspondent of Glanvill) is immediately preceded by an account given to Baxter himself in London by 'an ancient understanding pious and credible man of Ilchester in Somersetshire' who had received 'diverse sensible molestations by the Devil as he lay awake in his bed' and a blow in his face in daytime from the devil.<sup>137</sup>

There are also other connections between the Tedworth case and those in 1665. John Mompesson, whose house was affected in 1662–3, was the cousin of Sir Thomas Mompesson (1630–1701), and Michael Hunter has shown that Sir Thomas was heavily involved in the incident, writing a crucial letter to John which helped to shape how John understood and responded to the case. Sir Thomas Mompesson had also spread news of the case to others, including another Wiltshire landowner, the then secretary of state Sir Edward Nicholas. It therefore seems significant that another Thomas Mompesson (born c. 1634), of Corton in Wiltshire, owned property in Brewham, one of the parishes in the 1665 case, and was married to the daughter of Sir Hugh Wyndham, who had bought the manor of Stoke Trister from the Earl of Pembroke in 1652.



His younger brother, Henry Mompesson (born c. 1636, and sheriff of Somerset in 1698), lived in Batcombe, Richard Bernard's parish, also in the affected area of Somerset. The Mompesson family (notably Sir Giles, the notorious patentee and uncle of Sir Thomas) had been amongst the courtiers profiteering from deforestation in this region against whom so much local rage had been expressed. The misfortunes of the Tedworth Mompessons must surely have been discussed extensively in the area affected in the years before 1665.<sup>138</sup>

Glanvill had visited Tedworth with 'Mr Hill' from Somerset, 'a very sober, intelligent and credible person'.<sup>139</sup> It is impossible to identify Hill given the commonness of the name.<sup>140</sup> However, it was Richard Hill of Stoke Trister, yeoman, who was the first to complain against Elizabeth Style for harms caused to his 13-year-old daughter in 1665. A later Somerset case, tried before Lord Chief Justice Holt at Taunton Assizes in April 1690, involved accusations by an 18-year-old girl, Mary Hill of Beckington, just outside Frome, against three women, Elizabeth Carrier, Margery Coombes and Ann More (Coombes died in prison; the others were acquitted). The case was reported widely, with the full support of the rector of Beckington, May Hill (who does not appear to have been related to the girl, though he eventually took her into his house, where she recovered, so that by April 1691 she was 'in good health and fit for a service'). May Hill was introduced to Glanvill's correspondent Richard Baxter, showed him exhibits from the case and gave him 'the case in writing' dated 4 April 1691, which Baxter published as chapter 3 of his *Certainty of the World of Spirits*. However, a 1689 pamphlet on the case, also endorsed by May Hill, contains many details omitted by Baxter, covering not only the sufferings of another supposed victim, an 18-year-old man called William Spicer, but also graphic details of the multiple swimmings of an old woman (Carrier) suspected as the witch after she had been searched for marks.<sup>141</sup>

Glanvill reports that his friend Hill was discussing the Tedworth case with 'one Compton of Summersetshire, who practiseth Physick, and pretends to strange matters', who was a stranger to Hill and his wife. 'The Physician told him, he was sure it was nothing but a rendezvous of witches and that for an hundred pounds he would undertake to rid the house of all disturbance.'<sup>142</sup> He then took Hill, who was sceptical, aside into a separate room and showed him, in a looking glass, 'the exact image of his wife in that habit which she then wore, and working at her needle in such a part of the room (there represented also) in which and about which time she really was as he found upon enquiry when he came home'.<sup>143</sup> Compton 'was by all accounted a very odd person'

according to *Saducismus*; the 1668 version had added 'among his neighbours; and not only the credulous and easie vulgar suspect him; but even those of more sense and judgment'.<sup>144</sup> It is not possible to identify him, although a Francis Compton gentleman of East Pennard, near Ditcheat, is recorded in 1680, and three Comptons (Bernard, Henry (who also paid a subsidy there in 1641) and Joseph), signed the Protestation Oath in 1641 at East Pennard (and a Ferdinand Compton in nearby Pilton), so he was probably from this family, who may have been related to various minor gentry families of Compton in Somerset at Sutton Bingham (south of Yeovil) or near South Petherton.<sup>145</sup>

*Saducismus* continues: 'The same man we shall meet again in the story of the witchcrafts of Elizabeth Style, whom he discovered to be a witch by foretelling her coming into an house and going out again without speaking'.<sup>146</sup> One of the witnesses in 1665, Richard Vining, a butcher of Stoke Trister, reported that around Christmas 1662/3 (i.e. at the very time of the Tedworth affair) he 'went to one Mr Compton who lived in the parish of Ditch-Eate' (noted in *Saducismus* to be 'the same who showed a person his wife in a glass, as I have related in the story of Mr Mompesson') 'for physick for his wife'. Compton told him that 'he could do her no good for that she was hurt by a near neighbour, who would come into his house and up into the chamber where his wife was, but would go out again without speaking' (which Style then did), after which his wife remained ill until Easter 1663 and then died.<sup>147</sup> Compton, who seems to have been acting as much as a cunning man as a physician, could therefore have been acting as an intermediary, spreading news and fears about witchcraft. As we have seen, several of the other witnesses (recorded in Barnes) referred to consulting 'physicians' who claimed the case was not natural or 'bad neighbours' were to blame, and it seems likely that Compton may have been involved in those cases as well.

Crucially, the word Compton used for the witches' meeting in the Tedworth case, 'rendezvous', was also the term used by Sir Thomas Mompesson in his letter to his cousin, which Michael Hunter has noted was picked up in John Mompesson's account of the event.<sup>148</sup> Maybe this was a common term for such witches' meetings at the time (though a search of EEBO from 1640 to 1670 has revealed no other usages of the term in relation to witches), but possibly Compton had been in contact with Sir Thomas and suggested the idea to him using this term (though that would have been in November 1662, well before Glanvill's visit). Alternatively, Compton may have known the 'drummer' of Tedworth himself, William Drury of Uffcott in Wiltshire, who had once worked

for a vicar at Berwick Bassett who practised magic using 'gallant books' from which Drury had learned to tell fortunes.<sup>149</sup> As we have seen, Glanvill used the term 'rendezvous' in 1666 for the witches' meetings, although in the Hunt accounts in Barnes and *Saducismus* they are referred to simply as 'meetings' in all the evidence. However, in W.L.W.'s text Style is reported as saying 'if she could speak w[i]th her brother and sister at Shasbury, they could tell her of more witches than she knew, who had sealed but had not yet been at any randvoes' and again 'that a man in black did usually appear to the sayd Eliz. Style, Alice Duke and Anne Bushop, when they did meet at their randevouse'. This may suggest that, although Hunt himself did not pick up on the terminology of 'rendezvous', this was a distinctive term circulating the area, perhaps through Compton's influence, to characterise witches' meetings.<sup>150</sup>

If so, one wonders whether it might point to another source for the notion of collective meetings, namely the experience of the civil wars, within which the term rendezvous would have become normal parlance. At this time the term, while applicable to any kind of pre-appointed meeting, was most often used in military or naval contexts ('a place where souldiers are mustered' is the only definition in Edward Phillips, *The New World of English Words*, 1658) although it also had a significant association with conspiratorial meetings, including those of a religious nature. In 1653 Francis Higginson had attacked northern Quakers for the outdoor 'places of their randevous' such as mountain-sides, before going on to question their habit of night-time meetings or 'dark assemblies'.<sup>151</sup> Equally it seems likely that the protesters meeting to attack enclosures in the forests might have called their gatherings rendezvouses.

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In short, it is entirely possible that, far from Hunt being a lone zealot pursuing witches across Somerset, he was actually responding to stories of witchcraft being spread by clergymen like Glanvill and Sacheverell, gentlemen like Hill, lawyers like Bowyer and unorthodox physicians like Compton, who was acting like a cunning man spreading fear of witches. When Hunt then investigated maleficial accusations in his role as a justice, he may have drawn on Bernard's work to direct his examinations, and in asking about witches' night-time meetings he may have found those he examined drawing upon a range of associations to flesh out their vision of where and in what form they might have met the devil. Judging by his letters, however, Hunt himself continued to see

witches, even those who afflicted his own daughter, as malevolent evildoers who, like all the other criminals with whom he dealt daily, needed to be kept under control by the dutiful magistrate. If his experience in 1665 prevented him from pursuing witches again (and this is mere supposition), then he probably did not miss the hunt.

# 3

## The Trial of the Bideford Witches

Undoubtedly the best-known of all the witchcraft cases considered in this book is the trial of the three Bideford witches (Temperance Lloyd, Mary Trembles and Susanna Edwards), hanged at Exeter on 25 August 1682 following a trial at the summer assizes for Devon. The prominence of this episode is partly due to the fact that it is the last clearly documented English case which led to executions: it is likely that Alice Molland was hanged at the same place three years later, but her actual execution is not confirmed, while no later executions were carried out.<sup>1</sup> In addition, this case is unusually well-documented because it was reported both by one of the assize judges, Francis North, and in three pamphlets (called hereafter, as explained later, the Collins, Deacon and J.W. pamphlets) and a ballad, themselves prompted (as one noted) by the unusual outcome: 'in regard we have had no conviction or execution of any witches for many years past'. No witch had been executed on the Home Circuit or the Middlesex Sessions since 1660, and only a handful elsewhere (the last known being at Chester in 1675), and there are no other confirmed executions on the Western Circuit from 1671, when records survive.<sup>2</sup> The Bideford witches, three elderly women, also represented (both at the time and since) archetypal examples of the witch: aged, female and poor, whose confessions fitted many of the classic images both of those who believed in witchcraft and of those sceptics who considered their convictions the result of delusion. Hence they have provided, and still provide, rich material for public representations.

This chapter will focus on the nature of those representations while also offering some archival evidence about the social context of the witches and their accusers and the political setting of the trial and its coverage. It draws on research into the Bideford context by Nancy Cooper and Peter Elmer: the latter's work is embodied in his introduction and

notes to the republication of the three main pamphlets in the fifth volume of the series *English Witchcraft 1560–1736*. Both these studies in turn draw on the pioneering work of the local historian Frank Gent, whose 1982 work, subsequently revised online and in print, has introduced the Bideford material to a much wider audience, providing an excellent summary of the case and much useful background information. This chapter was written before I was aware of the article by Steven Timmons on the case: I have indicated below where my interpretation differs from his important study. Another book on the case is in preparation by John Callow.<sup>3</sup>

There has been ongoing interest in the trial since the seventeenth century. By late 1683 the Massachusetts clergyman Increase Mather was aware that ‘no longer since than the last year, viz, on Aug. 25 1682, three women who were executed at Exon in Devonshire, all of them confessed that they had had converses and familiarities with the Devil’.<sup>4</sup> The whole of the Collins pamphlet was reproduced in Richard Boulton’s *A Compleat History of Magick, Sorcery and Witchcraft* (1715–16), and then again in John Watkins’ *Notes towards a History of Bideford* (1792), as well as in the early-nineteenth-century *State Trials*. While Boulton cited it as a proven case of the reality of witchcraft, to Watkins it typified ‘ignorance, prejudice and superstition’ with the ‘three poor friendless old women’ accused by ‘cruel ignorant neighbours’ becoming ‘the last sufferers under the abominable statutes enacted against the supposed crimes of sorcery and witchcraft’. As he thought ‘no unbiassed mind can believe that these poor wretches were guilty’, the informations against them being ‘too ridiculous to deserve serious consideration’ and their confessions self-contradictory, he surmised ‘they were insane before, or were frightened out of their senses by ill-treatment commonly used to persons so accused, or by the terrors of death’. Watkins’ indignation that ‘there was always some poor devil, either on account of an unlucky visage, sour temper, or wretched poverty; set up as an object of terror and universal hatred’ has been generally echoed (and often quoted) in subsequent accounts of the Bideford case, although in fact his phrase applied not to the 1682 trial but to continuing ‘very general’ belief in witchcraft ‘in this town and neighbourhood’ ‘till about twenty years since’ (i.e. c. 1772).<sup>5</sup>

Bideford’s subsequent historians have largely been content to follow Watkins, though sometimes adding material from the other pamphlets and ballad and incorporating local traditions, for example that the three witches shared a cottage in Upper Gunstone (burned down in 1894, but recorded in a drawing and photograph). The latest history, for example,

refers to the 'infamous episode' providing 'a sensation for the "foolish rabble"', suggesting that Temperance Lloyd must have been 'a little simple herself' for her confessions, but also accusing 'much of Bideford' of 'witchmania' in denouncing Trembles and Edwards on 'much exaggerated charges'.<sup>6</sup>

Much less reliable material entered the historical record through *Tedrake's Illustrated Guide to Bideford* (1894–5), which contains an extraordinary nine-page account of 'the last witches'. This denounces not only the 'Moloch of popular delusion', but also the role played by the clergyman, mayor and alderman in 'the last cruel act of a fiendish superstition' concluding that this 'pretty town' will always be remembered in history 'as the place from which were led forth the last victims to gratify the appetite of a degrading credulity'. These sentiments are perhaps not surprising, but to justify them the guide offers as historical fact a largely fanciful account of how the witches were accused and treated. This begins with the (real-life) mariner, John Coleman, observing the devil – as a little black man with a spiked tail and cloven hoof – coming out of the rectory and giving the witches an object to go in their 'crock' before vanishing, after which they summon up a tempest at sea and then continue the 'wild orgie' with a further charm to raise storms, both given in full alongside a passage from *Macbeth* which clearly provided the inspiration for the invented incantations. Coleman having found his wife ill and denounced the witches, they are all three dragged to the town hall 'amid the jibes and execrations of the assembled populace', where 'a tall woman rushed from the crowd, caught hold of the skinny wizened arm of the poor crone and with a bodkin tore the flesh down its full length until the blood trickled in a stream. A yell of delight from the lookers-on followed the deed'. A fanciful account of the town-hall interrogations includes a large raven flying against the windows, further arousing popular terror. The transfer of the questioning to the parish church is elaborated with an account of a preliminary procession seven times around the church, the singing of the *Te Deum* and *Miserere* and other gothic details, concluding: 'Thus on the very altar dedicated to the religion of love and charity, its beauty and power were marred by an act of cruel injustice blinded by the darkest superstition'.<sup>7</sup>

As we shall see, none of these details have the slightest warrant in the historical record (not least because Trembles and Edwards were not arrested until Lloyd had been sent to Exeter gaol), but some of them, at least, have made it into subsequent histories. For example a 1985 history, published by Phillimore, quotes the first part of Coleman's

account from the *Guide*, including one of the witches' incantations. It also reports that Lloyd 'earned a few pence in summer by selling apples in town and many parents forbade their children to buy her fruit lest the old crone put the evil eye on them': we know only that she sold apples and that one mother took the apple her child had taken away from her, so angering Lloyd.<sup>8</sup> It is clear, in short, that Shakespeare, even Disney, has done much to shape modern images of the witches.

The story has also attracted literary accounts. A dramatised account of the 'trial of Temperance Lloyd, Susanna Edwards and Mary Trembles for practising witchcraft at Bideford' was written by Bruce Seymour in 1938 and survives in the North Devon Athenaeum. The following year the BBC Home Service broadcast a feature, produced by Francis Dillon (who later edited BBC's *Countryside Magazine*), on the trial, with all the Devon parts played by Devon people, which covered first the depositions 'before the Court of Inquisition held in Bideford Town Hall', then the sentencing of the witches at the end of the trial in Exeter, and finally the scene on the way to the Heavitree gallows.<sup>9</sup> In the last six years, there have been at least three further dramas involving the Bideford witches. In July 2005 the Shake-scene players put on *Possession: Macbeth*, which 'infuses Shakespeare's *Macbeth* with historical accounts of the 1680s Bideford Witch Trials... so that the connection can be made between Shakespeare's witches and Exeter's notorious three, the last to be executed for witchcraft in England', with performances in a nightclub 'in the actual authentic site in which these women were imprisoned'. The following August, BBC Radio Devon broadcast a play, *The Witches of Bideford*, by Heidi Stephenson, once again featuring local actors, and this time 'recorded on location throughout North Devon', including in the town hall and the parish church. In October 2008 (on Halloween, to be precise) South Molton's Assembly Room saw a staging of *Try the Witch*, exploring the history of witch trials, produced by Pastpresent of Torrington (a historical re-enactment group) and the Gateways Theatre of South Molton. The 'mock trial' was performed again at South Molton Museum on 20 March 2009 and involved the audience being asked to act as jury at the 1680 trial of a 'widow Jane Carter', 'who lived on her own growing herbs and treating people', so becoming 'vulnerable to public attention and opinion'. The publicity notes 'that period saw, among others, the Bideford Witch Trials (1682), which based on the beliefs of the time saw women burned or hanged, out of genuine public fear'.<sup>10</sup>

Not surprisingly, therefore, the Bideford witches have their own Wikipedia entry, offering a potted version of Gent's account, which has



also been the source for various recent journal and web articles on the case. Gent, a learning manager for the Workers Educational Association, also runs events about the trial: for example one held in October 2007 'as part of Halloween celebrations at Exeter Central Library'. On that occasion study of the historical record was combined with 'a spooky backdrop of skeletons, owls and witches' brooms', where 'attendees bringing their own Halloween pumpkin' could win prizes, in 'an atmospheric fun evening'.<sup>11</sup> It is perhaps a small step from this to their incorporation in media series such as *Most Haunted*, which came to Exeter in December 2008 'to check out the paranormal activity at the site of the 1682 Bideford witch trial', reporting 'many ghostly figures in the open courtyard', some of whom 'bring to mind the fates of Temperance, Mary and Susannah': 'three distinct figures have been seen swaying from the courtyard's gates: many conclude those hanging figures are the spirits of the three girls' (*sic* – apparently old women would make less interesting ghosts!).<sup>12</sup> More admirable were the efforts of those who set up a plaque by the castle, in 1995–6, commemorating the three (and Alice Molland), 'the last people in England to be executed for witchcraft, tried here and hanged at Heavitree, in the hope of an end to persecution and intolerance'. This plaque is reproduced on the website of an organisation ('Angels, the UK's largest Halloween retailer') seeking a government pardon for those punished for witchcraft in Britain, which has identified eight historical test cases 'that aim to remove the suspicion and fear that continued to surround these innocent women (and one man)', of whom two are Mary Trembles and Susanna Edwards (no reason is given for not including Lloyd!).<sup>13</sup>

Given this level of popular interest, it is perhaps surprising that there has been so little sustained analysis of the case by professional historians, though many have quoted documents from the case or picked out particular details. Recent attention, in line with witchcraft historiography, has largely focused on either gender issues or the legal aspects. Janet Thompson, studying witchcraft as part of a wider study of women in seventeenth-century Devon, built on Gent's study to argue that the case can illuminate general attitudes to women, and in particular 'the common level of sexual anxiety in Bideford in the late seventeenth century'.<sup>14</sup> Frederick Valletta has analysed the sex of witches and victims in Bideford, compared to other seventeenth-century trials, and explored aspects of the witches' confessions. He, like James Sharpe and others, have been particularly interested in the question of why the women might have confessed, and whether this reflects, as Sharpe suggests, 'the enthusiastic questioning of the mayor and justices of Bideford' and

'heavy local pressure against the women', or if their own beliefs can be identified.<sup>15</sup> Other historians have been more interested in the legal aspects of the trial, notably using Francis North's comments to consider the pressures on the trial judges. Some, for example Malcolm Gaskill and Gregory Durston, have focused on the evidential issues involved, while Ian Bostridge and others have explored the politics of the law.<sup>16</sup>

Stephen Timmons has offered by far the broadest account of the case, offering, like this essay, both a close reading of the texts it has generated and a wider view of the context of the trial in Devon's politics in 1682.<sup>17</sup> While I agree with many of his detailed interpretations (while challenging others, as noted below where appropriate), two aspects of his approach can be questioned. The first is that, despite identifying in the second half of his article that most of our surviving texts are heavily edited and quite possibly fictionalised, he uses their contents in the first half to establish the social and political course of the trial, without qualifying how far we can rely on them, and also he tends to 'rationalise' some of these texts without discussion, such as asserting that the witches' encounters with the devil as a black man are evidence that the witches actually engaged in prostitution.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, although his account admirably documents a conclusion I shall also reach, namely that both the case itself and the texts it generated reveal how 'different audiences could find comfort in finding the enemies of the body politic so handily dispatched' and 'different discourses fused together, providing satisfaction to varied sets of readers and authors alike', he ultimately prefers a much cruder emphasis on the value of the trials for Tories. 'Lacking high profile antagonists in Bideford and North Devon, the royalists turned on the three women accused of witchcraft... Tory politics... thus led to the execution of the three women .... The promise of witchcraft trials filled a political and religious niche for Tories... For Anglican Tories, the Bideford witches provided tangible and visible opponents to the Crown... opponents whom they could sacrifice in the name of judicial probity and religious correctness as well as political expediency'.<sup>19</sup> While this final comment may be true of the attitude of the judges to the execution of the witches, I do not believe that the evidence sustains the case that the Tories played any particularly decisive part in forwarding the case either in Bideford or Exeter, and I shall suggest that they were trying to keep the impact of the case under control, both in their actions and in their texts, rather than deliberately exploiting popular fears of witchcraft.

Clearly, then, the Bideford witches have been re-imagined (with more or less respect for the surviving historical record) over the centuries,

not least because of their (disputable) status as ‘the last witches’, or at least the last executed. However, it would be wrong to contrast their fluctuating historical treatment with some supposedly fixed historical ‘truth’ that we can obtain from the sources regarding the actual events of 1682. Instead, those historical records themselves are very partial, revealing the disputed character of what was happening at the time. It is much easier to document these partialities than it is to form any clear judgment on what actually occurred, and generally this chapter will focus on the former task. This will be done by looking first at the formal legal records of the trials, together with the assize judge Francis North’s comments on the case, and the surviving archival evidence regarding the accused and their accusers. In short, what could we know about this case if (like most trials) it had not been reported in pamphlets or ballads? We will then consider the main pamphlet, exploring how it is constructed, in particular how and why it adopted the format of reprinting a series of legal sources, together with reportage of the exchanges with the minister and sheriff at the execution. Next we will examine the other two pamphlets and the ballad, which can easily be dismissed as worthless pulp journalism, with no reliable historical content: is that correct, and even if it is, what can they tell us about what people were thought to want to know about witches in the 1680s? Finally, we will compare what this episode appears to have meant to those who presented it at the time, with the more recent understandings reported above.

\* \* \*

Starting with the legal records, we have a series of entries regarding the cases in the Bideford Sessions of the Peace book and the gaol books of the assizes. The spring assizes at Exeter on 5 April 1671 included the trial of Temperance Lloyd for killing William Herbert by witchcraft. She pleaded not guilty and was found innocent.<sup>20</sup> (In 1682, Lloyd was accused again of this murder by Herbert’s son, also William. She confirmed that she had earlier been tried for her life at the castle at Exeter but acquitted. One of the witnesses against her, we learn, had been Lydia Burman.)<sup>21</sup> Then the Bideford records state that on 15 May 1679 Temperance Lloyd was accused of witchcraft against Ann, daughter of Edward Fellow, Bideford’s gauger of excise, and searched on 17 May by Sisly Galsworthy and others, but no prosecution ensued. In the 1682 evidence this is confirmed, with the extra details that four women had searched her, but because the proofs had not been so clear Fellow did

not prosecute.<sup>22</sup> However, there was an important consequence of this case, because two of the witnesses against Lloyd in 1679 were Elizabeth Coleman and Dorcas Lidstone, and by 1682 Dorcas, now married to John Coleman, was a key figure, as we shall see.

Turning to 1682 itself, the Bideford records have four successive items on witchcraft between 5 and 26 July 1682, together with a footnote memorandum on the same page.<sup>23</sup> These records are clearly a neat record written after the event, most likely by town clerk John Hill. The first, on 5 July, reports informations and a confession by Temperance Lloyd of witchcraft on the body of Grace Thomas, for which she was sent by mittimus to gaol on 5 July, found guilty at the assizes held on 14 August and executed on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Then on 18 July confessions and informations were recorded for Mary Trembles and Susanna Edwards for witchcraft on the bodies of Grace, wife of John Barnes yeoman of Bideford, and Dorcas, wife of John Coleman mariner, for which they were sent by mittimus to gaol on the 19<sup>th</sup>, found guilty and executed like Lloyd. On 26 July there is then a further entry for Susanna Edwards, recording several informations against her for witchcraft upon the body of Dorcas Coleman. This seems to be repeating the 18 July material, but its purpose may be explained by the footnote memorandum, which notes that both Mary and Susanna had 'severally confessed' to the crime against Grace Barnes but that they could not both be indicted for the same crimes, so Mary would be indicted for the Barnes case and Susanna for Dorcas Coleman. Hence perhaps the separate recording of the Coleman case for Edwards on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Meanwhile, on 21 July the record notes, 'Mr Mayor's letter to Mr Hill the town clerk concerning Mary Beare and Elizabeth Caddie, with several informations ag[ains]t them. Ag[ains]t Mary Beare there was noe prosecution. But against Elizabeth Caddie (who was out upon bail) there was an indictment preferd by Mary Weekes, the wife of Robt Weekes of Bideford aforesaid gent, and by the grand jury returned with an ignoramus.' So, there were actually five women accused of witchcraft at Bideford in July 1682, and four of them were sent for trial at the assizes.<sup>24</sup>

If we turn to the assize gaol book we find no record of Elizabeth Caddie whatsoever, since those cases rejected by the grand jury were not recorded. As expected, we find Susanna Edwards accused of felonious 'witchcraft consuming the body of Dorcas Coleman', pleading not guilty but being found guilty. We find Mary Trembles accused of felonious 'witchcraft consuming the body of Grace Barnes', pleading not guilty but being found guilty. However, in the case of Temperance Lloyd we find two accusations. The second is for felonious 'witchcraft

consuming the body of Grace Thomas', pleading not guilty but being found guilty. But the first is for murder, 'bewitching Lidia Burman to death', for which she pleaded not guilty and was acquitted. It is not clear if the Burman accusation was part of the indictment sent from Bideford but (because she was not found guilty) not recorded in the Bideford file or whether it was a further indictment added while she was in Exeter.<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, Lloyd had not confessed to the Burman murder in her initial examination by the Bideford justices on 3 July; she confessed only the following day, both in the church and in gaol when pressed by William Herbert. It seems likely that she retracted this confession at the trial – at her execution, she insisted that Grace Thomas was the only person she had harmed.<sup>26</sup> Clearly the trial jury was capable of finding Lloyd innocent on at least one charge, just as the grand jury had rejected the evidence (whatever it may have been) against Elizabeth Caddie.

\* \* \*

This brings us to the question of what happened during the assizes trial. For this we are dependent on various reports by the assize judge Sir Francis (later Lord Keeper) North, and his brother (and biographer) Roger, who was also present. It is important to note that North did *not* try the case, since he handled the civil cases at that assizes, leaving the criminal cases to his fellow judge, Sir Thomas Raymond. Roger North does not appear to have been at the actual trial itself either, though he was in the courtroom the next day, and his accounts of the event, both in his own autobiography, *Notes of Me*, and in his life of his brother, were composed long after the event (the former in the 1690s, the latter in various versions until the 1720s) and contain several lapses of memory. The life refers to two old women being tried, and (in one version) 'they convicted them both, as I remember, but one most certainly was hanged'.<sup>27</sup>

Sir Francis North's letter to Secretary of State Sir Leoline Jenkins (a civil lawyer, but a trusted political ally of North) was written on 19 August, and it reported 'three old women condemned for witchcraft'. According to Raymond's account to North, they were 'the most old, decrepid, despicable, miserable creatures', such that 'a painter would have chosen them out of the whole country for figures of that kind to have drawn by'. 'The evidence against them was very full and fanciful but their own confessions exceeded it. They appeared not only weary of their lives, but to have a great deal of skill to convict themselves. Their

descriptions of the sucking devils with saucer-eyes was so natural that the jury could not choose but believe them'. Taken at face value, this report suggests a very different view of the trial from that contained in Roger North's later account, in which he implies that anyone of sense could have detected the weakness of the evidence and the mental incapacity of the women. However, it does not necessarily follow that Francis did not share this view, since in this letter he is not only reporting Raymond's account but is attempting to explain to Jenkins not only why the judges had (most unusually) allowed a witchcraft trial to end in a guilty verdict, but also, in particular, why they should not reprieve the witches. North goes on to tell Jenkins, 'we cannot reprieve them without appearing to deny the very being of witches', which would be 'contrary to law' and hence 'give the faction occasion to set afoot the old trade of witch finding that may cost many innocent persons their lives, which this justice will prevent'. It was easier for North to justify not granting a reprieve to these women, and so sacrificing them to save other lives, if he emphasised their responsibility for their own conviction and that, by the standards of the law as it existed, a guilty verdict was appropriate.<sup>28</sup>

By contrast, Roger North's chief aim in his accounts is to present his brother (and himself) as deeply sceptical about all witchcraft cases: the Exeter case is only one of a series used to illustrate this. As recently noted, the purpose of Roger's life of Francis 'was both to defend his brother and to present his life as in many respects exemplary'. Both men had played very controversial parts as lawyers central to Charles II's 'Tory reaction' in the early 1680s, including the attacks on corporation charters and the trials of leading Whig politicians and plotters. Both, as loyal Tory Anglicans, had disliked James II's pro-Catholic measures. Francis was saved from having to deal with this by his death in November 1685, but Roger continued to serve James, then became a non-juror (and legal advisor to the non-juring bishops) in 1689, retiring from public life, and devoting much of the rest of his life to defending the family reputation against ongoing Whig attacks. Furthermore, his memoirs, as published after his death, had been heavily edited by his son Montagu: only in the last 15 years have Roger's original texts been edited from the surviving manuscripts, showing that Montagu's version of Francis's life 'grossly distorts both the form and content of his father's version'.<sup>29</sup> Montagu had access to earlier versions of Roger's life of Francis and to Roger's autobiography, and he put material from these into his version. We have, therefore, to consider what I shall, for simplicity's sake, call Roger's and Montagu's versions of the life of

Francis, as well as Roger's *Notes of Me*, all three of which offer differing accounts of what happened in Exeter and other west-country witchcraft trials of the period. Previous historians have relied on Montagu's version, together with the later printed edition of Roger's autobiography; Timmons is aware of 'confusion' between the versions of Francis's life but does not use either version of Roger's autobiography, so this is the first account to compare all the original texts.<sup>30</sup>

Roger exonerates Francis from the Exeter executions by transferring all responsibility for the verdict to the other judge, Raymond, 'a mild passive man, who had neither dexterity nor spirit to oppose a popular rage, so they were convict and dyd' (*Notes of Me*). In Roger's version of Francis's life, 'his lordship's mind was disturbed...for fear the nonchalance of the other judg might give a latitude to the jury, swayed by the fury of the prosecution, which ever follows such poor wretches to their tryall, to condemne them'. In Montagu's version, 'he had really a concern upon him at what happen'd; which was that his brother Raymond's passive behaviour should let those poor women die'.<sup>31</sup>

The popular rage had also been reported by Francis in his letter ('I find the country so fully possessed against them'), but Roger goes much further. Montagu's version states simply, 'the city rang with tales of their preternatural exploits, as the current of such tattle useth to overflow. Nay they went as far as to say that the Judges horses were at a stand and could not draw the coach up the Castle Lane: all which the common sort firmly believed.' No such statement appears in Roger's version, but in *Notes of Me* he reports, 'The weomen were very old decrepit and impotent. And were brought to the assizes with as much nois and fury of the rabble against them, as could be shewd on any occasion. The story of their acts were in every ones mouth, and they were not content to bely them in the country, but even in the citty where they were to be tried, miracles were fathered upon them, as that the judges coach was fixt upon the castle bridg and the like. All which the country believed, and accordingly persecuted the wretched old creatures. A less zeal in a citty or kingdome, hath bin the overture of defection and revolution, and if these weomen [sic] had bin acquitted, it was thought the country people would have committed some disorder.'<sup>32</sup>

However, Roger also placed the blame for their fate on the witches themselves. In Roger's version, he states simply, 'They were two miserable old weomen, that one may say, securely as to sense or understand, were scarce alive; and as they verily believed themselves to be witches, tho they knew not what the word meant, as freely confess't

it, and according to his lordships' fears, and the old saw, confessing they were hanged.' Montagu's version was: 'The cases were so far clear, viz. that the old women confessed, and owned in court, that they were witches. These were two miserable old creatures, that, one may say, as to sense and understanding, were scarce alive; but were overwhelm'd with melancholy and waking dreams, and so stupid that nobody could suppose they knew either the construction or consequences of what they said.' He then reproved Raymond for not making 'nice distinctions as how possible it was for old women in a sort of melancholy madness by often thinking in pain and want of spirits to contract an opinion of themselves that was false, and that their confession ought not to be taken against themselves without a plain evidence that it was rational and sensible'. Instead 'he left the point upon the evidence fairly (as they call it) to the jury', who therefore convicted. This version seems to draw on Roger's *Notes of Me*, which stated, 'the confession of the weomen was mean and ignorant, the proceed of poverty and melancholy, and in the style of the vulgar traditions, of sucking, teats etc. It is not strang that persons of depauperated spirits should be distract in their minds, and come to a faith of meer dream and delusion; what hath bin the discourse of the sleepy chimney, with silent dull thinking takes place, as if the storys were realty, and then pride and self conceit translate all to their owne persons.'<sup>33</sup>

To stress the importance of the confessions, Roger had to play down the weight of the witness evidence. In *Notes of Me* he states, 'The evidence was only their owne confession, the rest of the stuff was all matter of fancy, as pigs dying and the like. I happened to take into my hand the file of informations taken by the justices and there saw one to this effect, that about twilight, the informant saw a catt leap in at one of their windows, and this informant farther sayth that he verily beleeveth the said catt to be the divell.' Roger's version has none of this, but Montagu's version dramatises it: 'All the rest of the evidence was trifling. I, sitting in the court the next day, took up the file of informations taken by the justices, which were laid out upon the table, and, against one of the old women, read thus. – 'This informant saith he saw a cat leap in at her (the old woman's) window, when it was twilight, and this informant farther saith that he verily believeth the said cat to be the devil and more saith not.'<sup>34</sup> Assuming that this 'information' is one of the depositions contained in the Collins pamphlet, it can refer only to one paragraph of Thomas Eastchurch's information of 3 July regarding Temperance Lloyd. In this Eastchurch is *not* reporting what *he* saw but what he heard Lloyd herself confess *she* had seen (as also reported



in her own confession to the justices the same day). What she actually confessed was that, after she and the devil had tormented Grace Thomas in her chamber at Eastchurch's house, she saw a 'braget cat go into the informant's [Eastchurch's] shop, but she believed it to be the devil'. So, what appears in Roger North's account as ridiculous actually made sense in the original, since the witch herself was identifying the devil as changing shape into a cat (in her own confession, she also reports seeing him again entering the same shop as a cat the next morning).<sup>35</sup> Whether Roger North ever understood this, or whether he had simply read the document too quickly to understand it properly, is impossible to judge, but clearly it suited his purpose to remember the evidence in this fashion.

In Montagu's version, Roger discusses his brother's role in witchcraft trials in the context of explaining how Francis liked to deal in detail with the evidence at assize cases, establishing precisely what he believed was true and then marshalling the case to persuade the jury (his 'audience') to accept his judgement. For this reason Francis hated cases in which there was a 'popular cry' and, if he was not very careful in how he opposed such views, the jury would 'conclude sinistrously and be apt to find against his opinion. And for this reason he dreaded the trying of a witch.' Such trials involved a 'popular rage' to put the witch to death, and 'if a judge is so clear and open as to declare against that impious vulgar opinion that the Devil himself has power to torment and kill innocent children or that he is pleased to divert himself with the good people's cheese, butter, pigs and geese and the like errors of the ignorant and foolish rabble; the countrymen (the triers) cry this judge hath no religion, for he does not believe witches; and so to show they have some, [the jurors?] hang the poor wretches. All which tendency to mistake, requires a very prudent and moderate carriage in a judge; whereby to convince, rather by detecting of the fraud, than by denying authoritatively such power to be given to old women.' Roger's version does not have this general discussion, but instead, in relation to the Somerset case discussed below, reports, 'the judg let the evidence drive, and examined to make the testimony (such as it was) clear, but did not huff at the pretence of witchcraft, for he knew the humour of the country people, who would say this judg hath no religion, for he doth not beleev witches so a poor creature must be hanged, to prove witches'. Similarly, in *Notes of Me*, he reports, 'the danger was with the jury who were ordinary men, who if they find an opinion against the being of witches are very apt to sacrifice a life to prove the contrary'.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the Exeter case, the Montagu version also discusses a case at Salisbury, and finally one at Taunton. The Salisbury case (surely relating to the trials of Elizabeth Peacock in 1670 and 1672) involved the judge, Sir Richard Rainsford, agreeing to gaol a woman even though she had been acquitted of witchcraft, because a JP, Sir James Long, complained that if she was released his 'estate would not be worth anything', only to complain the next year of the cost of maintaining her and ask for her to be moved to a cheaper gaol. This story does not appear in Roger's version, but in *Notes of Me* it reappears, but with much more overt criticism of Long, and ending 'such comedy will happen when men put on visors, either to conceal their ignorance or their knavery'. This fits with the overwhelming theme of this section of Roger's autobiography, which is the folly and ferocity of popular opinion, played on by both 'popish impostures' and 'sectarian impostures', cultivating 'the credulity as to witches and both triumph over satan, in their severall ways of exorcisation, and in the mean time hold the people deceived'. Roger assumes that 'the people must be deceived', so he hopes 'they fall into the hands of honest and good-natured deceivers, who seek the common good and not private interest'.<sup>37</sup>

Even so, the Long story seems a rather odd one to have remained in Roger's memory, but it perhaps gains significance if we note that, at the Wells assizes in 1679, which Francis conducted, Anne Rawlins, though acquitted of witchcraft, was confined in the house of correction until the next sessions.<sup>38</sup> In both these cases, as in 1682, it is clear that North and his fellow judges were willing to base their treatment of those accused of witchcraft, however innocent they thought them of the crime, on what best suited the needs of social order. In light of Francis's comment about not setting off the 'old trade of witch finding', this may mean that they feared that releasing (or reprieving) the witches might lead the people to take justice into their own hands and set off a worse panic. It is worth recalling that Francis had been brought up in Cambridgeshire on the family estates there during the 1640s, travelled the Norfolk assize circuit for many years and also served as MP for King's Lynn, so he would have been well aware of the East Anglian witch trials of the 1640s, fuelled by the witch-finding of Hopkins and Stearne, and doubtless he associated witch-finding with the Puritan and republican traditions to which the Norths were so passionately opposed. It is also worth noting that Francis and Roger North were generally highly critical of Sir Matthew Hale, who had presided over the hangings of witches at Bury St Edmunds in 1664 and Lancaster in 1666 and whose authority was regularly cited by those defending witchcraft trials: the Norths regarded Hale as a populist and anti-monarchist, and they probably thought his

willingness to countenance witchcraft typical of this failing, though this is not stated in their writings.<sup>39</sup>

The other case reported by Roger, an undated episode at the Somerset assizes (at Taunton, according to the two versions of Francis's life, but not specified in Roger's *Notes of Me*), is on the surface much more straightforward, as it neatly illustrates Francis behaving as a judge in the way he liked to do (and how Raymond had supposedly not acted in Exeter). In all three versions, Francis, convinced that the supposedly possessed young girl (aged 12 or 13) was a fraud, arranged his interrogation of the witnesses so as to avoid any appearance to the jury that he was trying to discredit the case, but he finally persuaded the magistrate who had indicted the accused to admit in court what he had already told North privately, namely that he thought he had seen the young girl smuggle into her mouth the pins which she had then ejected as proof of her preternatural illness. This convinced the jury, who found the accused innocent, and North was then thanked by the accused's mother.<sup>40</sup>

However, other aspects of the three versions are less straightforward. In both versions of Francis's life the accused is a man (or wizard), and this point is stressed. In Montagu's version he is an old man, and 'for the curiosity of observing the state of a male witch or wizard, I [Roger] attended in the court and sat near where the poor man stood'. In Roger's version the wizard is a 'hearty old fellow', and 'attendance at the tryall was notable as if they came to see justice done, that was, to hang up the poor old man'. Unfortunately, this does not fit with any of the cases conducted at the Somerset assizes from 1670 onwards (when Francis started attending the Western Circuit), as none of these involved a male defendant! Furthermore, in Roger's *Notes of Me*, we are told that the defendant was 'a young woman': in comparing the case with the Exeter one, he stresses that, whereas that case was the result 'of error and ignorance', this was 'of meer malice' (by the accusers), and 'here was a great cry and fury too, but not equal to the other [Exeter]'. Equally, there are significant differences in the account of the acquitted person's mother. In Montagu's dramatic version, 'a hideous old woman cried, *God bless your lordship. What's the matter good woman?* said the judge. *My Lord*, said she, *Forty years ago they would have hang'd me for a witch and they could not; and now, they would have hang'd my poor son*'. In Roger's soberer version, 'a wretched old woman cried, *God pless [sic] your lordship; above 20 years agoe they would have hanged me for a witch and becaus they could not doe that, they now would have hanged my son*'. In *Notes of Me*, we are told 'a wretched old hagg, the mother of this wench, cryd *God bless your lordship, they would have made me a witch 20 years agoe*'.<sup>41</sup>

In short, we have to be very careful about accepting at face value any specific statement in one of the North accounts. Not only may memories have faded or deceived, but the overall shape of each narrative determines what is reported. While it seems likely that the 1690s account in North's *Notes of Me* will be more accurate in recalling Exeter in 1682 (as it was in the Somerset case), it may also have been more affected by Roger's obsession with the threat of popular credulity, if played upon by faction and malice. Interestingly, however, this required less direct criticism of Raymond than the later versions, with their focus on Francis's legal acumen.

Equally, one may wonder whether Raymond was actually as 'passive' as reported by the Norths. One of the two short pamphlets about the case offers a rather different account. It is hard to know whether to give it any credence (as discussed below), and it may merely be a story recycled from another case. According to this version, all three women pleaded guilty (not what the legal record states, but in line with North's letter), but the judge, 'in his charge to the jury, gave his opinion that *these three poor women* (as he supposed) *were weary of their lives, and that he thought it proper for them to be carried to the parish from whence they came and that the parish should be charged with their maintenance; for that he thought their oppressing poverty had constrained them to wish for death;* whereupon several neighbours, who had been great sufferers by their diabolical practices, moved that if these witches went home in peace, none of them could promise themselves a minutes security, either of their persons or estates, and one of the evidence offering to prove one act of their witchery and alledging a door to be shut, one of the three cried out, that it is false, for the door was open; which tacitly implied that she was then an actor, and consequently convinced both judg [sic] and jury that she was guilty, and so the other two'. If correct, Raymond's initial approach here bears a notable resemblance to what Roger North reports that Rainsford and North had been doing at earlier trials.<sup>42</sup>

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Using the information contained in these sources, we would have the names of five witches accused at Bideford in 1682 (and Lloyd also in 1671 and 1679) and of seven people against whom they were supposed to have practised maleficium, as well as some other witnesses in the 1679 case. In many other witchcraft cases this would be the only information available to us, if we then sought other information about the parties in order to recreate the social relationships involved. What would we find?

Starting with the five accused, we can find nothing further about Mary Beare or Elizabeth Caddie, although a Susanna Caddy, widow, attended a dissenting conventicle in Bideford in 1674. For the three tried in Exeter, we know a bit more. All three were clearly elderly, according to the Norths. Temperance Lloyd was already a widow in 1679. Susanna Edwards was born illegitimately to Rachel Winslade in 1612, married Davy Edwards (d. 1662) in 1639, and bore him five children between 1641 and 1656: two of her daughters were themselves to have three illegitimate children, and the eldest, Unnis, was also accused of theft in 1659. So she was a 70-year-old widow in 1682. Mary Trembles, a single woman, was born in 1630 to a Bideford man (who died in 1671) – she was therefore 52 at the time of the trial. All three were clearly poor and received support from a local charity, ‘Andrew’s Dole’, with Lloyd and Edwards given relief in 1678, 1679 and 1682, and Trembles in 1680.<sup>43</sup>

As for those they were accused of attacking, the earliest, William Herbert, had died in February 1671, when he was a ‘husbandman’: his son of the same name was a Bideford blacksmith in 1682, but the father appears to have lived in Fremington (near Bideford) in 1671. Lydia Burman, who had witnessed against Lloyd in the 1671 trial, had died in May 1672. She was then a spinster in the employ of Humphrey Ackland, who served as Bideford parish clerk 1653–77, but she (or someone of that name) had also borne an illegitimate son in 1662. As for Ann Fellow, who died in 1679, we know only that she was the daughter of Edward Fellow (called either ‘gentleman’ or ‘Mr’), the gauger of excise in 1679, and his wife, also Ann. One of the witnesses against Lloyd in 1679 was Dorcas Lidstone. On 15 August 1680 she married John Coleman, a Bideford mariner, who was probably related to another of the 1679 witnesses, Elizabeth Coleman (née Pooley), born in 1631, who had married in April 1658 another John Coleman, probably the uncle of the mariner. Both were probably related to Grace Barnes, another of the supposed victims in 1682, as Grace, who married John Barnes, a Bideford yeoman, in 1663, was herself born a Coleman: she was to die only in 1713. Finally Grace Thomas, a spinster but called ‘Mrs’ in the records, was living with her sister Elizabeth, who on 5 December 1678 had married Thomas Eastchurch, who kept a shop in Bideford but is referred to as both ‘gentleman’ and ‘Mr’ in the records: Grace died in March 1686. Both sisters, Grace and Elizabeth Thomas, were listed as dissenting conventiclers in 1674, with their father, Christopher Thomas, ‘gentleman’. The other 1679 witnesses were the apothecary Oliver Ball, an Elizabeth Davie (perhaps related to the leading merchant and alderman, John Davie) and Sisly Galsworthy, who searched Lloyd’s body (she died in 1697).<sup>44</sup>

On this basis we might well conclude that the cases involved accusations from a series of well-established, if not necessarily leading, Bideford families (some of them related) against three poor elderly women (two widows, one aged 70, and a 52-year-old single woman), one of whom (Lloyd) had a long-established reputation for witchcraft. Timmons is therefore wrong to claim 'all the principals involved in the case, plaintiffs and defendants alike, seem to have been recent arrivals in Bideford' but probably right that the three accused 'fell into the poorest class of Bideford society'.<sup>45</sup>

How does the evidence of the pamphlets confirm or alter this impression? The Collins pamphlet contains very little further social information about the three witches, beyond their marital status. Lloyd is reported returning from the bakehouse with a loaf of bread to her own house and then meeting the devil 'near her own door'. When carrying broom (firewood from the bush of that name, not a broomstick!), the devil met her and said to her 'that poor woman has a great burden', but it is unclear in what sense the word 'poor' is used here.<sup>46</sup> Mary Trembles is reported standing at a door with a whitepot in her hands as if going to the common bakehouse, and again going towards the common bakehouse (carrying some meat) when she met the devil. On 18 May 1682 she had gone about town to beg some bread, and she begged for some meat but could get none. She then met Susanna Edwards, and they went together to the Barnes' house in the hope of getting some meat but were denied by Grace Barnes and her servant. Later Susanna sent Mary back for a farthing's worth of tobacco, only to be refused again.<sup>47</sup> The Barnes family suspected Susanna because she often came to their house 'on frivolous or no occasion at all'. Susanna supposedly promised Mary that by becoming a witch she would 'neither want for money, meat, drink or clothes', while when Susanna encountered the devil as a gentleman, curtsying to him 'as [she] did use to do to gentleman', she told him she was a 'poor woman' and was promised she would not want for 'meat, drink nor clothes'. This encounter had occurred when Susanna was out gathering wood: seeing a gentleman, she had 'hoped to have a piece of money of him'.<sup>48</sup> There is no evidence that the women lived together (or where they lived – Lloyd met the devil in Higher Gunstone Street when she was going home, but that street is not said to be her home) or that links Lloyd with the other two and their practice of begging, but Susanna and Mary's prior acquaintance and common poverty seems relatively clear.<sup>49</sup>

The other trial pamphlets speak a lot more about Lloyd; all they say about the other two (apart from the judge's supposed pity for their

'oppressive poverty' as quoted above) is that, though 'stricken in years' according to one, they were not as old as Lloyd. The Deacon pamphlet refers constantly to Lloyd's age, calling her eldest of the three (twice), the 'old hag', the 'old one' (twice) and 'old witch', while the J.W. pamphlet specifies that she is 70 years old, having been the 'Devil's slave' for 30 years. It also calls her a poor woman, earning her living by the sweat of her brows and carrying a burden of broom, and mentions 'her own poor habitation'. However, these details may be fanciful elaborations of references in the Collins pamphlet, such as the reference to broom at the execution scene.<sup>50</sup>

As for those afflicted, there is almost no further detail about them in the Collins pamphlet, except for information about their use of medical help during their lengthy afflictions. All three report the use of physicians (suggesting they were reasonably well off), and Grace Thomas, who had been ill since February 1680, had an attendant in her illness for the last six weeks at her lodging with the Eastchurches. When Lloyd meets her in the street, she calls her 'Mrs Grace'.<sup>51</sup> It seems unlikely that the other two pamphlets have any reliable information about the victims. Neither of them refers to Coleman or Barnes at all, perhaps because they are only really interested in Lloyd, who afflicted Thomas. The J.W. pamphlet calls her 'Madam Thomas' but thinks she is 'the wife of a worthy gent of Bideford' and portrays the 'gent and his lady in bed', also referring to Lloyd's 13-year torment of her, in which the physicians could be of no help, while Deacon's pamphlet calls her *Hannah* Thomas.<sup>52</sup>

All of these social details, of course, are given in the context of the requirements either of the legal process (and its forms of documentation) or of the pamphlet narratives. This may well mean that what they say (or do not say) is designed to fit with legal or fictional stereotypes. One example may be the claim of all three victims to have had lengthy illnesses and sought numerous remedies, including from physicians, before making a witchcraft accusation: this would clearly protect them from the accusation of rushing easily to blame the innocent (or of using counter-magic or consulting cunning folk to identify the witch). Their marital details and the occupations of the husbands or male relatives are elicited by the deposition process – they may or may not reflect the key social networks at play.

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To explore this further we need to look in detail at the structure of the three pamphlets. Timmons has offered a close account of these

texts, but I will offer my own, indicating where I differ from his interpretation. The Collins pamphlet is *A true and impartial relation of the informations against three witches, viz, Temperance Lloyd, Mary Trembles and Susanna Edwards, who were indicted, arraigned and convicted at the Assizes holden for the County of Devon at the Castle of Exon, Aug. 14. 1682. With their several confessions, taken before Thomas Gist Mayor and John Davie Alderman of Biddiford in the said county, where they were inhabitants. As also their speeches, confessions and behaviour, at the time and place of execution on the twenty fifth of the said month.* As the title suggests, the pamphlet, 44 pages long, consists entirely (apart from a preface 'to the reader') of 'informations' (i.e. witness statements) and 'confessions' (by the witches before the magistrates) as received by the Bideford mayor and alderman (who were the justices of the peace for the town), which take up 37 pages, followed by 'the substance of the last words and confessions of Susanna Edwards, Temperance Lloyd and Mary Trembles, at the time and place of their execution; as fully as could be taken in a case so liable to so much noise and confusion, as is usual on such occasions.' This is laid out as a dialogue between the three witches (first Mary, then Temperance, then 'Susan') and 'Mr. H.' (a minister), until the dying words of Susanna and Mary as they were executed, after which there is a final dialogue between Temperance and the sheriff.

The other pamphlets are both only eight pages long. The Deacon pamphlet is *The tryal, condemnation and execution of three witches, viz. Temperace Floyd [sic], Mary Floyd [sic] and Susanna Edwards. Who were arraigned at Exeter on the 18<sup>th</sup> [sic] of August, 1682. And being prov'd guilty of witchcraft, were condemn'd to be hang'd, which was accordingly executed in view of many spectators, whose strange and much to be lamented impudence, is never to be forgotten. Also, how they confessed what mischiefs they had done, by the assistance of the Devil, who lay with the above-named Temperance Floyd nine nights together. Also how they squeezed one Hannah [sic] Thomas to death in their arms; how they also caused several ships to be cast away, causing a boy to fall from the top of a main-mast into the sea. With many wonderful things, worth your reading.* The J.W. pamphlet is *The life and conversation of Temperance Floyd, Mary Lloyd [sic] and Susanna Edwards three eminent witches, lately condemned at Exeter Assizes; together with a full account of their first agreement with the Devil; with the manner how they prosecuted their devilish sorceries. Also a full account of their tryal, examination, condemnation and confession, at the place of execution: with many other things remarkable and worthy observation.*

The first pamphlet was printed in London by Freeman Collins, 'to be sold by T. Benskin on St Brides Church-yard, and C. Yeo Bookseller



in Exon. 1682'. The second was 'printed for J. Deacon at the sign of the Rainbow, a little beyond St Andrews Church in Holborn. 1682'. The final one simply states, 'London: printed by J.W.'. followed by a smudged date, which is usually read as 1687. This date is possible, as witchcraft cases were sometimes reported years later as if current. (At some date in the late seventeenth century a 'J. W. near Fleet Street', possibly the same person, printed an account of one of the 1645 East Anglian trials as if it had just occurred at Worcester assizes.) Timmons treats it as printed in 1687 and reads it as the product of the 'secular press' 'once the political and religious need to justify sedition had faded' and appealing to a 'broad diverse readership' in the context of royal toleration in 1687. I am inclined to think the date is wrong (or just wrongly read) and it is actually from 1682.<sup>53</sup>

Freeman Collins, printer of the first pamphlet, was the son of an Exeter clergyman (a cathedral prebend deprived during Parliamentary rule), who (with his regular partner J[ames] C[otterell]) printed a significant number of Devonian works in conjunction with Exeter booksellers from 1679 until the end of the century, most of them of Tory Anglican character (for example various sermons by Thomas Long of Exeter); in 1681 they had published *Separation convicted of profanation, oppression, persecution, rebellion, self-destruction and antichristianism* by Lewes Sharpe, rector of Moretonhampstead, for the 'booksellers of London and Exeter'.<sup>54</sup> The same political and religious stance is found in all the known publications associated with the Exeter bookseller Charles Yeo. In 1683 Collins printed for Yeo *An essay on hypocrasie and pharisaism, as it was set forth in a sermon by a curate of souls* and the following year *Pia fraus, or Absalom's theft being a sermon preached to a country-congregation on the thirtieth of January last, being the anniversary fast for the martyrdom of King Charles the First* by R[obert] L[awe].<sup>55</sup> Thomas Benskin, who was an active publisher 1680–5, appears to have published mostly Tory works, such as the plays of Aphra Behn, often with Daniel Brown. John Dunton noted (20 years later) of Benskin that 'he had no great estate to begin the world with, but his stars have been very kind and he makes a considerable figure in trade and has a general knowledge in books'. Dunton (a Presbyterian Whig) called Benskin a 'true son of the church [of England]', while Brown is called 'a sincere lover of the established church', though both are seen as moderates. This pamphlet was therefore produced by well-established printers and booksellers, of a moderate Tory and Anglican bent, most of whose publications were respectable sermons and books.<sup>56</sup>

By contrast, Jonah Deacon and J.W. (there are numerous printers with such initials) were publishers of short popular works such as

ballads, broadsides, chapbooks, and sensational pamphlets.<sup>57</sup> Jonah Deacon produced many broadside ballads, mostly dealing with courtship in a humorous fashion, and often with a regional setting, such as *The Taunton-Dean damosel; or a pleasant discourse between Nelly and her mother as they were sitting in a meadow of a May-morning* (1680) or *The West-Country counsellor; or the Devonshire damsels advice to the lasses of London in their choice of kind and loving husbands* (c. 1684), but he also produced political ballads, for example *The Whigg and Tory's friendly dialogue, or admonition to unity, as the greatest help and inlet to peace and quietness* (1682) and *The sorrowful lamentation of the widows of the West, for the death of their deceased husbands. Wherein they declare their hearty sorrow that ever their husbands was led away by fair words to this foul rebellion. Together with their kind advice to all people to be loyal to their prince* (1685). On 7 August 1682 he entered six titles in the Stationers' register, including several chapbooks and *Hocus pocus junior. The anatomy of legerdemain; or the art of juggling* (1682), a 64-page guide (based, ironically, on the account of conjuring given by Reginald Scot in book 13 of his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584)). There are no other identifiable witchcraft tracts in Deacon's name, but in 1690 he was joint publisher of a 24-page chapbook, *The first part of Dr Faustus, abbreviated and brought into verse*. While Deacon's political bent, if any, was clearly loyalist, it seems likely that he was largely interested in the Bideford case as a sensational story.<sup>58</sup>

Around 1688 the group of publishers to which Deacon then belonged (with Philip Brooksby, Josiah Blare and John Back) produced a ballad, *The undutiful daughter of Devonshire, or the careful, kind and indulgent fathers entreaties for her to forsake her lover a spend-thrift and to embrace a farmers hopeful son*. This has no obvious connection to witchcraft, but apparently a 1765 Philadelphia version embellished the story by claiming that the girl was from Bideford, bore a child to a Mr Lawrence there and was 'hanged for murder after a confession of witchcraft' and a 'learned Dr H...y discovered her witchcraft'.<sup>59</sup>

Either Deacon or J.W. may also have been responsible for the undated and unattributed ballad that does clearly relate to the Bideford case, namely *Witchcraft discovered and punished, or the trials and condemnations of three notorious witches, who were tryed at the last assizes, holden at the castle of Exeter; in the county of Devon; where they received sentence for death, for bewitching several persons, destroying ships at sea and cattel by land etc. To the tune of Dr Faustus; or, Fortune my Foe*. This tune was regularly used for ballads concerning executions and other tragic events. The ballad does not report the execution at all, indicating that it may

have been brought out after the trial but before the execution (as does such phrasing as 'they will now for their deeds pay dear' and 'while thus they lie, condemn'd for their wicked deeds to die'). Timmons points out significant similarities between the ballad and Deacon's text. But his suggestion that 'given the complexity of the pamphlet and the simplicity of the ballad, the possibility is more likely that the latter was based upon the former than the reverse' is outweighed for me by the evidence that the ballad was published before the execution, and hence before the pamphlet, suggesting they may both depend on the same source or author rather than the ballad being a shorter version of the pamphlet.<sup>60</sup>

A telling example of the differences between these accounts is their coverage of what the Collins pamphlet calls 'their speeches, confessions and behaviour at the time and place of execution'.<sup>61</sup> The Deacon pamphlet refers on its title page to their being 'executed in the view of many spectators, whose strange and much to be lamented impudence is never to be forgotten'. This phrasing leaves it unclear whether the unforgettable impudence is that of the spectators or the witches. If the former, then we learn nothing more. If the latter, then presumably it refers to the 'deportment' of two of them on the way. 'It is certainly affirmed the old witch Temperance Floyd was very obstinate and went all the way eating and seemingly unconcerned; but Mary Floyd [i.e. Trembles] was very obstinate and would not go, but lay down inasmuch that they forc'd to tie her upon a horseback for she was very loath to receive her deserved doom'.<sup>62</sup> There is no indication of this in the other two accounts, although the Collins pamphlet does begin with the minister, Mr H., addressing Trembles. However, according to the Deacon pamphlet, 'when they came to the place of execution they desired the minister to pray for them and that part of the 40th psalm might be sung, which was accordingly done, and presently the executioner did his office'. According to the Collins pamphlet, Mr H. prayed with them, 'whose prayer we could not take', then they 'sang part of the 40 psalm at the desire of Susanna Edwards', who then mounts the scaffold, saying, '*The Lord Jesus speed me; though my sins be as red as scarlet, the Lord Jesus can make then as white as snow; the Lord help my soul* and then was executed'. Trembles simply says, '*Lord Jesus receive my soul; Lord Jesus speed me*' before execution. Lloyd is then reported saying, '*Jesus Christ speed me well: Lord forgive all my sins*' but then has an exchange with the sheriff, before he asks her, 'do you believe there is a God?' and then 'do you believe in Jesus Christ?', to both of which she replies yes and,

finally, 'and I pray Jesus Christ to pardon all my sins'. The J.W. pamphlet, however, offers a different account of Lloyd. Ignoring the others totally, it reports her making a full confession then desiring 'all the spectators to take warning by her'. It reports that she requested of the minister that the 40<sup>th</sup> psalm might be sung, 'begged the prayers of all there present and [...] herself uttered a short prayer', which is then given in full. It reads like a prayer designed by the minister, beseeching God 'that this my late repentance may be true, and not too late', protesting she would lead a different life if she had 'my days over again' and 'my confidence is, that through the merits of my saviour, all my former iniquities shall be blotted out; which I begg for his sake alone, in whom I hope to find mercy'. Finally 'at the turning over, she said Lord receive my soul'.<sup>63</sup>

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The competition offered by the other accounts helps to explain the tone of the Collins pamphlet. Whereas the other versions offer their readers a very simple and moralistic account, the only editorial comment in the Collins version comes in the one-page preface, and even this makes no attempt to summarise or draw conclusions from the case. Instead, it seeks first to establish its own authority as an accurate account and then, very briefly, to justify the execution of witches. For the latter, 'if thou dost not believe the being of witches, study the sacred writ; consider that the wisdom of nations have provided laws against such persons', including the laws of Alfred and Edgar and the act of Parliament 'which hath provided punishments proportional to the quality of this offence', or, 'at leisure', consult King James' *Daemonologia*, fol. 91, and the late tryal of witches before the honourable judicious great man, Judge Hales. See also Dr More's learned discourse, entitled *Saducismus Triumphatus*, where the subject of witches and spirits is handled at large.' For the former, it asserts that 'this relation was written by a faithful and able hand, employed in taking the examinations and confessions' of the three women executed, and is 'the onely true, authentick and exact account; and that if any others creep abroad, they are lame and imperfect'.<sup>64</sup> As we shall see, it differs drastically from the two rival pamphlets in its austere presentation of the legal case. This may have been regarded as its best selling point, relying on the 'remarkable' nature of a witchcraft execution to attract its readership, without sensationalism, but it may also reflect a desire to dampen down any passions associated with the case.

It has generally been assumed that the 'faithful and able hand' must be that of the Bideford town clerk (since 1661) John Hill, who would have assisted the Bideford justices in their examinations: three of the documents in the Collins pamphlet state at the end 'examined with the original, whereof this is a true copy, John Hill town-clerk'.<sup>65</sup> Hill also compiled the entries about the cases in the Bideford Sessions book, as noted above. However, it is possible that Hill merely produced the documentation sent to the Exeter assizes and that the material was then passed to the publisher by someone else. There is no reason why Hill should have been in Exeter for the execution, and if he had been, he is unlikely to have been pleased with the major role played at the place of execution by the minister, 'Mr. H.' As discussed below, this must be Francis Hann, rector of Loxbeare (near Tiverton) from 1663 to 1691, a highly controversial minister, who was used by the rector of Bideford, Michael Ogilby (rector 1674–99) as his curate. Ogilby, from a Scottish noble family, was himself controversial (he was excommunicated in 1683) and highly quarrelsome, having engaged in a series of public rows with many of his parishioners. The first of eight articles against Ogilby in a jury presentment at the town sessions in 1680 was that he allowed Mr Hann and his son, both excommunicated persons, to preach and officiate in the parish church, and others recorded that Ogilby 'did say and utter many unbecoming words against [the bishop and cathedral clergy of Exeter] saying they should not order him to putt any curate into his church, and swearing oftentimes in a very profane manner that they were knaves', as well as being 'much given to raylings and vilifying the clergy in the county of Devon and magistrates of Bideford and also for being a lover of wine and strong drinks'.<sup>66</sup>

Another article was that on 8 October 1679 Ogilby 'did raile at Mr John Hill town clerke, as he was going out of the church and did bestow much unchristian language, holding out his staffe and threatening and assaulting him therewith'. This was perhaps because Hill, as a Tory Anglican, regularly reported on Bideford affairs to the bishop of Exeter and rejoiced in attempts (irregular and not very effective) to clamp down on the major dissenting congregation in Bideford.<sup>67</sup> This congregation had formed around the ministers William Bartlett (ejected as rector in 1662; died January 1682) and his son John (ejected minister of Fremington; died September 1679) and was reportedly attended by at least a third of the town, including numerous leading figures, such as John Gist (who was possibly brother of the mayor in 1682, Thomas Gist, who examined the witches). Agnes Whitefield, wife of the cordwainer John Whitefield, a friend of John and Grace Barnes and witness

in the case, was born Agnes Gist in 1634 and later served as a servant in John Bartlett's household, being named by his widow in her will of 1686. There is no direct evidence that Thomas Gist was other than an Anglican, but it is notable that his mayoralty involved a strong clamp-down on alehouses and other threats to moral order.<sup>68</sup>

Returning to the Collins pamphlet, the next feature requiring discussion is the ordering of the material. As Gent has made clear in his reconstruction of the case, the 1682 episode began with accusations against Temperance Lloyd on 1 July 1682, and by 5 July she had been sent to gaol in Exeter. There is no evidence that, during this period, any formal accusations were made against Mary Trembles or Susanna Edwards (or the other two women accused, Beare and Caddy). It was not until 17 July that Trembles and Edwards were arrested, following Grace Barnes' accusation against the former during her illness on Sunday 16 July. Yet the pamphlet begins not with the initial accusations against Lloyd, as one would expect, but with three informations related to the supposed harming of Dorcas Coleman by Susanna Edwards, all dated 26 July, the *final* day of the proceedings in Bideford.<sup>69</sup> The third of these ends with one of Hill's three statements confirming the accuracy of the copies. It is then followed by the various evidences against Temperance Lloyd, ending with another of Hill's statements, and then the remaining evidence against Trembles and Edwards, ending with Hill's third statement. This suggests that what has been printed are three sets of documentation produced and attested by Hill, relating to the accusations against each of the three. But why is the Coleman material regarding Edwards first? The most likely reason would seem to be that it reflected Hill's attempts to separate out the indictment against Edwards for harming Coleman from the initial indictment of both Edwards and Trembles for harming Barnes: as we saw, this required a separate entry and memorandum in the Sessions book, and Hill may have thought the clearest way to distinguish the cases was to place them apart in the file, with the Lloyd material in between.<sup>70</sup>

The documents regarding Lloyd begin with the information, deposed on 3 July, by Grace Thomas, whose severe illness on Friday 30 June clearly precipitated the arrest of Lloyd on 1 July, Thomas testifying that as soon as Lloyd 'was apprehended and put in the prison of Biddiford, she this informant immediately felt her pricking and sticking pains to cease and abate'. On 2 July (as she testified the next day) Anne Wakely (a husbandman's wife) 'by order of [the Mayor] did search the said Temperance Lloyd in the presence of Honor Hooper and several other women' finding two teats each an inch long 'in her secret parts',

'upon which this informant did demand of [Lloyd] whether she had been suckt at that place by the black man? (meaning the Devil)'. Wakely had been acting for the previous six weeks as Grace Thomas's attendant in her sickness, while Hooper was a servant to Thomas Eastchurch, Grace's brother-in-law, with whom she lived. When Lloyd was brought before the magistrates to be examined on the next day, the examination starts 'the said informant being brought before us by some constables of the said burrough, upon the complaint of Thomas Eastchurch of Biddiford aforesaid Gent. And charged upon suspition of having used some magical art, sorcery or witchcraft upon the body of Grace Thomas of Biddiford aforesaid spinster; and to have had discourse or familiarity with the Devil in the shape of a black man.' The other witness statements are those of Elizabeth and Thomas Eastchurch, on 3 July, and then a joint statement by both Eastchurches, Anne Wakely and Honor Hooper, on 4 July.<sup>71</sup>

Evidently the Eastchurch household was the driving and controlling force behind the prosecution of Lloyd, as Clive Holmes has noted.<sup>72</sup> This is particularly clear during the most unusual aspect of her examination, namely the questioning of Lloyd by the rector (Ogilby) and others in the parish church on 4 July. Not only is this occasion reported only through the sworn statement of the Eastchurch household as to what had happened, but also they had initiated the process 'with the leave and approbation of the said Mr. Gist the Mayor' and their main aim was 'because we were dissatisfied in some particulars concerning a piece of leather which the said Temperance had confessed of unto the said Elizabeth Eastchurch...conceiving there might be some enchantment used in or about the said leather'. On 2 July Elizabeth Eastchurch had noticed 'nine places in [her sister Grace's] knee which had been prickd; and that every of the said pricks were as though it had been the prick of a thorn' and so asked Lloyd the same day 'whether she had any wax or clay in the form of a picture whereby she had prickd and tormented the said Grace Thomas', to which Lloyd had answered 'that she had no wax or clay, but confessed that she had only a piece of leather which she had prickd nine times'. In the church on 4 July she confessed that she went into Eastchurch's shop 'in the form and shape of a cat; and fetcht out of the same shop a puppit or picture (commonly called a child's baby)', taking it to Grace's bed, 'but would not confess that she had prickd any pins in the said puppit or baby-picture, although she were demanded particularly that question by the said Mr Ogilby'. After dealing with other issues, they 'further demanded again in what part of the house of the said Mr Eastchurch, or in what part of the

bed whereupon the said Grace Thomas lay, she left the puppit or baby-picture above-mentioned', but Lloyd said 'she would not nor must not discover; for if she did discover the same, that the Devil would tear her in pieces'.<sup>73</sup> There are no mentions of such image magic in any of the other depositions (even though Dorcas Coleman and Grace Barnes both also suffered from similar symptoms), as in those cases the assumption is made that the witches were invisibly present with the afflicted, directly scratching or pricking them; this was also what Lloyd confessed that she and the devil had done.

However, if it was the Eastchurch household who dominated the process, once Lloyd was before the magistrates and 'had made such an ample confession and declaration concerning the said Grace Thomas', they 'were induced to demand of her [an interesting phrase, perhaps distancing the magistrates from what followed] some other questions concerning other witcheries which she had practised upon the bodies of several other persons within this town', at which she confessed to pricking William Herbert to death in 1670/1 and doing 'some bodily hurt' to Anne Fellow in 1679. In the church on 4 July, when Ogilby demanded to know 'how long since the Devil did tempt her to do evil', Lloyd confessed that 'about twelve years ago she was tempted by the Devil to be instrumental to the death of William Herbert', also causing the death of Anne Fellow; 'also she did then and there confess that she was the cause of the death of one Jane Dallyn the late wife of Simon Dallyn of Biddiford mariner, by pricking of her in one of her eyes, which she did so secretly perform that she was never discovered or punished for the same'. The Dallyns had married in 1656, and Jane had died in 1674.<sup>74</sup>

Finally she confessed in church 'that she did bewitch unto death one Lydia Burman' spinster 'because she had been a witness against her' at the Herbert trial 'and had deposed that the said Temperance had appeared unto her in the shape of a red pig at such time as the said Lydia was brewing in the house of one Humphry Ackland'. As we have seen, this accusation, unlike the others, was later made a formal indictment at the assizes. This may be the reason why the final deposition in the Lloyd series is that of William Herbert blacksmith of Bideford, son of the deceased William Herbert, made before the Bideford magistrates on 12 August, that is only two days before the assize trial. In this William claims that in prison on 4 July not only did Lloyd confess to killing his father, but when he then demanded 'whether she had done any hurt or harm to one Lydia Burman', she confessed having done so also, as well as causing the death of Anne Fellow and 'bewitching out one of the eyes' of Jane Dallyn. (It is not clear if this confrontation



was before or after the episode in the church – if it was before, it may have prompted Lloyd to confess there to the Burman and Dallyn cases, which she had not done to the magistrates on 3 July.) It seems likely that Herbert's evidence was thought necessary if Lloyd was to be tried for Lydia Burman's death: presumably she could not be tried for Herbert's father's murder again because she had already been tried for that in 1671 and acquitted.<sup>75</sup>

As noted earlier, there is nothing in the depositions against Lloyd to associate her with Trembles and Edwards. The only indications in the pamphlet that they were connected come in the dialogues at the execution. When the minister asked Lloyd if she ever 'rode over the arm of the sea on a cow', she replied, 'No, no master, twas she, meaning Susan. When Temperance said 'twas Susan, she said she lied, and that she was the cause of her bringing to die: for she said when she was first brought to goal [sic], if that she was hanged, she would have me hanged too; she reported I should ride on a cow before her, which I never did'. It is impossible to be sure which woman is speaking about which in this exchange, but in any case they seem to relate to further claims about the witches' activities that arose during their period in Exeter, not the Bideford evidence. The same can be said of the sheriff's reported statement that Lloyd was 'lookt on as the woman that has debauched the other two'.<sup>76</sup>

By contrast, the evidence against Trembles and Edwards is interlaced from the beginning. The first deposition of the third group in the pamphlet is that of John Barnes, Bideford yeoman, on 18 July, which refers to his wife's illness since 18 May, but in particular that she became worse on Sunday 16 July, when Mary Trembles was found outside the door. When Grace Barnes heard this, she said 'that she the said Mary Trembles was *one of them* that did torment her' (my italics). In Grace's own deposition, which is printed next even though it was not taken until 2 August (because she was too ill?), she reports that when 'some physicians' had told her 'about a year and a half ago' that her long illness was caused by witchcraft, 'thereupon she this informant had some suspicion of one Susanna Edwards' because she 'would oftentimes repair unto this informants husband's house upon frivolous or no occasions at all', before repeating the details about Trembles coming to the door on 16 July 'upon which this informant was fully assured that the said Mary Trembles, together with the said Susanna Edwards, were the very persons that had tormented her'. It is unclear if they were arrested together or not, but the next day William Edwards, blacksmith, claimed to have heard 'Susanna Edwards to confess that the Devil had carnal knowledge

of her body' and 'that she and one Mary Trembles...did appear hand in hand invisible in John Barnes's house...to make an end of her the said Grace Barnes'.<sup>77</sup>

By 18 July, when the two women were subjected to further questionings, both by the public (e.g. one John Dunning of Great Torrington) and by the magistrates at Bideford Town Hall (where Grace Barnes was brought to confront her supposed tormentors), they were both confirming not only that they had jointly visited Barnes to torment her, but also that they had worked together as witches. According to Joan Jones, a constable's wife, 'she did hear the said Mary Trembles to say unto the said Susanna Edwards; O thou rogue, I will now confess all; for 'tis thou that hast made me to be a witch, and thou art one thyself, and my conscience must swear it. Upon which the said Susanna replied unto the said Mary Trembles, I did not think that thou wouldest have been such a rogue to discover it'. Trembles' confession to the magistrates that day begins (when asked 'how long she had practised witchcraft') 'that about three years last past, one Susanna Edwards of Biddiford aforesaid widow, did inform her, that if she would do as she the said Susanna did, that this examinant should do very well', promising that she should 'neither want for money, drink, meat nor clothes' and only after 'she had made this bargain with' Susanna did the devil come to her. Edwards reported that she (Edwards) had had a direct encounter with the devil and 'that the said Mary Trembles was a servant unto this examinant, in like manner as she this examinant was a servant unto the Devil'.<sup>78</sup>

Certainly Edwards appears to have been the more feared of the two, not only by Grace Barnes since 1680, but also during the interrogations. Joan and Anthony Jones both testified that, in the town hall, Anthony had seen Edwards 'gripe and twinkle her hands upon her own body' and accused her, 'Thou Devil thou art now tormenting some person or other', causing her to be 'displeased with him' and tell him, 'Well enough I will fit thee'. When she later 'turned about and looked upon' Jones 'he cried out, Wife I am now bewitched by this Devil, meaning Susanna Edwards, and forthwith leapt and capered like a madman and fell a shaking, quivering and foaming and lay for half an hour like a dying or dead man. And at length, coming to his senses again' declared Susanna 'had bewitched him'.<sup>79</sup>

As already noted, the accusation that Edwards had also hurt Dorcas Coleman was very much an afterthought to the Barnes accusations. Joan Jones reported that Edwards confessed 'that she did prick and torment one Dorcas Coleman' and at the end of her confession the same day, Edwards, 'being demanded whether she had done any bodily hurt

unto any other person beside the said Grace Barnes, saith and confesseth that she did prick and torment one Dorcas Coleman'.<sup>80</sup> As noted earlier, Dorcas and Grace were probably related by marriage, and Dorcas must also have been agitated by the earlier proceedings against Lloyd, given that she had given evidence against her in 1679 for the murder of Anne Fellow, to which Lloyd now confessed. In her evidence on 26 July Dorcas states that 'when the said Susanna was apprehended concerning Grace Barnes' she 'did go to see the said Susanna ... in prison', where Susanna confessed she had bewitched her and desired her to pray for her. Whether this encounter had proceeded the 18 July confession is not clear. However, the Coleman family accusations report that Dorcas's suspicions of Susanna predate the events of July. Her illness had been going on since August 1680, and Dr George Beare had declared then 'that it was past his skill to ease her of her said pains; for he told her that she was bewitch'd'. Dorcas herself then reports 'that at the time of her tormenting pains' she 'did see her the said Susanna Edwards in her chamber: And that she this informant would point with her finger at what place in the chamber the said Susanna Edwards would stand, and where she would go'. Presumably this means that Susanna was invisible to other people, as otherwise it hardly seems noteworthy. Her husband's uncle, Thomas Bremincome, confirms that when Dorcas 'could neither see nor speak, by reason that her pains were so violent upon her, the said Dorcas would point with her hand which way the said Susanna Edwards was gone' and if he went out of the house he saw Susanna 'to go the same way that the said Dorcas did point with her hand'. However, both John Coleman and Bremincome also refer to an actual visit by Susanna Edwards, which Coleman dates 'about three months now past', when Dorcas was confined in her chair, 'speechless'. Bremincome reports that as soon as 'the said Dorcas did see the said Susana Edwards, she did strive to fly in the face of the said Susanna' but could not get out of her chair. While he and her husband tried to help her up, Susanna retreated out of the room and downstairs, while Dorcas 'did slide out of the chair upon her back' in striving to go after her. Gent plausibly suggests she was trying to scratch the witch as a counter-remedy: certainly Edwards can have been in no doubts about Dorcas's suspicions against her.<sup>81</sup>

Although there was no formal link between the Lloyd case and the others, it seems probable that the very public proceedings against Lloyd led the Barnes/Coleman family, who had long suspected Edwards of witchcraft, to make their suspicions public, just as (unknown) suspicions were aroused against Mary Beare and Elizabeth Caddie. Furthermore, there is a close similarity between the symptoms of witchcraft reported

in all three cases. Each of the afflicted had been suffering for at least two years from bodily pains involving 'very great pains of sticking and pricking in her arms, breast and heart, as though divers awls had been prickt or stuck into her body', as Grace Barnes put it, with continuous if intermittent attacks and occasional convulsions of various kinds. It also appears possible that around 1680/1 all three were told by physicians that their cases involved witchcraft. Coleman is specific that Dr George Beare (an Oxford graduate with a Padua MD, who had practised first in Exeter and then in Barnstaple) visited her shortly after her first attack in August 1680 and declared her bewitched.<sup>82</sup> Grace Barnes had been in pain for 'these many years last past, in so much that she hath sought out for remedy far and neer and never had any suspicion that she had any magical art or witchcraft used upon her body, until it was about a year and a half ago, that she was informed by some physicians that it was so'. Thomas Eastchurch 'supposed that the said Grace Thomas [whose illness began in February 1680] in her sickness had been afflicted through a distemper arising from a natural cause' and so 'did repair unto several physicians, but that she the said Grace could never receive any benefit prescribed by them', though he does not claim they ever suggested witchcraft.<sup>83</sup> Of course, in all three cases it suited their argument both to claim that they had tried natural remedies first, and (in two cases) that physicians had confirmed (or even suggested) their suspicions of witchcraft, but it seems unlikely that the Colemans would have named the prominent physician Beare unless there was some truth in at least that case.

It is much harder to establish how the parties understood the nature of 'the magical art or witchcraft involved'. As we have seen, the Eastchurches suspected some kind of image magic, with pins stuck into the image to cause the pains, while the others seem to have envisaged the witches using their hands, either at a distance or by visiting the afflicted invisibly, and it was this last method to which the witches confessed – whether this was because they themselves shared the same idea of how such harm might be caused or they were just going along with the suggestions made to them is not clear, but it is notable that Lloyd was willing to admit 'bruising' Grace Thomas with her hands, but not the use of image magic.<sup>84</sup> In the confessions of Edwards and Trembles there is no suggestion that the devil, demons or familiars play any part in the tormenting – they go themselves, invisibly, into Grace Barnes' chamber to prick and torment her with their own hands.<sup>85</sup> In Lloyd's case, she does report that the devil (or the black man) accompanies her into Grace Thomas's chamber, but on the first occasion she reports that it is she

who carries out the tormenting; on subsequent occasions on 1 June 'the said examinant did pinch and prick the said Grace Thomas (with the aid and help of the blackman, or rather the Devil) in her belly, stomach and breast; and that they continued so tormenting of her about the space of two or three hours, with an intent to have killed her', and on 30 June she and 'the said black man did torment her again'. Otherwise the role of the devil in Lloyd's account is of a tempter, even coercer, who persuades or forces her (sometimes with the use of force, striking her) to carry out her maleficia, not as the supplier of any supernatural methods.<sup>86</sup>

This raises, of course, the question of when and how the devil entered the cases. This appears to have happened through the searching of Lloyd for signs of a devil's mark. She had been searched in 1679 and was searched again on 2 July, ahead of her examination by the magistrates. As soon as Anne Wakely found 'in her secret parts two teats hanging nigh together like unto a piece of flesh that a child had suckt', each 'about an inch in length' she asked 'whether she had been suckt at that place by the black Man? (meaning the Devil)', at which Lloyd 'did acknowledge that she had been suck'd there often times by the black Man'.<sup>87</sup> There is no reference in the Bideford papers to either Edwards or Trembles being searched for marks, but at the execution, when Trembles is asked, 'have you a teat in your privy-parts', and she replies, 'none', the pamphlet notes, in editorial italics, 'The grand inquest said it was sworn to them', which implies that there was a deposition about marks in the evidence seen by the grand jury.<sup>88</sup> All three women confessed that the devil had sucked them. Lloyd said that 'the said black Man (or rather the Devil, as aforesaid) did suck her teats which she now hath in her secret parts' and later 'did suck her again as she was lying down, and that his sucking was with a great pain unto her'.<sup>89</sup> At no point, however, did Lloyd confess to having sex with the devil, unlike the other two. Trembles confessed that the devil had had 'carnal knowledge of her body' four times in all, the first when he came to her 'in the shape of a lion', 'and after that the Devil had had knowledge of her body, that he did suck her in her secret parts, and that his sucking was so hard, which caused her to cry out for the pain thereof'.<sup>90</sup> Edwards confessed that 'something in the shape of a little boy, which she thinks to be the Devil, came into her house and did lie with her, and that he did suck her at her breast' and another time met her in a lane, 'where he did suck blood out of her breast'. Joan Jones also reported Edwards confessing 'that she was suckt in the breast several times by the Devil in the shape of a boy lying by her in her bed; and that it was very cold unto her' and that 'after she was suckt by him, the said boy or Devil had the carnal

knowledge of her body four several times'. She also reported Edwards confessing 'that the Devil did oftentimes carry about her spirit', and Edwards herself confessed 'that she can go unto any place invisible, and yet her body shall be lying in her bed and further confesseth that the Devil hath appeared unto her in the shape of a lyon, as she supposed'.<sup>91</sup> This last comment is an interesting echo of Trembles' confession and may suggest that some biblical-minded individual asked them both if the devil came in the shape of a roaring lion (or perhaps one or both of them had this image in their own mind?).

However, the fullest accounts of the devil come in their descriptions of their first encounter with him. From Wakely's first question to Lloyd, the devil for Lloyd comes 'in the likeness or shape of a black man' – as we have seen the scribe has frequently to gloss this with such phrases as 'or rather the Devil'.<sup>92</sup> About 30 September 1681 she 'met with the Devil in the shape and likeness of a black man' mid-afternoon in Higher Gunstone Lane, where he 'did tempt and sollicite her to go with him' to torment Grace Thomas.<sup>93</sup> When she confesses to the earlier murders, that of William Herbert is 'by the perswasion of the black man' and of Ann Fellow 'that the said black man or Devil (or some other black man or Devil) with her this said examinant did do some bodily hurt'.<sup>94</sup> At no point does Lloyd refer to a compact or any worship of the devil, though she does refer to kneeling down to him in the street (when he sucked her).<sup>95</sup> However, she confesses that he promised 'no one should discover her' (Thomas Eastchurch also reports her saying the 'black man' promised her 'no one should discover her or see her').<sup>96</sup> She tells Ogilby, who asks her 'how long since the Devil did tempt her to do evil' that it 'was about twelve years ago she was tempted by the Devil to be instrumental to the death of William Herbert' and 'the Devil did promise her that she should live well and do well'.<sup>97</sup> When Herbert's son asks her why she did not confess to the Herbert and Burman murders when 'in prison last time? She answered, that her time was not expired; For the Devil had given her greater power, and a longer time'.<sup>98</sup>

However, Lloyd's devil is not simply a black man. 'Being demanded of what stature the said black man was, saith, that he was about the length of her arm; and that his eyes were very big; and that he hopt or leapt in the way before her'.<sup>99</sup> Eastchurch reports her saying, about the same meeting with him: 'that he had blackish clothes, and was about the length of her arm. That he had broad eyes and a mouth like a toad, and afterwards vanisht clear away out of her sight'.<sup>100</sup> If this suggests a toad or other animal familiar, rather than a man, then we also have several references by Lloyd to the devil turning into 'the form or shape of a

grey or braget cat', going in and out of Eastchurch's shop. In the church interrogation, this mutates into Lloyd confessing that she herself went into the shop 'in the form and shape of a cat'.<sup>101</sup> That Bideford people thought of the devil in animal form as well as a black man is also suggested by Anne Wakely's question to Lloyd on 2 July as to what she knew about a magpie which Wakely had seen fluttering at Grace Thomas's window on 29 June, 'upon which question the said Temperance did then say, that it was the black man in the shape of the bird'.<sup>102</sup>

If Lloyd's devil was primarily a black man, Edwards' devil was a gentleman, and her questioners found it hard to get her to refer to him otherwise, just as Lloyd's did. Although we have seen her refer to sex with 'a little boy', and perhaps to refer to the devil as a lion, her initial encounter is with 'a gentleman in a field called the Parsonage Close' whose 'apparel was all of black'. She 'did make a curchy or courtesie unto him, as she did use to do to gentlemen', hoping 'to have a piece of money of him'. The examination then notes, 'Being demanded what and who the gentleman she spake of was, the said examinant answered and said, that it was the Devil'. The 'Devil in the shape of the Gentleman' then establishes that she is a poor woman and tells her if she 'would grant him one request, that she would not want for meat, drink nor clothes', but when she replies 'unto the said gentleman (or rather the Devil), In the name of God, what is it that I shall have ... the said gentleman vanished clear away from her'. Later she calls herself 'a servant unto the Devil (whom she called by the appellation of a gentleman as aforesaid)'.<sup>103</sup> One is tempted to wonder if Edwards' gentleman in black, met in Parsonage Close, might be modelled on the town's black-robed parson, the notorious Mr Ogilby. Ogilby's aristocratic connections in Scotland had given him a post as a chaplain in ordinary to Charles II, and within a year of his arrival at Bideford he had 'repaired, beautified, new built' the parsonage house and added 'new made gardens'.<sup>104</sup> But perhaps her equation of devil and gentleman just reflected her broader sense of social injustice. Once again, there is no compact with the devil, let alone worship of him. Indeed, ironically, the only mention of a compact is the 'bargain' made by Trembles with Edwards (according to Trembles) in which she agrees to do as Edwards did, on the promise that 'she should do very well' and 'neither want for money, meat, drink nor clothes'.<sup>105</sup>

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We have no direct evidence of what the three women confessed during the trial at the assizes beyond Francis North's reference to 'sucking

devils with saucer-eyes' and Roger's to 'sucking, teats etc'. However, the dialogues reported at the execution suggest that a substantial number of other offences or stories had been aired, at least in the mind of minister Hann. But at the same time the three women were busily denying most of what they had confessed at Bideford, let alone during the trial.<sup>106</sup> Lloyd denied to Hann that she had 'made any contract with the Devil' or that he took any of her blood or had 'any carnal knowledge of her'. She admitted that he had appeared to her 'in a woful shape' and 'caused me to go and do harm' to Grace Thomas, claiming, 'the Devil beat me about the head grievously because I would not kill her, but I did bruise her'. She told the sheriff the same story: 'the Devil met me in the street, and bid me kill her, and because I would not he beat me about the head and back'. She insisted to the sheriff now that her 'discourse with the Devil' had been 'never but this day six weeks', as at the only previous encounter she had refused his help and relied instead on the Lord. Trembles admitted the devil coming as a lion to her and frightening her but claimed he vanished when she 'cried on God' and denied he took her blood or used her 'body in a carnal manner'. This led Hann to ask, 'was not the Devil there with Susan when I was once in the prison with you, and under her coats? The other [Edwards?] told me he was there, but is now fled.' Later, addressing Edwards, Hann does not return to this, but asks her, 'Did you see the shape of a bullock? At the first time of your examination you said it [the Devil] was like a short black man, about the length of your arm.' In fact, this was what Lloyd had said, not Edwards, but Edwards just replies, 'He was black, Sir'.<sup>107</sup>

Hann then goes on to ask Edwards, 'Had you any knowledge of the bewitching of Mr Lutteril's child, or did you know a place called Tranton Burroughs?' This may relate back to Hann's comment to Trembles that, in prison, Edwards told him 'that the Devil was in the way when I was going to Taunton with my son who is a minister'. Hann also asked Lloyd, 'Do you know one Mr Lutteril about these parts, or any of your confederates? Did you or them bewitch his child?'<sup>108</sup> At this point we may also wish to note that in the J.W. pamphlet, it is reported that 'the minister of her own parish' visited Lloyd in prison and she 'put him in mind of his once riding between Banton and Taunton, where in the midst of the water, his horse would neither go backward or forward until he used these, or words to this effect, *Well Satan thou hast not long time to continue a torment to human nature before thou shalt be chained up &c*, at which words the Devil fled away in the shape of a bull, and roaring most terribly. And told him that she was there though invisible'.<sup>109</sup> This incident might explain another of Hann's questions to



Lloyd at the execution: 'did you never ride over an arm of the sea upon a cow?'<sup>110</sup>

If we assume that some of the place names have been scrambled here, then it is possible to make good sense of all these references. The prominent local family of Luttrells were the lords of the manor of Saunton Court, which was just across the Taw/Torridge estuary beyond Appledore, in the parish of Braunton. The dangerous tidal crossing to Saunton involved going over the Braunton Burrows, a rabbit warren of sand dunes belonging to the Luttrells, who were a junior branch of the Luttrells of Dunster. Colonel John Luttrell of Saunton Court had fought for Parliament in the civil war. The current owner was his son, Southcote Luttrell, who had married Anne Codrington in 1662. His heir was to be his second son, also Southcote, born in 1672. The oldest son had been born in 1666, but the date of his death is unknown, while a third son, Robert, had died on 11 September 1679, aged one, so maybe one of these two boys was the child bewitched. If the Hanns, as assistant clergy in Bideford, were aware of the problems of the Luttrell family, they may have travelled to Saunton via Braunton Burrows, so explaining why the two issues were associated in Hann's mind.<sup>111</sup>

Hann also brought up two other accusations against Lloyd, also involving the sea and children. The first was 'did you know any mariners that you or your associates destroyed by overturning of ships and boats?', which she denied. The second was 'Was it you or Susan that did bewitch the children?, to which she replied "I sold apples, and the child took an apple from me, and the mother took the apple from the child; for the which I was very angry; but the child died of the small pox"', but there is no further sign what child or children were involved here: it does not necessarily relate to the Luttrell case.<sup>112</sup>

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The accusations raised at the place of execution but not covered in the Bideford depositions or confessions in the Collins pamphlet become central to the coverage in the other two pamphlets and the ballad. Although these do refer to Lloyd's harming of Thomas, they focus otherwise on wider accusations associated with the harming of animals and people, including those on ships, and in particular the role played by a 'minister' (named as Hann in the Deacon pamphlet).<sup>113</sup> They are far more focused on the role played by the devil, and they portray the three witches as common conspirators, with Lloyd a long-term witch who had brought the others into her work. They are also far more

overtly moralising than the Collins pamphlet, both in the judgments they make on the witches and in their invitations to their readers to draw particular conclusions. In short, they fit perfectly the pattern of sensationalist stereotyping which might be expected given their publishing genre. We can clearly draw on them for evidence as to the kinds of stories publishers thought the public wished to hear about witches, but can we expect them to contain any genuine material regarding the cases as they were considered in Bideford and Exeter? Or are they merely products of a London industry, cobbling together a good story from the Collins pamphlet?<sup>114</sup>

If we start with the ballad, then there is little evidence of anything more than stereotypes. The 'three notorious witches' or 'three aged women' are never named, though one is stated to be 'four score years of age'. The title described their crimes as 'bewitching several persons, destroying ships at sea and cattle by land &c', and the text is even less specific, once stating 'they children had destroy'd/ Lamed cattel, and the aged much annoy'd./ Having familiars always at their beck', then later: 'One lost a child, the other lost a kine,/ This his brave horses, that his hopeful swine./ One had his wife bewitched, the other his friend,/ Because in some things they the witch offend'. There is no description of any meetings or sex with the devil, though both a compact and devil's marks are implied: 'they had about their bodys strange /And proper tokens of their wicked change; / As pledges that to have their cruel will, /Their souls they gave unto the prince of hell'. The most specific comment, which has an echo in the Deacon pamphlet, is from the supposed confession of the 80-year-old: 'She said the Devil came with her along,/ Through crouds of people, and bids her be strong, /And she no hand should have, but like a lyer,/ At the prison door he fled and ne're came nigh her.' If, as suggested above, the ballad was rushed out before the execution, it seems unlikely that the balladeer had more than a few rough details of the case before composing a highly generic song, as unoriginal as the woodcuts used, which were no doubt recycled from earlier texts.<sup>115</sup>

The Deacon pamphlet, by contrast, addresses the question of authenticity directly, by opening: 'Let not my assertions seem strange to the ingenious reader, who seems to affirm this (by some incredulous) story, concerning the subsequent matter; nor will I trouble you with a long prologue, to stir you to believe that which so many letters have verified concerning the matter in hand, but so it was.' It then proceeds to offer an account first of the assizes trial and then of the execution, before offering 'a caution for all sinners to forsake sin and Satan'.<sup>116</sup>

It does not, therefore, address directly at all the depositions made in Bideford, and, given that we do not know otherwise what happened at the trial in Exeter, we need to consider if it might indeed report what 'many letters' had contained. Even where its contents appear to contradict the Bideford depositions or the assize records, this may reflect what happened in court and often has echoes in what the Collins pamphlet reports at the execution.

So, in the Deacon pamphlet, Lloyd pleads guilty at the trial and confesses to a league with the devil for more than 20 years, lying carnally with him for 'nine nights together', and with two inch-long paps, which the devil 'us'd to suck to provoke her to lechery'. She is an 'old hag', the other two 'somewhat younger', and she instructed them 'in the damnable art', serving her for five years 'to learn her accursed art' and be 'acquainted with many wonderful and unlawful tricks', and 'in the term of those five years grew to be as dexterous as their devilish tutor, trying their experiments upon man and beast to the injury of both'. The devil 'used to be with them on nights in several shapes, sometimes like a hound, who hunted before them (but without doubt he hunted for souls)'. 'The old one [Lloyd] confessed plainly that she had caused several ships at sea to be cast away, to the loss of many men's lives', been 'instrumental to the death of several' and lamed several others. They all confessed that 'they had been the destruction of many cattle both small and great' and 'many more accusations laid against them, which they all owned (except one), which was about causing a ship to be sunk and a boy that fell from the topmast of another ship and so broke his neck or, as some say, drowned in the sea'. 'They also asserted that the Devil came with them to the prison door, and there left them.'<sup>117</sup> As we have seen, the questions asked at the execution appear to fit this pattern, in terms of the focus on harms to ships and Lloyd as the chief.

More specifically the Deacon pamphlet makes two accusations which, while problematic in terms of the Bideford evidence, fit with the Collins report of the execution. The first is Lloyd's confession that, of the three people they had killed, one was 'Hannah Thomas by pretence of love, squeezing her in her arms so long till the blood gushed out of her mouth'.<sup>118</sup> The Bideford depositions relate to the illness of Grace Thomas (who did not die), and none of the witches was formally accused of killing anybody except Lydia Burman, for which Lloyd was found not guilty. Yet at the executions, the minister asks her about her harming of Grace Thomas and Lloyd states, 'I did bruise her after this fashion (*laying her two hands to her sides*)', and the minister then asks, 'did you bruise her till the blood came out of her mouth?'<sup>119</sup>

Secondly, the Deacon pamphlet brings to the fore that 'these hellish agents intended mischief and misery to the person of Mr Hann', whom it terms 'a minister in those parts, a person of good repute and honest conversation'. When 'an over-ruling power prevented' them from exercising 'their diabolicism upon his body', they sought revenge by laying 'their diabolical charms upon his cattle, so that those cows that used to give milk, when they came to be milked they gave blood, to the great astonishment of the milkers'.<sup>120</sup> While there is nothing in the Collins pamphlet that directly confirms these specific claims, Hann's questions at the execution show he regarded himself as one of those attacked by the witches, and, if he was prominent in the trial, it might help explain his role in the execution procedure.

If we turn to the J.W. pamphlet, then we find an even more central role being played by an unnamed 'minister of the parish', whom we may associate with Hann by the passage already quoted above about the devil as a bull attacking him while riding across water. Here, when Lloyd engages in her 'thirteen-year torment' of the married 'Madam Thomas' (unlike the two-year illness reported by the spinster Grace Thomas in the depositions), causing her to be 'seized with fitts of raveing, sometime of laughing, but alwaies of pain', which baffle the physicians, it is 'the minister of the parish, observing her fits of laughter and by his reading, knowing something more than those countrey physicians, had a strong presumption that they must be the effects of sorcery'. Judging that the 'witches do torment in effigie (as surely this did by tickling)' he applied a countercharm, that 'in those fitts, the bottoms of her feet might be held and covered with hands, which project had a good success, for it always stayd her laughter, and proved consequently more effective than the magical charme by which she was enchanted'. Furthermore, 'the minister abovesaid caused this witch to be apprehended and committed to Exeter goale [sic], where she remained a month before she would confess anything, but at last she made a free confession of all that is above said'. When he visits her in prison, she is 'extraordinarily joyful' at the sight of him, takes his hands and tells him that 'she knew not but that his advice and prayers might do him good', before reminding him of the water-crossing episode. The minister then gives all three women 'good and wholesome advice' and tries to get them to say the Lord's Prayer, which one could not repeat at all, while Lloyd is compelled to say, 'lead us *into* temptation' and 'deliver us *to* evil'.<sup>121</sup>

Otherwise, apart from the claim about the judge at the trial, already discussed, this pamphlet focuses almost exclusively on Lloyd's relations with the devil, noting of the others 'she also impeached one Mary Floyd

and one Susanna Edwards, both of which had been too long and great actors in such sort of devilising, but because my paper will not permit, I shall give you no trouble with them'. Lloyd 'was 70 years old, and had been the Devils slave 30 years of that time'. Their first meeting is described in some depth, and it involves him appearing 'in the shape of a comely black man' offering to assist her with her 'almost insupportable burden of broome', but she spots his 'feet to resemble those of an ox' and replies naming God, whereupon 'the tempter immediately transformed himself into a flame, so disappeared'. Later she sees a black dog that grows ever bigger, then 'the same black gentleman', who now prevails 'with her to consent to his compact (*drawn up in writeing wherein he bound himself for a time, and her his forever*), which she signed with her own blood, which the Devil (*as an ingenious chyrurgion*) drew from her with little or no pain'. After she bruises Madam Thomas's side at his command, she refuses his further order to kill her: 'whereupon the Devil struck her a slap on the face, where he left the print of his fist', before prevailing on her to start her 13-year torment.<sup>122</sup> Several of these details are also reflected in the Collins pamphlet's account of the execution: the meeting while collecting broom and initial refusal of his offer, the bruising and the refusal to kill Thomas followed by his beating her about the head, though there is nothing like the compact in any of the other accounts.

One possible explanation of the similarities between both the Deacon and J.W. pamphlets and the execution scene within the Collins pamphlet, while there is almost no overlap with the Bideford evidence (Bideford is named only once by Deacon and never in J.W.'s pamphlet), is that they both drew exclusively on reports of the trial offered by someone involved in the assizes trial and the execution but not in the Bideford process. The most likely candidate for this would be the minister Hann himself. As we have seen, both shorter pamphlets make him a central figure, though in different ways, and fit closely with the preoccupations of those accounts of witchcraft (or other crimes) written by ministers who attended (or perhaps preyed on) the accused in prison and at their executions and wrote up the outcomes. Possibly both draw on a common account by Hann which has not itself survived, or on letters or reports circulating based on his stories. In doing so they introduced numerous errors of detail (both confusing Trembles' name, for example), and it is quite possible that they invented some of their details but probably not all of them. Whether Hann's account of the trial would have been reliable is, of course, another matter.<sup>123</sup>

Francis Hann had been a minister at Leicester and then at Durston in Somerset in the 1650s, before being appointed vicar of Loxbeare, near Tiverton, in 1663 by the patron, Daniel Cudmore. The Cudmores had strong Puritan links; Daniel himself published two books of devotional poetry in the 1650s 'from my desk in Tiverton', and in 1672 his house at Loxbeare was licensed for Presbyterian worship. John Cudmore, 'brother of Daniel Cudmore esq. of Loxbeare', though educated at Oxford, refused to conform and became an independent minister at Chumleigh by the 1690s, dying in 1706.<sup>124</sup> Hann remained vicar of Loxbeare until his death in 1691. There is no sign that Hann was university educated, and this (and his Protectorate posts) may explain the claim of Bishop Lamplugh of Exeter in 1680 that Hann was 'a taylor by trade, a preacher under Cromwell and one who scarce understands common sense; admitted into orders by Bishop Gauden; this person, beside leudness of life, is guilty of marrying severall persons clandestinely'. He had been prosecuted in Tiverton in 1668 for drunkenness and debauchery, refusing a demand from Bishop Sparrow that he make a public confession of his sins, then in 1680 he was excommunicated on the clandestine marriage charges, though Lamplugh notes, 'he values the latter so little, that he lives as easy under it, as if it were but *brutum fulmen* (exercising works of public ministry in his house)'. He was formally inhibited from preaching on 28 July 1682.<sup>125</sup> As for his son, the only other Hann recorded as a clergyman at this period is one John Hann, who held two Dorset curacies in 1670, but this seems likely to be the John Hann (son of Giles Hann, pleb. of Sturton Caundle in Dorset) who matriculated at St Edmund Hall Oxford on 12 July 1667, aged 17, in which case he cannot be the son of Francis. However, a Francis Hann BA of Loxbeare was licensed for medical practice in the four south-western dioceses by the archbishop of Canterbury in September 1670, and this may be the son.<sup>126</sup>

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This emphasis on Hann's possible role, and the contrast between the Hann version and the Bideford evidence supplied by Hill, brings us back to the question of the political and religious context of the trials. Most recent historians who have examined the case have felt that it must arise in some way out of the factional turmoil affecting Bideford (like Devon and indeed the whole country) at this period. The tensions between Anglicans and dissenters, and within both, were clearly deep in Bideford and were exacerbated at the time by the deeply divisive

figure of Ogilby. Ogilby had not only fallen out with Hill and both the town and diocesan authorities, but also been accused of overcharging both John Coleman (at his marriage to Dorcas) and Edward Fellow (for burying one of his children, quite probably Anne, the bewitched daughter).<sup>127</sup> Several of the accusers had attended dissenting conventicles, and perhaps they were distressed both by intermittent campaigns of persecution against them and by the recent deaths of their two charismatic ministers, the Bartletts. As we have seen, the North brothers associated the tumultuous rage against the witches in Exeter with popular passions and with 'the faction' (meaning Whigs and/or dissenters). On the other hand, other accusers, and the town clerk Hill, were loyalist Anglicans, like the publishers of the Collins pamphlet, and Peter Elmer thinks the pamphlet was 'the work of one sympathetic to the Tory cause'.<sup>128</sup> Can we reconcile all of these contradictory indications?

Two possible explanations can be offered, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The first is that witchcraft suspicions against the women led not only to prosecutions but, even more unusually, to executions precisely because the cases meant different things to the different parties, who could each see some meaning (or advantage) to them in pursuing (and reporting) the cases. Within this account, we might want to stress the difference between what the cases signified initially within Bideford (and the Lloyd and Trembles/Edwards cases were not necessarily closely connected, at least at first) and then what they came to mean when the women were prisoners in Exeter and taken to trial and execution. The different accounts of the case offered by what we might label the Hill version (the Bideford depositions), the North version, and then the Hann version, could be seen as reflections of these different understandings, with the Collins pamphlet an uneasy mixture of the Hill and Hann approaches.

Alternatively, we might see certain strange features of the case and its reporting as explained by attempts by the different parties to challenge the meaning of what was happening in these witchcraft proceedings and use them to further their other concerns. Why did the interrogation of Lloyd get transferred to the parish church, with Ogilby leading (or being required to ask) the questions and with the requirement that Lloyd repeat the Lord's Prayer? And how and why did Hann manage to become so central to what occurred in Exeter, even to be portrayed as the parish minister? And why, if the Tory North was worried about how the case might be used by 'the faction', would other Tories want to publish an account of the episode? Perhaps precisely because (for people under pressure) the procedures offered the chance for someone

apparently threatened by the witchcraft case to step in and try to redirect its significance to their own advantage (or at least, to minimise the threat it posed to them). Ogilby gets the opportunity (or perhaps is forced to take the opportunity) to bring his parish church, and himself as its minister, back to the centre of civic life. Hann, away from Bideford, can present himself in Exeter as the ideal parish minister, hated and persecuted by witches and the devil, and yet also able both to bring them to punishment and to offer them pastoral care, taking centre stage at an Exeter execution only a month after his bishop had banned him from preaching. The publishers of the Collins pamphlet, by offering a highly factual (and, to be honest, rather boring) account of the episode, which largely ignores the more sensational aspects while including sufficient details of the execution scene to meet expectations of completeness, may have done enough to spoil the market for other accounts which might, indeed, have exploited the episode to factional advantage.

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There remains the question of the confessions made by the three accused women, without which, one suspects, the case would have been unlikely to make it to the assizes, let alone lead to a guilty verdict. What made each woman confess? There seems to me to be nothing in the evidence which allows us to go beyond the speculations made at the time by the Norths regarding their possible state of mind or the general presumption of more modern writers that they were pressured into confession.<sup>129</sup> As far as such pressure goes, the Bideford deposition evidence does not suggest, in my view, that the two magistrates, Gist and Davie, the town clerk, Hill, or the rector, Ogilby, led the way either in prosecuting the women or in directing the nature of the confession.<sup>130</sup> Rather, these appear to have been shaped by the Eastchurch and Coleman/Barnes families, and their supporters, in their interrogations of the women ahead of the magistrates' involvement. It is clear that these families, while driven by the maleficial illnesses they thought were being inflicted on their womenfolk, had a notion of witchcraft involving the devil, although, judging by the confessions made at Bideford, either they had a fairly basic sense of what this involved, or they could not get the women to confess to more than a very minimal interaction with the devil: the sexual material is limited, compacts tacit or absent and devil worship (either individual or collective) totally absent.<sup>131</sup>

It is only with the evidence which seems associated with Hann that we get a more elaborate account of the women as joint members of a



devil-led conspiracy, although even here there is little about sex and nothing about devil worship – the devil is presented as enabling the women to perform more extensive maleficia against ships, people and cattle and, of course, against Hann himself. My presumption would be that this was extracted from the women while they were in gaol in Exeter during visits from Hann, although others may also have been involved. It seems likely that it was these stories which made Exeter, if the Norths can be trusted, to have been so possessed with fear and hatred of the witches: whether their cases had aroused the same passions in Bideford seems to me unproved and, probably, unprovable.

If my reconstruction of the evidence is accepted, then it calls into question much of what historians have drawn from the case, partly because they have conflated evidence from the different sources which I have argued cannot be conflated, and partly because they have sought to draw conclusions about what was occurring in Bideford itself from sources determined largely, I have suggested, by what developed first at Exeter, as the trial played out amid intense political passions, and then in London and beyond, as the case was presented and re-presented by Hann, the London publishers and the North family, in accord with their own interests. Accounts which focus on sexual tensions and diabolical fantasies within Bideford, while they *might* be correct, do not seem to me to rest securely on what we know of the Bideford phase of the trial, while attempts to correlate the case firmly with any particular political or religious faction within Bideford or to see the case as driven by the town's elite appear less plausible than seeing this as a case driven by the families directly affected, with a divided elite unable to resist the pressures for action the families exerted, and then trying in various ways to manage and take advantage of what had occurred.

# 4

## The Politics of *Pandaemonium*

Historians of witchcraft have often cited the letter sent by Sir Francis North to Secretary of State Sir Leoline Jenkins (dated 19 August 1682) from the Exeter assizes concerning the trial of the three 'Bideford witches', a trial which also generated several accounts in pamphlets and ballads and widespread contemporary comment. North, one of the two circuit judges (though not the one trying this particular case), wrote, 'Here have been three old women condemned for witchcraft. ... I find the country so fully possessed against them that, though some of the virtuosi may think these things the effects of confederacy, melancholy or delusion, and that young folkes are altogether as quick-sighted as they who are old and infirme; yet we cannot relieve them without appearing to denye the very being of witches, which, as it is contrary to law, so I think it would be ill for his Majestie's service, for it may give the faction occasion to set afoot the old trade of witch-finding that may cost many innocent persons their lives, which this justice will prevent'.<sup>1</sup> By the faction, North meant the Whig party, which was very strong in the south-west. In the life of Francis North written by his brother, Roger, these witchcraft cases are discussed immediately after a discussion of how the judge had to act very carefully when watched and tested by the factious. Roger North makes much of his brother's scepticism on such matters, contrasted with the credulity of the juries.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as Sir Francis noted, the law was clear about the reality of witchcraft, and the royal judges could not afford to appear to flout the law lest 'the faction' take advantage. The reference to 'the old trade of witchfinding' suggests that North at least was conscious of the precedent of Hopkins in the 1640s, and perhaps of the wider upsurge of witchcraft prosecutions during the interregnum in areas such as the south-west. The three Bideford witches were thus

sacrificed to prevent broader danger to the monarchy and the state, caught between rival political factions for whom witchcraft was contested ground.

In considering attitudes to the Act of 1604, and witchcraft more generally, between the Restoration and 1736, historians have become increasingly aware of the malleable and conjunctural character of responses in the highly complex and rapidly altering ideological contexts of the period. Both religion and politics in general were dominated by disputes over the meaning of allegiance to Crown, Parliament and the Church of England (or Protestantism more generally), and by how to respond to the threats to national culture posed by social and cultural change, seen by many as requiring a 'reformation of manners'. Although one dimension of this change was often seen as the decay of religion as a force in public life (as opposed to a spiritual or moral guide), most people appear to have still held strongly providentialist views, linking national well-being with God's judgement on the nation. Moreover, all of these debates took place in an atmosphere of polarization and conspiracy, in which disputes regarding allegiance and cultural change were conducted not through the acceptance of genuine differences between parties and opinions that could be resolved but through the demonization of opposing viewpoints as expressions of faction at best, and of treason against the state and God at worst. As Bostridge, Elmer and the present author have shown, in this setting the language and accusation of witchcraft could be deployed by all sides and in many different settings.<sup>3</sup>

As North's letter demonstrates, the statute against witchcraft was itself a potent, yet highly contested, factor in this process. As a law, it represented the fusion of the authority of both Crown (stressed by the Tory North) and Parliament. Its close association with the first of the Stuarts, and his well-known attack on witchcraft as the ultimate crime against royal authority in his *Demonology*, gave it strong Royalist credentials. Yet in practice the Stuart monarchs in England, and most of their judges and leading clergy, had proved highly suspicious both of the reality of witchcraft in specific cases and, in general, of the potential that witchcraft (especially possession) offered to critics of the established church to claim authority in matters of the spirit. Before 1640, this was a dual struggle against both Roman Catholics and Puritans, but after that it became ever more complex, with the emergence not only of more radical forms of sectarianism (themselves often seen as demonically possessed), but also of the fear of Hobbesian materialism and atheism. For the next 75 years, at least, it was far from clear to the

establishment where the greatest threat to national security lay. The emergence of Tory and Whig political parties, and the association of each of these (by their opponents) with absolutist popery and republican fanaticism (respectively), with each party struggling to rid itself of these labels and to convince the nation that it could rid the country of atheism and enthusiasm and reform the nation's manners, meant that both the general debate about witchcraft and specific cases (both trials and reported happenings) became overlaid with ideological readings and meanings.

The aim of this chapter is to uncover as many of these layers of meaning as possible for a specific text, namely *Pandaemonium, or the Devil's Cloyster* published in 1684, and for the Bovet family of the Somerset/Devon border region who produced the text.<sup>4</sup> Ian Bostridge has already sketched the potential of reading *Pandaemonium* from North's perspective as an example of a writer 'with Whig credentials embracing witch theory and with political ends in mind ... as the cover for an attack on Roman Catholicism', showing that 'the iniquities of the Restoration court, and the advance of Popery in the bosom of the English establishment, were, quite literally, diabolical'.<sup>5</sup> In so doing, he focuses his account on the first part of the text, rather than the second part, which has normally been seen as the interesting part of the volume. This part 'giving plain Evidence concerning Apparitions, Spirits and Witches, proving by a Choice Collection of Modern Relations (never yet Published) their real Existence' consists of 15 cases either from Bovet's locality and own experience or sent to him by friends (in Scotland, mostly), and several of these (regarding fairies and ghosts) have become standard parts of the repertoire of supernatural stories. Russell Hope Robbins dismisses the first part as 'unoriginal comment on witchcraft, violently anti-papist, some borrowed from Glanvill and the rest from the mystical theology of the unreliable Daniel Brevint' but considers that 'the second part, however, contains fifteen quite amusing ghost stories (including Poltergeists) ... In collecting such stories from his friends, Bovet shows the contemporary interest in experimental philosophy, in common with Dr Henry More (to whom the book is dedicated) and Glanvill'.<sup>6</sup> Most other historians have echoed this last point, seeing Bovet as a follower or colleague of Joseph Glanvill, Henry More and the Scotsman George Sinclair, all publishing in the period 1681–5. Jo Bath and John Newton, for example, regard Bovet's subtitle (in the Walthoe edition; see below) 'being a further Blow to Modern Sadduceism, proving the Existence of Witches and Spirits' as showing 'that he was self-consciously following in [Glanvill's] footsteps'.<sup>7</sup>

Only the eccentric Montague Summers, who republished the text in 1951, has used both parts of his work, citing him uncritically in his *Witchcraft and Black Magic* both as a serious demonologist and as a source of specific cases.<sup>8</sup> However, Summers treats Bovet as schizophrenic – contrasting his ‘religious eccentricities’ with the ‘plain and practical’ work of the ‘absolutely unmystical’ Bovet as ‘an investigator of psychic phenomena’. He even argues that ‘in one sense and in a very real way, the religious bias and prejudice of the author lend a certain weight to his pages. His eccentricities, although harsh enough and foolish, today we can set aside. His ‘Relations’ bear the hall-mark of truth’.<sup>9</sup> I shall argue that this completely inverts Bovet’s own order of priority.

To understand Bovet’s text in its entirety, we need to understand the relationship between its two parts, and what relationship it actually bears to the work of Glanvill and More. We also need to consider its title, borrowed from the court of the fallen angels in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. We need to understand the two slightly different editions of the text, and their relationship to a pamphlet on one of the cases in part two, the ‘Daemon of Spraiton’ (Spreyton near Okehampton in Devon), which Bovet had published the previous year, and how his handling of this case in each publication compares with the account of it which John Aubrey received from his Somerset correspondent, Andrew Paschall. We also need to understand how this text fits in with the experiences of the Bovet family in the second half of the seventeenth century, including the radical lives and deaths of Richard and Philip Bovet in civil war, under republican and Restoration regimes and finally in Monmouth’s rebellion of 1685, and the participation of other Bovets in one of the last cases of witchcraft tried at Exeter, in 1696. This case brings home the question of whether we can or should separate the use of witchcraft as an ideological weapon (against political and religious enemies) from its place in shaping the fears of families faced with everyday misfortune and tragedy, and their legal actions against their neighbours within the framework of the law. Ironically, these Bovets found themselves up against another royal judge, Sir John Holt, who was even more determined than North to use suspicion of fraud and sarcasm about the evidence to undermine the possibility of prosecution under the act of 1604. Holt passed on his notes about this and other late trials to Francis Hutchinson for his *Historical Essay concerning Witchcraft* of 1718, after which Whigs generally adopted the attitude which lay behind the new Witchcraft Act of 1736, in which the threat to the state from witchcraft was authoritatively declared no longer to

be the actions of demons but the frauds of conspiring humans and the credulity of the vulgar.

\* \* \*

Bovet's text has normally been identified as part of the campaign to defend the existence of the world of spirits, and hence the truths of the Christian religion, against 'sadducism', revived in the form of Hobbesian materialism and fashionable skepticism. The two central figures in this campaign were Joseph Glanvill (Rector of Bath) and Henry More (of Christ's College, Cambridge), with the key work being Glanvill's 1681 *Saducismus Triumphatus*, which was More's edition of the revised and expanded version of Glanvill's earlier writings on this subject, left unfinished at his death in 1680. At the core of Glanvill's text were the details of a series of Somerset witchcraft cases from the period 1657–64, given to him by the Somerset JP Robert Hunt, plus his own experience of the Wiltshire poltergeist case, generally known as the 'Drummer of Tedworth'.<sup>10</sup> Glanvill corresponded regularly with More, and he took from More's 1653 text *An Antidote against Atheisme* the characteristic mixture in all these books of theological debate with detailed accounts of specific cases of the preternatural observed first-hand by the author or his trusted correspondents. Given that Bovet was also from Somerset and drew his cases largely from that county and its close neighbours, and organised his book in a similar fashion, it is hardly surprising that his work has been seen as a minor contribution to the same tradition.

Indeed, Bovet goes to some lengths to encourage the reader to consider his book in this light. *Pandaemonium* is dedicated to More, praising 'with what irrefragable reason you have opposed and vanquish't the legions of atheistical and disbelieving pretenders who seem to be incredulous of discourses of the existence of spirits and their attempts upon lapsed and degenerate men'.<sup>11</sup> Bovet claims to be taking up the invitation in *Saducismus Triumphatus* 'to contribute all I could to the asserting the reality of spiritual existencies [sic] and, by consequence, the advantages such subtle agents have to surprise the unwary and entrap the negligent disbeliever in inextricable snares; whil'st they who shut their eyes against the belief of daemons are imperceptibly hurried by them upon the unavoidable principles of sensuality and impenitence'.<sup>12</sup> Later he attacks 'the bold confidence of some of these Witch advocates that they durst affront that Relation of the Daemon of Tedworth, published by the Ingenious Mr Glanvil, and Attested by Mr Mompesson, a Gentleman, and a Divine, who (to all that knew them) were never over

fond of crediting stories of this kind'.<sup>13</sup> At the end of Chapter 5, before turning to the relations of witches, Bovet states 'that atheism, idolatry, sensuality, and debauchery, have a natural tendence [sic] to promote this impious and diabolical confederacy, hath been hinted in the foregoing pages. Which being so regularly, learnedly and largely treated of by the excellent pens of Dr H.M. and Mr J.G. before mentioned, in the second part of *Saducismus Triumphatus*; I shall presume to wade no further in the argumentative and philosophical part'. Bovet also compares his cases with those in *Saducismus Triumphatus*.<sup>14</sup>

*A Narrative of the Demon of Spraiton*, edited by Bovet in 1683, is even more emphatic in its attack on 'your Hobbs's, your Scots, your Websters, with their blasphemous denyals of the existence of spirits, or an eternal state in the life to come. Or how can they that deny the being of spirits suppose that there is such a thing in the world as a God? Here is one Account more of matter of fact, to those which the learned Doctor Moore, the ingenious Dr Glanvill (with divers others, the assertors of divine providence, and an eternal state) have printed in confutation of your brutish stupidity; which one would think were enough for ever to silence and confound the advocates of debauchery and sadducism and reduce their arguments into that nullity they contend for'.<sup>15</sup> It continues: 'we have not room in this place to enter into a disquisition of the nature of the apparitions hereafter mentioned; but shall for that refer the reader to the learned discourses of the reverend Dr Henry Moore and the ingenious Dr Glanvill, before mentioned, who have largely treated of the nature of spirits and daemons and with undeniable arguments proved the existence of such'.<sup>16</sup>

However, there is no evidence in any other sources that Bovet was known to Glanvill, despite their proximity, and he admits that he is dedicating his book to More despite being a 'stranger' to him. Apologising for his 'unpolisht' discourse, Bovet describes it as 'common prudence to list myself under the banner of so victorious a chieftain' and, anticipating attacks for his work, he claims to 'have this farther encouragement, that I have not only ingaged in a good design, but have put myself under the umbrage of so great a patron, that there can be no apprehensions of dangers from the attacks of the modern sadduces upon, sir, your assured humble servant R.B.'. <sup>17</sup> This suggests that the appeal to the More/Glanvill tradition is more a defensive mechanism than an acknowledgement of authority. It is also worth noting that Bovet, while not neglecting the theological dimension of 'sadducism', emphasises the degeneracy, sensualism and debauchery which are indelibly associated with it. This reflects the very distinctive character of the first part

of his text, which offers, in the words of the title page of the Walthoe edition, 'a discourse deduced from the fall of the angels, the propagation of Satans kingdom before the Flood: the idolatry of the ages after, greatly advancing diabolical confederacies. With an Account of the lives and transactions of several notorious witches', which the other title-page identifies as 'confederacies of several Popes and Roman priests with the Devil'.<sup>18</sup> Bovet's dedication anticipates that 'some, perhaps, may be offended at the method I have used in attributing to priestcraft, so much of the original and contagion of diabolical confederacy'.<sup>19</sup> It is doubtful if the Anglican clergymen and apologists Glanvill and More would have approved of this strategy which, if it claimed to be attacking Hobbesian skepticism, seemed to reproduce much of the anticlericalism which underlay both Hobbes's own writings and the use made of them by both radical Whigs and court wits.

Furthermore, Bovet was very clear that the first part of his text took precedence over the second. Both title pages privilege the first part, and Bovet notes, 'the collection of relations may by some be blamed for being too short, many delighting themselves more with novelty of story then to enquire, and pursue the drift of the design; to these I can only say, that being confined to such a volume, there was not room for more, tho [sic] many might have been added, which perhaps may be the subject of another volume; besides I could not without detriment to the whole have omitted anything contained in the first part, wherein I fear I have rather been too concise'.<sup>20</sup> If one compares the 'collection of relations' in the second part with More or Glanvill's publications, Bovet's can be seen to be highly sketchy, with 15 cases related in 42 pages of the modern edition (compared to 97 pages for the first part), with the longest being the case of the 'demon of Spraiton', in a slightly amended version to that published in pamphlet form the year before. Although Bovet presents this collection in the empirical tradition of the Royal Society, hoping 'some sober and ingenious persons would undertake but to commend to the publick the occurrences of this nature in every county',<sup>21</sup> his language quoted above emphasizes the subordination of the factual details to the 'drift of the design', and indeed denigrates the desire for more detail, as the product not of scientific interest but of delight in the 'novelty of story'.

If we are looking for a true inspiration for Bovet's work, a more likely answer is given by his title, borrowed from the name given to the court of the fallen angels in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. We are now so used to the word Pandaemonium that we tend to forget both its original meaning (literally an all-demon-assembly) and that it was a word coined by



Milton: indeed the *Oxford English Dictionary* records no further usages of the term until the 1690s.<sup>22</sup> In 1691 John Wilson's *Belphegor, or, The Marriage of the Devil* begins with the reading of a paper dated 'At the Pandaemonium, or Common-Council of the Infernal'. Bovet acknowledges his use of Milton when discussing the spread of idolatry among the Israelites; 'nay, there was not any detestable idol among the heathens, though never so bloody and diabolical, which did not at some time or other obtain for a Deity among the hardned [sic] and back-sliding Jews. A list of which is excellently drawn up by the pen of the learned and profound Mr John Milton in his *Paradise lost* [sic]'.<sup>23</sup> Reading Milton's poem as a historical account of the interdependence of diabolism and idolatry, Bovet can clearly be seen as part of the radical tradition of reading Milton which was obscured by its absorption into the mainstream of literary culture in the eighteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

There is no direct evidence that Bovet knew Milton except through his work, but one of Bovet's accounts in his second part suggests that he may have done. The eighth and twelfth accounts both refer to a 'nobleman's house in the West of England, which had formerly been a Nunnery'.<sup>25</sup> The only house which clearly fits this description is Wilton House, the home of the earls of Pembroke. In 1667, when Bovet tells us he was staying there 'with some persons of honour' and ended up sharing a room with 'the Nobleman's steward, Mr C', the earl in question was the fifth earl, Philip Herbert. Philip had been a Parliamentarian and president of the Council of State in the early 1650s, although he survived the Restoration. He had a reputation as a chemist and Behmenist and, at the very least, a sympathizer with Quakerism, and in 1665 he braved the Restoration Court to warn Charles II that the end of the world would come that year (to which Charles responded by offering to buy Wilton House for seven years' purchase, since the earl did not anticipate enjoying it for long!).<sup>26</sup> During the 1660s the earl employed the radical Behmenist Samuel Pordage as his steward (presumably not 'Mr C') and the tutor to his children between 1665 and 1670 was Milton's nephew, pupil and literary heir, Edward Phillips.<sup>27</sup> If Bovet was indeed a regular guest at Wilton in 1667, which was the year *Paradise Lost* was published, he must have known both Phillips and Pordage and perhaps met Milton: certainly he would have been encouraged to see Milton through the lens of radical dissenting republicanism.

Bovet's other acknowledged source is Daniel Brevint, Dean of Lincoln. He admits that he has chosen 'to make use of the allegations of the learned Dr Brevint', who 'had the advantages of being both an eye and ear-witness of the detestable idolatries of the Roman Church, by being

so long in Italy amongst them'.<sup>28</sup> Summers and Robbins have identified the close use of Brevint's work in the first part of Bovet's text, but he may also have borrowed from Brevint the idea of using a text apparently about witchcraft to attack the idolatry of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>29</sup> Despite its title, Brevint's 1674 work, which Bovet used, *Saul and Samuel at Endor, or, The new waies of salvation and service, which usually temt [sic] men to Rome and detain them there truly represented and refuted*, actually contains nothing about the witch of Endor. Brevint's work also formed the source for much of the material in another work which may have influenced Bovet more directly, since it was published in London in 1683 by Thomas Malthus, with a preface by Titus Oates, namely Christopher Ness's, *The Devils Patriarck, or, A full and impartial account of the notorious life of this present Pope of Rome Innocent the 11th wherein is newly discovered his rise and reign, the time and manner of his being chosen Pope, his prime procession, consecration and coronation, the splendour and grandeur of his Court, his most eminent and gainful cheats, by which he gulls the silly people, his secret and open transactions with the papists in England, Scotland, France and Ireland, and other Protestant countreys to this very day : together with the rest of the hellish policies and infamous actions of his wicked life / written by an eminent pen to revive the remembrance of the almost forgotten plot against the life of his Sacred Majesty and the Protestant religion*. Here again we have the association of diabolism with popery, set in the context of priestcraft, plots and hellish policies. Like most publications of this period, this can be understood only in the context of the Popish Plot and its aftermath, with 1682–3 seeing the high point of the press struggle to define whether the greatest threat to the country came from popery or from Whiggery. The prosecution of the Rye House plotters and the full force of the Tory reaction over the next two years, up to James's succession to the throne and Monmouth's rebellion, drove much of this press controversy underground.

It is in this context that we may be able to understand the curious publishing history of Bovet's text. It survives in two editions, whose texts are apparently identical, but with different title pages and publishers. One was printed for 'Tho. Malthus at the Sun in the Poultry', while the second was printed for 'J. Walthoe, at the Black Lion, Chancery Lane, over against Lincoln's Inn'. The Malthus title page gives the title simply as 'Pandaemonium or the Devil's Cloyster, in Two parts' and then gives in full the chapter headings of part I, before describing part II as 'giving plain evidence concerning apparitions, spirits and witches; proving by a choice collection of modern relations (never yet published) their real existence'. The Walthoe edition has the subtitle, 'being a

further blow to modern sadduceism, proving the existence of witches and spirits', before giving the details of the 'discourse' quoted above and then 'also, a collection of several authentick relations of strange apparitions of daemons and spectres, and fascinations of witches, never before printed'. The Michaelmas 1684 edition of the *Term Catalogue* (under 'Miscellanies') gives a further variant of the title, identical to Walthoe's except that it replaces 'an account of the lives and transactions of several notorious witches' with 'an account of the lives of several notorious witches, some whereof have been popes'. No publisher is given for the work here, but the next item was an edition of Lucan's works sold by Malthus.<sup>30</sup> It appears that, as I have suggested was the case within the text, there was an ongoing tension about whether this book was primarily to be identified as an anti-papal or an anti-Sadducist work.

The publishing careers of Malthus and Walthoe may suggest that this reflected two potentially different markets for the work. *Pandaemonium* was not their only collaboration, and they both also co-published with D[aniel] Brown, who combined with Malthus to publish *A Narrative of the Demon of Spraiton* in 1683. Walthoe was a newly established bookseller, whose location in Chancery Lane reflected the start of a long career marked by a focus on law publishing, with no obvious ideological bent.<sup>31</sup> Malthus, on the other hand, although his career had also begun only in 1682, had a highly active record in 1683 and 1684, then just two publications in 1685, after which he disappears from the record. John Dunton (who printed works for Malthus, including *The Devils Patriarck*, and also wrote a panegyric of the Earl of Shaftesbury, *The Compleat Statesman Demonstrated* (1683), which Malthus published) last remembered seeing him leaving for Holland in a hurry in 1685, 'his circumstances being something perplexed'.<sup>32</sup> This must surely be a euphemistic way of describing the flight into Dutch exile which many Whig radicals (such as John Locke) made in 1684–5, some returning with Monmouth, others not until 1688. Dunton noted that Malthus 'midwifed several books into the world, ay! And that of his own conceiving (without help of woman). He made a shew of great trade by continually sending out large parcels, But all I can say of his industry is, He took a great deal of pains to ruine himself.'<sup>33</sup> Many, though not all, of his publications in 1683–4 were Whig in sympathy, including works praising the Duke of Monmouth and the Earl of Shaftesbury, Dutch and Scottish publications and other anti-papal texts, and none were Tory or Anglican. In June 1683 the *Term Catalogue* advertised another Malthus publication entitled *A Whip for the Devil, or the Roman Conjurer*, which was a swinging attack on 'the folly, prophaneness and superstition of

the papists in endeavouring to cast the Devil out of the bodies of men and women'.<sup>34</sup> One might plausibly conclude that Malthus published Bovet as part of a body of work which used the sensational theme of witchcraft to sell to fellow Whigs a diet of anti-papal diatribes, but ones which, from 1683 onwards, were best disguised as fitting a moral and religious agenda which had the protective respectability of Anglican clergy such as More, and could be published, in that setting, by men such as Walthoe.

It is interesting, in this respect, to consider more closely the story of the 'demon of Spraiton', which Bovet had published the previous year, and how his handling of the case in each publication compares with an account of the same events which circulated among the real colleagues of Glanvill and More. This was later published by John Aubrey, from a letter received in May or early June 1683 from his Somerset correspondent, Andrew Paschall.<sup>35</sup> The story involved the appearance of various spectres to members of the Furze household, notably a young male servant, with increasingly violent attacks on his body, who was also carried into the air and around the countryside, ending with a bird attacking him with a metal weight while he was in Crediton. Both accounts refer to a 'person of quality' and a clergyman as witnesses to the events. Bovet names the former, who wrote the letter of 11 May to a 'gentleman his friend in London' (presumably Bovet) which formed the basis of the pamphlet, as 'T.C. esq a near neighbour to the place', and this is probably one of the numerous members of the Cary family of Devon and Somerset. He continues, 'and though it needed little confirmation further than the credit that the learning and quality of that gentleman had stamp't upon it, yet was much of it likewise known to and related by the Reverend Minister of Barnstable, of the vicinity to Spraiton'.<sup>36</sup> The clergyman to whom Bovet referred, and who was the author of the letter to Paschall, which he then forwarded to Aubrey, was John Boyse, who also held a living at Cheriton Bishop, near Spreyton. Paschall expected Aubrey to pass on the account to Henry More via Benjamin Whichcote in Cambridge and also, intriguingly, expected Sir Francis North to find it of interest. More did not use this material in the later editions of *Saducismus Triumphatus* but did use Paschall's account of the haunting of his father's house in Soper Lane.<sup>37</sup> With the thoroughness of a fellow of the Royal Society, Paschall sought corroboration of the details of the story from another local clergyman, who had also spoken 'with a gentleman of good fashion that was at Crediton when Fry was blooded and saw the stone that bruised his forehead, but he

did not call it copper or brass but said it was a strange mineral. That gentleman promises to make a strict enquiry on the place into all particulars and to give me the result; which my friend also promises me, with hopes that he shall procure for me a piece of that mineral substance which hurt his fore-head'.<sup>38</sup>

John Boyse, was, like Paschall, a former fellow of Queen's College Cambridge, now holding a living in the west country but still in intellectual contact with Anglican antiquarian and scientific circles. Paschall also refers to an earlier episode concerning an apparition in Barnstable where 'An account was given to me long since [by Boyse], it fills a sheet or two, which I have by me; And to gratifie Mr Glanvill, who is collecting histories for his *Sadducism Triumphatus*, I desir'd to have it well attested, it being full of very memorable things, but it seems he could meet only a general consent as to the truth of the things; the reports varying in the circumstances'. In May 1686, shortly before his death, Boyse was to write to Paschall again regarding 'new feats played by invisible powers in his own parsonage house in the countrey'.<sup>39</sup>

There is not space here to make a detailed comparison of the three accounts of the same event. Although Bovet in 1684 justifies reprinting his earlier work, 'having likewise since had fresh testimonials of the veracity of that relation; and it being at first designed to fill this place; I have thought it not amiss (for the strangeness of it) to print it here a second time, exactly as I had transcribed it then', in fact there are minor textual variations.<sup>40</sup> There are also minor differences in the information provided between the Bovet and Boyse versions, mostly reflecting the different viewpoint of the relators. The Boyse letter provides names and further details on the relationships between the parties, reflecting its status as a private letter rather than a public document. The crucial difference, however, comes at the end. Whereas the pamphlet ends by stressing that it is a faithful account of the original letter, 'the truth of which will be attested not only by divers persons of quality in this city, but upon inquiry in the adjacent county will be confirmed beyond all exception', Boyse concludes his letter by adding details of several other afflicted people caught up in the same episode, and adds, 'Indeed Sir you may wonder that I have not visited that house and the poor afflicted people, especially since I was so near and passed by the very door, But besides that, they have called to their assistance none but Nonconforming ministers, I was not qualified to be welcome there, having given Mr Furze a great deal of trouble the last year about a conventicle in his house, where one of this parish was the preacher. But I am very well assured of the truth of what I have written, and (as more

appears) you shall hear from me again'.<sup>41</sup> Even though Bovet's 1684 version promises 'fresh testimonials', it offers no updating of the May letter, and indeed it ends 'whether the young man be yet alive, I can have no certain account. I leave the reader to consider of the extraordinary strangeness of the relation'.<sup>42</sup>

In short, Bovet's account is, even in his longest case study, lacking in any real depth of interest in the story related, except as a source of wonder. Furthermore, both Bovet accounts omit the crucial information that the incident takes place in a nonconformist house with nonconformist ministers involved, as well as Anglican ones. Glanvill and More, and their fellow Anglican clergy like Paschall and Boyse, were seeking to walk a line between popery and nonconformist enthusiasm and using witchcraft and the spirit world to vindicate Anglicanism against both threats. Can we see Bovet as treading the same tightrope? No. His texts are unequivocally aimed against Catholicism, with no parallel attack on any form of Protestant dissent. *Pandaemonium* offers, as Bostridge rightly saw, a devastating contrast between the evils of the Restoration regime and the virtues of the period before the Fall, which it is hard not to read as the period of the 'good old cause' of republicanism. At issue here were both morality and religiosity – a simultaneous critique of decadence and licentiousness which both created and reflected a lack of proper religion, and of a form of religion which was idolatry and priestcraft, not true faith. Both these facets reflected the role of the devil in inciting such corruption – forms of both behaviour and worship which he created and which led to worship of him in place of God.

Both the pamphlet and the book are obsessed with the 'bestial sensualities' which would inevitably follow lack of belief in spirits or a future life, leading to an 'eat, drink and be merry' culture 'whilst with torrents of intemperate and libidinous debauches they overwhelm their pampered and deluded selves in an eternal gulph of inextricable misery'.<sup>43</sup> This world of licentiousness is seen as the product of constant falls from grace, in which the devil strives to 'seduce and draw off the subjects of the Almighty from their allegiance to their sovereign creator' and 'bring them into an estate of vassalage and subject to his infernal power'.<sup>44</sup> One form that this takes is the explicit compact with the devil made by witches, or what Bovet calls 'those homages, offices and oblations made him by his miscreant hagg[sic] and confederates in their nocturnal cabals and night-revels'.<sup>45</sup> But the language of this extract makes clear that such witchcraft presents itself to Bovet as a form of a much wider tendency to false worship, confederacy and revelling, which all amount to the 'worshipping that abomination', whether in pagan form or 'in

temples and pompous ceremonies'. Throughout the ages Bovet portrays a cosmic battle between a 'righteous seed' and those 'still held captive in the chains of his diabolical enchantments and fascinations, notwithstanding the dreadful and terrible judgments of the Almighty'.<sup>46</sup> The Israelites 'had no temple erected to his infernal worship, but still he reign'd among atheistical priests, debauched courts and wanton cities' nor 'are the streets of Christian cities free, but rather too shamefully infected with the filthy riots of these lewd night rambles: whose shameless abominations (if not soon suppressed) will doubtless bring us under an amazing and tremendous desolation'. 'If the back-slidings of the Jews cost them so dear, what may we think will become of apostate Christians?' In pre-Christian times, this saw 'the first National Church of the Jews perverted to the abominations of the Gentiles'.<sup>47</sup> But worse was to come, as 'the idolatrous papists of later date have been and are the great promoters of this infernal and accursed defection... the great encouragers of Demonolatry as well as Idolatry' for 'idol priest-craft [i.e. the Roman Catholic clergy] and devil-worship are inseparable dependants one upon the other'.<sup>48</sup> Papal apostasy from 'primitive simplicity' involved one long series of confederacies with the devil leading to 'an adoration of images, altars and relicks'. 'Still the old confederacy is kept up, tho [sic] under new forms and notions. And perhaps it is none of the smallest policies of the agents of that communion to impose upon their credulous ones the belief that there is no such thing as a witch, so that their performances of that kind may the better pass under the notion of a miracle'.<sup>49</sup>

Bovet's account of witchcraft itself is highly unoriginal and could have been written by any seventeenth-century English Protestant. It condemns the full biblical range of soothsayers, charmers, sorcerers and magicians, as well as witches both black and white.<sup>50</sup> Given the power of the gospel, 'in those countries where there is least idolatry and where the sincere preaching of the word of power is countenanced, there it is very rare comparatively to meet with instances of the Satanical craft and power'.<sup>51</sup> Witchcraft appeals to the ignorant, the malicious and especially the superstitious, 'for they often become witches, by endeavouring to defend themselves against witchcraft', but others 'take up the use of magical forms and simples by tradition'.<sup>52</sup> He condemns the use of conjuring books and most judicial astrology, but he notes that the latter, if kept 'within the modest directions of natural speculation', can be lawful and useful. Similarly, there can be lawful divination, as God can give true knowledge of future 'to such as truly fear him and call upon his name', such as 'the changes that may happen either to his Church

in general or to particular countries, families or persons'. 'Approaching calamities' 'often shew themselves to us either in aerial or other prodigies', for example 'the dreadful desolations that happened in Germany and in England in the late unnatural warrs [sic] (which whether or no they were presaged by them, yet certainly had many tremendous apparitions in the air and on the earth etc before those calamities broke forth among them)'.<sup>53</sup>

The witch is 'commonly understood' as 'a female agent or patient, who is become in covenant with the Devil, having in a literal sense sold her selfe to work wickedness, such whose chief negotiation tends to the spoiling their neighbours persons or goods'.<sup>54</sup> Bovet describes the witch's relationship to the devil in terms of prostitution ('those hellish compacts therefore are managed like the filthy intrigues betwixt a fornicator and his strumpet').<sup>55</sup> But because 'it is very difficult to prove such and such a one to be a witch' 'it ought to be done with the greatest caution and tenderness imaginable'. Some 'may have been unjustly accused for witches; either by ignorance of causes meerly [sic] natural or misapplying causes that in themselves are supernatural', especially given the possible effects of the imagination. But 'even if it be supposed that some have been suspected for witches, barely for having deformed bodies, ill aspects or melancholy constitutions', this does not disprove the existence of witches.<sup>56</sup> That witches are 'commonly of the female sex' is explained by their Eve-like qualities, and 'it has been a long time observed' that women excel in both virtue and wickedness.<sup>57</sup>

There is no sense in Bovet's book that he is seeking to stir up the prosecution of witches, but, in his commentaries on the cases in the second part, he is relatively quick to identify a witch at work. In the first case (a 1683 report from Bristol of a case c.1638), although 'there be no mention made of any suspected witch, by whose power the aforesaid children were reduced to that deplorable state, and some of the physicians that administered to them were of the common opinion that there was nothing of fascination on the case, but that was purely the effect of a natural distemper, I must crave their pardon if I dissent from them'. Many of the features of the case were preternatural (unnaturally powerful convulsions, levitation, vomiting of pins and sudden recovery) and revealed 'the cloven-foot of fascination', and the omission of any reference to a witch appearing to the children might just be because no account survived of that particular or 'the confederate agency might purposefully avoid shewing any personal figure to them, lest the relations upon such notice should detect and prosecute the peccant party'.<sup>58</sup> In the fifth case, a Somerset one, the 'suspected agent' was a 'woman



that had been of ill fame among the neighbours and suspected of divers ill practices', and problems began when she was refused the loan of some small change. A 'great toad' and seven 'vast large' cats appeared, and the fits of the afflicted mother and son involved vomiting pins and needles. The mother saw the witch and got her husband to cut at it with a sword, and 'that party had a lame hand for a considerable time after', though the 'supposed malevolent' lived about five years after the afflicted. Bovet notes, 'I do not understand for all this any Justice was applied to, but many Physicians who all agreed it to be notorious witchcraft'.<sup>59</sup> Two of the Scottish cases also involved witches, although only the first, the 1678 case of Sir George Maxwell of Pollock, had led to an actual prosecution.<sup>60</sup>

However, there is no sign in Bovet's volume of the elaborate confessions of sabbaths and other dealings with the devil found in the Somerset cases published by Glanvill or in the writings of Hopkins and Stearne. Bovet's witch stories could have appeared in any of the maleficial and possession pamphlets published during the previous century. The 'nocturnal cabals and night-revels' of the dedication, or the elaborate idolatrous worship of the devil of the first part, are conspicuously absent, as is any direct role for the devil. One other case involves a falconer 'raising the Devil' by reading a book at night, but the devil is called a 'frightful goblin' and it is far from clear what took place or how seriously it is meant to be taken.<sup>61</sup> Another case, in which some maids hope to see their future husbands on Midsummer's Eve night, leads Bovet to discuss 'magical days and seasons', noting the devil's 'aversion to the light' and concluding that 'most probable this appointing of times, and hours, is of the Devils own institution, as well as the fast, that having once ensnared people to an obedience to his rules, he may with more facility oblige them to a stricter vassalage', but he leaves the 'learned to judge' whether the 'appearances were the spirits of two young men' or (as he is 'apt to believe') 'spirits of another nature, that assumed their likeness'.<sup>62</sup> The 'demons of Spraiton' are also described by Bovet as 'ghosts', 'spectres' and 'spirits', and Bovet concludes that one came 'not upon an errand of uncharitableness, but to see the will of the defunct performed'.<sup>63</sup> The other stories all involve the preternatural but cover a wide range of phenomena, from apparitions and poltergeists of various kinds to what are labeled as 'fairies'. In discussing these, Bovet is cautious about drawing any firm conclusions about what is happening, and quite often he reports the cases with no comment or explanation at all. Their common message would appear to be the moral drawn from the final case, which forms the last sentence of the book, namely 'let no

man doubt of intelligencies [sic] in the world, besides what are huddled up in garments of clay: we see agencies above the reach of our comprehension; and things performed by bodies seemingly aerial, which surpass the strength, power and capacity of the most robust mortal'.<sup>64</sup>

Once again, this returns us to the question of how we can link the two halves of the text, since the mild anti-materialism of the second part seems to have little connection with the anti-idolatrous radicalism of the first. Should the second part then be seen merely as a publishing ploy, drawing in the reader with the promise of strange wonders and orthodox anti-Sadduceeism, to encourage him to read the polemical first part? To answer this question, we need to turn to the history of the Bovet family themselves and consider the relationship between *Pandaemonium* and the family's experience. This will offer strong support for the supposition that radical anti-popery lies at the heart of the book and suggest that a further motive for its publication, and for the inclusion of the second part, was a desire to vindicate the gentility and worth of the Bovets, but it will also suggest that it would be wrong to rule out the fear of witchcraft as a force driving the production of such a work.

Who was the 'Richard Bovet[t] Gent.', named on both title pages as the author of *Pandaemonium*? Most scholars have followed Montague Summers in identifying him as Richard Bovet junior, born about 1641 in Somerset, who matriculated at Wadham College Oxford in 1657 as 'Arm. fil' (the son of a gentleman) and the likely author of two later anti-Jacobite congratulatory poems, praising the defeat of the French fleet in 1693 and William III's surviving an attempted assassination in 1695. Both poems share *Pandaemonium*'s deep-seated anti-Catholicism and its tendency to uncover Jacobite conspiracies animated by devilish powers.<sup>65</sup> But *Pandaemonium*'s author could be his father (or possibly uncle), Richard Bovet senior of Bishops' Hull, near Wellington (Somerset) who, together with his brother Philip, was executed in 1685 for commanding a regiment in Monmouth's rebellious army.<sup>66</sup> Both had been prominent parliamentarians in Somerset, where Richard's purchases of sequestered property included a Duchy of Cornwall manor at Milton Falconbridge (purchased for £7150) and, from the Stawell family estates, both the rectory of Wiveliscome and the mansion at Cothelstone, outside whose gates he was hanged in 1685.<sup>67</sup> After the Restoration, 'Colonel Bovet' (or Buffet) was associated with numerous plots, frequently hiding before reappearing; Philip remained a significant local figure but was refused the title of gentleman by the heralds visiting Somerset in 1672.<sup>68</sup> These Bovets were part of a larger clan of Bovets,

most of them from the middling ranks of the countryside and small towns, who straddled the borders of west Somerset, east Devon and west Dorset, exactly the territory from which Monmouth was to draw his rebel forces in 1685. Monmouth's rebels included ten Bovets, from Yarcombe, Honiton, Axminster, Membury in Devon and Stockland in Dorset as well as Taunton and Wellington, whose occupations included yeomen, combmakers and an exciseman. Only Richard and Philip were definitely executed, but three others were transported to Barbados and one was reported 'slain in service'.<sup>69</sup> The family then lapsed into relative obscurity.

The clan leader was 'that beggar old Buffet', as Richard senior was described in 1685.<sup>70</sup> He was probably the son of Faith and John Bovett, a Chard woollen-draper who died in 1660, leaving £40 each to his two sons Richard and John and £20 to his son Philip. Richard rose to prominence as a supporter of the radical John Pyne and a parliamentary officer in the 1640s in Somerset (especially his defence of Wellington House against Royalist siege in early 1645), reaching the rank of 'lieutenant colonel', which he retained in the militia after 1649. 'Colonel Bovet', as he was regularly known, was a rogue figure in Somerset politics. By 1651 he was mayor of Taunton and purchasing the properties noted above.<sup>71</sup> By 1653 he had joined the county bench, his first meeting in April 1653 also featuring the first witchcraft case in Somerset in the interregnum, although there is no sign he was involved in it.<sup>72</sup> In August 1656 Bovet was an unsuccessful candidate at the county elections (with 374 votes), and in 1659 he and Dr John Palmer failed to win at Taunton.<sup>73</sup> He operated as a JP alongside such prominent families as the Carys until 1660, although he was less active from 1657. This may have brought him into contact with the source of Glanvill's material on Somerset witchcraft cases, Robert Hunt, since Cary and Hunt worked closely as JPs (including in a number of witchcraft cases) from 1657 (when former Royalists such as Hunt came back onto the bench), but there is no direct evidence of Bovet and Hunt collaborating. At the Restoration, whereas both Cary and Hunt remained on the bench, Bovet lost everything.<sup>74</sup> The sequestered Royalist and Crown properties were taken back, and Bovet entered a twilight zone, though apparently occupying a six-hearth house in Taunton in 1664. He was identified, rightly or wrongly, in every radical plot of the 1660s and 1670s as the potential military leader capable of raising thousands of soldiers around Taunton, which made him crucial since Taunton was the most anti-Royalist town in the west country. Time and again he was Somerset's most wanted man and disappeared, only to resurface when things had calmed down.<sup>75</sup> Finally, in 1685, his

status was recognized when he was made a colonel again to command the Blue Regiment in Monmouth's army, while his daughter Catherine was the leader (or 'captain') of the famous Taunton schoolgirls who greeted Monmouth and became the particular objects of both popular memory and the revenge of Judge Jefferys.<sup>76</sup>

So, everything we know about the Bovet family fits easily with the radical anti-popery and hatred of the Restoration regime displayed in part one of *Pandaemonium*. But what of the collection of relations in the second part? One way of reading these is to see them as an assertion of the gentility of the Bovets, establishing their linkages with a range of leading families in the west country. Presenting himself as the correspondent, confidante and frequent guest of these families, the author presents the marginal Bovets (often on the run from arrest) as regular members of gentry society. In addition to the 'noble family', these include the Ayshs of South Petherton, the Woods of Kitford (Devon), 'Sir J.F. near Sherburne', and several lesser but established families, as well as merchants in both London and Scotland. His Bristol informant, 'Mr J.R. a gentleman of good ingenuity and reputation', might well have been Colonel John Rumsey, the customs collector, a leading radical involved in the Rye House Plot, though he saved his life by turning informant.<sup>77</sup> The use of initials in this case (and that of 'T.C.' in the Spraiton case) and the coyness in naming the 'noble family' or discussing their cases in detail ('I could say much more, only for the regard and honour I ought to bear to the family, I dare not name them')<sup>78</sup> seem to be playing simultaneously with two conventions. The one, widely discussed in the history of science at this period, is the notion of using unimpeachable witnesses from the aristocracy and the professions to give credibility to testimonies but avoiding compromising their 'honour' through the use of social descriptions and initials rather than full names. The second is the convention of the conspirator, who has to establish the strength of his potential connections, but without compromising their security. The bitter irony is that, a year later, the Whig gentry families of the south-west failed to support Monmouth and left the 'beggarly' Bovets to lead the middling and lower orders of the region to disaster.

It would be perfectly plausible, therefore, to argue that for the Bovets (as for the bookseller Malthus) the publishing of *Pandaemonium* was shaped by the politics of anti-popery and the standing of the Bovets, not by a desire to contribute to an intellectual debate on the world of spirits, much less to 'the old trade of witchfinding'. Yet it need not follow from this, of course, that the Bovets were simply exploiting the fears of 'the country' without believing in the powers of the devil or

witchcraft. There is no evidence to link the Bovet family with any of the Somerset cases tried in the period up to 1684. But the story of the Bovets and witchcraft does not end with the events of 1684–5.

On 7 September 1696, an Elizabeth Harner or Horner, alias Turner, was tried at Exeter Castle, for killing Alice Bovett by witchcraft and bewitching her sisters Sarah and Mary Bovett. It has been argued by Humphreys, the historian of Wellington, that the family must have been based there, as both Horners and Bovetts were local names.<sup>79</sup> But in that case a trial at Devon's assizes in Exeter is most unlikely, and we have seen that Bovets were scattered across the region. From some of the names in the case it is more likely that this Bovet was from Yarcombe or Honiton, and that the father in the case, Thomas Bovet, may have been another of the Monmouth rebels, perhaps the one transported to the West Indies and then pardoned by William III, or his descendant.<sup>80</sup>

Details of the trial are preserved in a letter written a week later by Archdeacon Blackburne to the bishop of Exeter, who had commanded him to attend the trial.<sup>81</sup> The parents, Thomas and Elizabeth Bovett, were the chief witnesses, reporting the strange ailments and physical contortions of their children, the bafflement of physicians, the vomiting of pins and stones, marking of the children's skin, levitation, and the voices and apparitions of the witch, who also prevented them from saying prayers and forced them to swear and curse: all classic symptoms of possession cases and all found in *Pandaemonium*. The children 'gave the same account sensibly enough', one adding details about Bett Horner playing with a toad in a basin. Four other witnesses, three women and a man, then testified in various ways. One repeated the classic story of refusing Horner drink, after which their brewing vessel began to behave oddly. A second recorded seeing the witch in the countryside when she was locked up in prison. The third reported a piece of counter-magic, driving a red-hot nail into the witch's footstep, after which the witch went lame and 'being searched her leg and foot appeared to be red and fiery' until the nail was pulled out and 'then the witch was well'. Finally the other male witness, John Fursey, deposed 'to his seeing her three nights together upon a large down in the same place as if rising out of the ground'. In court 'the witch denied all, shewed her shoulder bare in court, when there appeared nothing but a mole or wart', – not a devil's mark – and also managed, despite some hesitation, to repeat the Lord's Prayer and the Creed.

It is tempting, given the vagaries of seventeenth-century spelling, to associate the John Fursey who witnessed in this case with the Furze family who were involved in the Spraiton case (a nonconformist family,

it will be recalled) and/or the Alice Furze against whom Alice Molland supposedly practised witchcraft in Exeter in 1685. At the Exeter Lent Assizes on 20 March Alice Molland was found guilty of witchcraft on the bodies of Joane Snow, Wilmott Snow and Alice Furze and hanged, probably the last witch executed in England. Four Somerset Furzes were Monmouth rebels.<sup>82</sup>

Despite his neutral presentation of the evidence, Blackburne was clearly a little disturbed at the behaviour of Lord Chief Justice Holt, a notorious sceptic who presided over many non-guilty verdicts at this period, of which this was one. He notes 'my Lord Chief Justice, by his questions and manner of hemming up [summing up?] the evidence, seemed to believe nothing of witchery at all, and to disbelieve the fact of walking up the wall, which was sworn by the mother'. Holt passed his case notes onto the sceptic Francis Hutchinson, who used them in his brief account of the case in his *Historical Essay* of 1718.<sup>83</sup> Both Holt and Hutchinson, like North, clearly regarded the witchcraft statute, and the uses to which it could be put by factious politicians feeding on the passions of the people, as the real danger to the establishment in state and church. For all its complexities, perhaps the example of *Pandaemonium* suggests that they were right.

# 5

## John Beaumont: Science, Spirits and the Scale of Nature

In May 1685, John Beaumont, of Ston Easton in the Mendips region of Somerset, was elected a fellow of the Royal Society. He had already published several papers in the society's *Philosophical Transactions* and *Philosophical Collections* and was a friend of leading Royal Society members such as Robert Hooke and Edward Tyson. His close observations of the geology of the Mendip hills and mines, and the specimens he collected from such studies, brought him praise from the new generation of natural historians such as Robert Plot and John Ray, and both the Royal Society and the Oxford Philosophical Society were keen to see him publish the natural history of Somerset, for which he issued proposals earlier in 1685. Although this history never materialised, there was praise for his most substantial work of geology, his 1693 *Considerations on Dr Burnet's Theory of the Earth*, which offered a sustained critique of Burnet's Cartesian account of the current earth as the ruins of a former perfect globe, of his account of how the deluge had produced such catastrophic change, and of his view of the future fiery destruction of the world. Beaumont used his own observational data, as well as arguments from biblical and classical scholarship and other natural histories, to argue for the evidence of design in the world as currently formed. Hence Beaumont earns his place in Roy Porter's account of the earth sciences in this period as one of the best field workers, with a significant collection of fossils and stones, and as an effective theorist of the earth in the natural history (and natural design) tradition.<sup>1</sup>

By the time of his death in 1731, however, Beaumont had become better known as the author of a 'Treatise on Spirits', namely his *Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits, Apparitions, Witchcrafts and Other Magical Practices: containing an account of the genii or familiar spirits, both good and bad, that are said to attend men in this life, and what*

*sensible perceptions some persons have had of them (particularly the author's own experience for many years). Also of appearances of spirits after death, divine dreams, divinations, second sighted persons, &c; likewise the power of witches and the reality of other magical operations, clearly asserted. With the refutation of Dr Bekker's World bewitch'd; and other authors that have opposed the belief of them* (1705). This attracted considerable attention, such that it was translated into German in 1721 by Theodor Arnold with a foreword by Christian Thomasius at Halle, and its stories have found their way into numerous subsequent collections, with Beaumont (like Glanvill and Bovet) becoming part of the canon of authors of accounts of the supernatural.<sup>2</sup> Notably, the author of *The History of the Life and Adventures of Mr Duncan Campbell* (1720) cites the *Treatise* several times, describing the author as 'the ingenious Dr Beaumont, whom I personally knew, who had a familiar genius himself'. This work, now ascribed to William Bond (d.1735), was long thought to be by Daniel Defoe, and so Beaumont is regularly discussed as a possible influence on Defoe when he wrote about apparitions in the 1720s – Sir Walter Scott even opined that Defoe had written the *Treatise* under the name of John Beaumont!<sup>3</sup> Though details of Beaumont's personal life remain obscure, and he himself refers to numerous setbacks in his fortunes, his book has retained its appeal to the present day.

The apparent contrast between the two facets of Beaumont's life, highlighted above, has been noted several times. George Goodwin, in the original *Dictionary of National Biography*, resolved the conflict by postulating that Beaumont, a 'geologist', had 'laid his [natural history] aside that he might devote himself to theology and spiritualism', dismissing the *Treatise* as 'written in an amusing, gossiping style, [abounding] with grotesque tales and illustrations from little-known authors'. As for his personal experience of spirits, he 'innocently contrives to lessen the effect of his narration by adding that in their frequent visitations "all would dissuade me from drinking too freely"'. In short, the impressive experimentalist became the deluded writer on spirits (in both senses)! As I shall argue, this is a grotesque distortion, and it is avoided by Scott Mandelbrote in his much better informed and balanced account of Beaumont ('natural philosopher and collector of geological specimens') for the recent *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Goodwin paraphrases the comments on Beaumont of John Ferriar in his 1813 *Essay towards a Theory of Apparitions*: 'He appears to have been a man of hypochondriacal disposition with a considerable degree of reading, but with a strong bias to credulity. His collections of stories are entertaining, but my business is with his visions, which show in a



most astonishing manner, how far the mind may be deceived, without the occurrence of actual derangement. Had this man, instead of irritating his mental disease, by the study of the Platonic philosophers, placed himself under the care of an intelligent physician, he would have regained his tranquillity, and the world would have lost a most extraordinary set of confessions.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, Beaumont *had* come under the care of one of the age's most intelligent physicians, Sir Hans Sloane, secretary and then president of the Royal Society, whose collections and library (including all of Beaumont's books) formed the basis of the British Museum and British Library collections. Sloane clearly regarded Beaumont as a fascinating and tragic case and prepared a memoir of him, which he sent (in French) to the Abbé Bignon in 1740. Sloane had not been able to shake Beaumont's belief in his experiences with spirits. Yet a simple contrast (between a successful experimentalist and a failed occultist) hinders a proper understanding of not only Beaumont's career, but also perhaps Sloane himself. It is to Sloane's own collection of occult material that we owe much of what has survived in the way of magical manuscripts and artefacts (intriguingly including a 1643 horoscope of a 'Dr Beaumont of Bath'), and while the public Sloane was very much a model of the new enlightened Newtonian scientist, the collector was clearly drawn to many of the same subjects as Beaumont, which may explain his fascination with Beaumont's case.<sup>5</sup>

The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to try to restore a rounded vision of John Beaumont's life and writings. It will first outline what we know of his life, before going on to consider his intellectual contacts. I will suggest that, even if he did spend much of his life in Somerset, his ambitions were focused more on his London links with Royal Society members and with his publishing career there as an aspiring European man of letters. I will then consider in detail his *Treatise* and its treatment of spirits, suggesting that Beaumont should be seen not in the tradition of Glanvill and More, with their attempts to prove the empirical reality of a spirit world, but rather in a hermetic tradition, interested in the role of spirits in guiding humans to enlightenment. I will then show that these interests pervaded his earlier work on the history of the earth, at least in his major publication of 1693. Rather than seeing an early experimentalist whose career degenerates into occultism, my emphasis will be on the continuity of his core interests and approaches across his career, suggesting that his experimental work in natural history was always embedded within his wider scholarly interests in what could be gleaned from antiquity and his sense of the

ultimate subordination of the world of reason to that of faith. In particular, it will portray him as committed to what we now label as a 'hermetic' philosophy, one stressing the recovery of an ancient wisdom fully recoverable only by those willing to follow the discipline of a contemplative life and open themselves to spiritual guidance as well as human reasoning. In his writings we find an extended commentary on how far this esoteric approach can be combined with the public, or exoteric, world of natural philosophy, as it was developing under the aegis of the Royal Society. Beaumont himself was well aware that there were tensions between the demands of science and of religion, of public reasoning through experiment and of private experience and self-development. He was also aware that his personal circumstances and mental condition might help shape what he understood, and he presented himself to his readers precisely so that they might take account of that in judging his work. Hence, even though much about his career remains unknown, even mysterious, he offers an ideal opportunity to develop further the themes of this book.

\* \* \*

Throughout his life, Beaumont described himself as John Beaumont (sometimes adding 'junior' in his early work), gentleman, of Ston Easton (a small village north-east of Wells on the eastern edge of the Mendip Hills, also known as Stone or Stony Easton). Goodwin says he 'led a retired life' here, 'where he practised surgery', while Mandelbrote says he 'spent most of his life' here and 'practised medicine', but there are records neither of his licensing or practice, nor of his residency in the parish.<sup>6</sup> Nobody is sure when he was born (Goodwin gives no date, while ODNB hazards circa 1640, as Sloane states he died aged 'plus de nonante ans'), but we know nothing of his life before his first publications in 1676.<sup>7</sup> When a catalogue of 'several valuable libraries', totalling 8000 volumes, was offered for sale by John Brindley on 1 December 1741, it included the 'entire libraries' of 'an eminent counsellor, deceas'd and of Dr Beaumont author of the Treatise upon Spirits'.<sup>8</sup> He is also referred to as 'Dr Beaumont' in a 1714 document from a lawsuit involving him and his wife Dorothy, the sister of John Specott of Penheale in Egloskerry Cornwall.<sup>9</sup> But there is no record of his university education at all, let alone of the award of a doctorate, and he never claims one in any of his publications or in his will, dated 30 July 1728, in which he calls himself, as ever, 'John Beaumont of Stony Easton in Sommersetshire gent'. This will, which was not proved by his widow and executrix Dorothy

until 3 May 1739, includes reference to £10 he was lent by the father of Mr Daniel Browne bookseller (the publisher of the 1705 *Treatise*) and to money owed to him by Sir John Molesworth.<sup>10</sup>

Even his death is a bit of a mystery. He certainly died in early 1731, and a John Beaumont was buried at Ston Easton on 23 March 1731. However, the *London Evening Post* of 23 January 1731 reports, 'on Saturday night last Dr John Beaumont a Roman Catholic gentleman was interr'd privately at Pancras', which would be in accord with the will of 1728, which specified his wish to be buried 'in Pancras churchyard in a grave next to that of my late dear sister and children'. The *Gentleman's Magazine* also reports that 'Dr John Beaumont a Roman Catholick gentleman' had died, though on 25 January.<sup>11</sup> There were several other John Beaumonts active in London at this period: a Presbyterian minister at Deptford in Kent, who had died in November 1730; a man who became doorkeeper to the House of Lords in 1737; and 'a very eminent apothecary' who died in 1748, but clearly none of these died in January 1731.<sup>12</sup> Though his publications all stress his location in Ston Easton (and historians portray him as a provincial), we know that he spent substantial parts of his life in London, and he may well have been there at his death (possibly being buried there initially before later being moved to his family base in Somerset).<sup>13</sup>

Most notable, perhaps, is the suggestion that he was a Roman Catholic at his death, which is confirmed by Sloane's memoir for Abbé Bignon, which states that he was a sincere Roman Catholic throughout his life.<sup>14</sup> None of his writings enable us to draw this conclusion, although it is certainly compatible with his regular citation of authors such as Father Richard Simon and his fideist willingness to subordinate the findings of reason, ultimately, to the authority of revelation, as understood by the church. However, it fits very well with what we know of the Beaumont family. Our first reference to the Beaumonts at Ston Easton comes with the presentment of the churchwardens and tithingmen of Ston Easton that 'John Beaumont and Constance his wife are reputed to be papists and no other' on 22 September 1657. This is presumably John's father (John Beaumont 'senior'), and suggests that he came from the Beaumont family of Wells (whose name, however, is usually spelt Beamond or Beamont in the pre-1650 records), who were also Roman Catholics. In 1642 both John and Anthony Beamond, though signing the Protestation Oath roll for St Cuthberts Wells, were listed as recusants at the end of the roll, and John Beamont 'gent' was also noted as a recusant in the tax returns of the same period; there are no Beaumonts listed at Ston Easton at that date. Several of

the Beaumonts in early-seventeenth-century Wells are apothecaries, including John Beaumont, who died in 1635, leaving sons William, John and Thomas, to the last of whom he gave 'all my books of physic and surgery and my shop drugs'. Thomas, who also became a vicar choral in 1637, operated at 1 Market Place and was still there in 1664. It may be his older brother John who moved out of Wells to nearby Ston Easton during the next decade; in the hearth tax of 1664/5 they were one of only three families in Ston Easton with more than two hearths.<sup>15</sup>

Once established there, the Beaumont family became prominent in the Roman Catholic community, and several became priests, including the Franciscan John Beaumont (eldest son of Joseph and Hannah Beaumont), who was born in the 1690s and died in 1774 at Douai Convent and was active in Somerset in the 1730s, being listed in 1736 as 'guardian of the custody of Bristol'. The register of papists' estates for Ston Easton in 1731–2 lists properties for Henry, James, Hannah, William and John Beaumont, and associated papers reveal that several of them still owned properties in Wells. In 1779 the Beaumonts, based at Hay Street Farm, which had its own tiny Roman Catholic chapel attached, were the second largest landowners in the parish, with 67 acres, farming 27 of them and letting the others out. The main landowners of the parish were the Hippisley family (among whose papers, interestingly, is a manuscript account of the 1633 Pendle witches case). Joseph Beaumont, gent (then married to an Elizabeth, but possibly the father of the Franciscan), whose will was made in November 1731, had a manor in the parish with a mansion house and about 33 acres of land. He was probably our John's brother, as his will mentions his sister-in-law Dorothy, and in 1735 a Chancery suit refers to Dorothy as the widow and executrix of the plaintiff's uncle John Beaumont of Ston Easton, and to Elizabeth, widow of Joseph, another of the plaintiff's uncles.<sup>16</sup>

John also dedicated one of his books in 1694 to Charles Cottington, in recognition of 'the many favours I have received from you...your most obliged kinsman and most humble servant, John Beaumont junior'. Cottington, of Fonthill Gifford in Wiltshire, who died in 1697, was the nephew and heir of Francis Lord Cottington, Charles I's Lord Treasurer, who, though not a Catholic himself, was from a Somerset recusant family in the Bruton area. Charles's son Francis refused the oaths to George I in 1715 and was made a baron by the Old Pretender in 1716. It may be significant, therefore, that Beaumont tells Cottington that the book is 'chiefly intended for your hopeful offspring' and stresses

'its well known how eminent for parts and service to the nation the late Lord Cottington your uncle was'.<sup>17</sup>

John Beaumont's Roman Catholicism throws a different light on his behaviour in 1685, a turning point in his career. In early 1685 he appears to have been at the height of his success, admitted to the Royal Society in London while seeking the approval of the Somerset bench and gentry for his county history project. In his dedicatory epistle to Robert Hooke of his *Considerations* Beaumont states, 'I had no sooner printed a draught of [the county history proposal] when an ill juncture of times happening, it caused me to lay it by. To such providential disappointments all men must submit.' In his later *Gleanings of Antiquities* (1724) he returned to the question of 'the natural history of that county, which was recommended by some gentlemen of the Royal Society to be undertaken by me. And accordingly I printed a draught of my design and attended the Parliament-men of that county here in London with it, who seem'd inclined to favour it; but it being in the reign of the late King James, when people were generally uneasy, and the disturbance of Monmouth's rebellion falling chiefly on that county, it discouraged me in it; and farther, tho I believe the Gentlemen of the Royal Society were sincere in their recommendation, I found there was another party of men, who, for reasons known to themselves, were resolved to obstruct my proceedings in it, and by some clandestine practices, let me know after a severe manner; the same party having pursued me ever since with a far greater severity, if we must call so, a continual thwarting all our worldly concerns; which notwithstanding (if I may be believed) has no way affected me, I never having sought worldly advantages; and if at any time fortune has thrown them upon me, I think I have shewn great indifferency in that respect. I beg the reader's pardon for this short digression and shall only add that Somersetshire deserves a good natural history, it having great diversity of soil, and considerable antiquities, and if affords considerable heads of natural history, which Dr Plot had not in his histories of Oxfordshire and Staffordshire; I mean the heads of mines and the sea'.<sup>18</sup>

One might take this to mean that Beaumont had been a supporter of Monmouth's doomed rebellion, which tore apart Somerset and Dorset society in 1685. Indeed, among those tried for participation in the rebellion we find a John Beaumont senior of Lyme Regis, tried at Dorchester and hanged at Bridport on 12 September, and a John Beaumont junior (no location given) tried at Dorchester but 'humbly proposed for pardon'. Beaumont's 'late honoured friend William Strode' of Street, to whom he refers in 1724, if this means William Strode of Barrington

Court and Street (d. 1695) was a Whig who had entertained the Duke of Monmouth during his west-country tour in 1680 and was reported to have sent horses and money to him in 1685; his brother Edmund sheltered Monmouth for the night after Sedgemoor, but both brothers obtained royal pardons in 1686. In November 1686 Paschall tells John Aubrey (who knew Beaumont) that there has been no news of Beaumont and that it must be Aubrey's province to preserve his collections 'if he be gone'. The letter also suggests some tension between Paschall, who had been promoting natural history in Somerset since the 1660s, and Beaumont, which might suggest that the Tory clergyman Paschall was one of those Beaumont thought had opposed him, but Paschall seems to want Aubrey to act as a go-between to get Beaumont back on board, if he returns. When he did return is unclear, though it was before 1691, when Edward Lhwyd visited his collection in Somerset. All this is compatible with seeing Beaumont as a Monmouth rebel who had fled Somerset in the summer of 1685 and perhaps not returned until after the Revolution of 1688–9. But this seems strongly at odds with Roman Catholicism, so it may be that our Beaumont is not the Monmouth rebel and that his disputes were of a different kind.<sup>19</sup>

Certainly there is nothing elsewhere in his writings to suggest any political involvement or giving any definite proof of his ideological preferences. His numerous editions of a publication called *The Present State of the Universe* from 1694, with its long accounts of the royal families of Europe, might be read as a form of Royalism, though his coverage both of the House of Orange and of the deposed house of Stuart seems neutral, and he also covers republics, as well as the papal state in Rome, all without judgemental comments. Noting James II's second wife, Mary, he comments 'as some say, he has had a son and daughter by her since, still living. Their Majesties reside at present at S. Germain's in France and profess the Roman religion', while William is 'now stiled William the Third King of England'. After listing the princes and princesses of royal blood who are not excluded from succession by 'late Act of parliament', he then lists the others that are Roman Catholics. However later, citing Petty on London's superiority over Paris, he adds, 'we know that in case of a war or the like (as at present) the kings of England, with the concurrence of their Parliaments, are able to raise sums great enough to deal with any prince or potentate whatsoever'.<sup>20</sup>

A key event in Beaumont's career was the lawsuit involving the claim of his wife, Dorothy, to her brother's estate. She was the daughter of John Specott and his wife, Hannah (the daughter of John Eliot of Port Eliot), and was christened at Egloskerry (the parish of their manor of Penheale)

near Launceston on the Devon/Cornwall border on 12 November 1668 (so she was considerably younger than John). Her father was MP for the nearby borough of Newport from 1661 to January 1678, when he died. He was apparently a Presbyterian and inclined to the Whigs, but his son John (1665–1704 or 1705) was a strong Tory supporter after 1689, refusing the Association in 1696. He was MP for Newport in 1685, 1689 and 1690, and for Cornwall from 1695 until November 1701. He had married a daughter of John Robartes, first earl of Radnor, in 1689, but she had died of smallpox caught from him only a few weeks later.<sup>21</sup> The Specotts were related to many other leading families in Devon and Cornwall, including the Molesworths and the Edgcumbes. We have already seen the reference in John's will to Sir John Molesworth, presumably the third baronet, as the prominent second baronet (MP for Lostwithiel 1701–5) had died in 1716. The dedicatee of Beaumont's last book, in 1728, was Richard Edgcumbe (1680–1758), later Baron Edgcumbe, whose father, Sir Richard, had been an early fellow of the Royal Society (and had his house designed by Hooke) and who was himself a notable connoisseur and friend of Alexander Pope, his neighbour in Twickenham, whose grotto he supplied with minerals from his estates. Though Pope was of course another Roman Catholic (and if the Cottington connection hinted at possible Jacobitism in Beaumont's views), one should note that Edgcumbe was a model Whig and Hanoverian, closely associated with Walpole.<sup>22</sup>

Dorothy seems, therefore, to have taken Beaumont into a considerably higher level of society than the minor gentry background he came from (his family do not feature in the 1672 herald's visitation of Somerset). However, when Dorothy converted to her husband's Roman Catholic faith, her brother John took offence and, although childless when he made his will in August 1703, he left his sister Dorothy, who had been his heir, only an annuity of £150 per annum and £500 for each child she might have (or £1000 if only one), also bequeathing her £2450 to recompense her for the lands which she had given him during his lifetime, which probably included the manor of Tinney Hall in Lewannick. He left his main estate to his cousins John and Jonathan Spark of Plymouth, and, if they died without heirs, to the male heirs of his aunt Elizabeth, wife of the clergyman Richard Long. Specott's death (stated in the law reports to be 25 August 1704, but elsewhere given as June 1705), followed rapidly by the death of both Spark brothers without heirs, left a legal conundrum. Dorothy claimed that she was her brother's surviving heir, because Elizabeth Long was still alive and so had no heirs, as yet, to inherit. Elizabeth's son Thomas Long took

the view that he was already heir apparent and so should get the estate. According to the legal report of the case, it was worth £600 per annum in lands, rather than the £6000 p.a. suggested by some, but it was still a major fortune and attracted much attention. The Longs began their case in 1707, and it was brought to the Launceston assizes in March 1710, and then to the Exchequer (where different leading judges decided first for the Longs and then the Beaumonts), ending up finally in the House of Lords, which in May 1714 reversed the Exchequer judgement (which had been in favour of Dorothy) and gave the inheritance to the Longs (by now represented by William Darbison, a lessee of the Longs, so the case is well-known in legal history as 'Darbison vs Beaumont').<sup>23</sup> What then happened to Dorothy is unclear, though she clearly outlived John. Intriguingly, a Dorothy Beaumont is recorded as paying £200 for a 15% stake in the London paper the *Daily Advertiser* in 1741 and then finding herself in the Fleet prison because of problems associated with South Sea debts: this might explain the sale of John's books in 1741, if she was trying to raise money.<sup>24</sup>

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Clearly life had brought John and Dorothy considerable reversals of fortune, which are reflected in his published observations on his problems and on his preference for a contemplative life of the mind and the spirit; in 1724 he told Edgecumbe, 'I have always indulg'd a studious life'. Yet, it is clear that John had also spent considerable periods in London and abroad before 1700 and attempted a number of ventures into publishing which belie the image of a withdrawn country gentleman (or medical practitioner) interested only in his study. His first recorded stay in London is in August 1679, when he is mentioned in Robert Hooke's diary, and there are then regular mentions of him by Hooke until late that year, then a gap until the second half of 1680.<sup>25</sup> At some point in the early 1680s it seems that Beaumont went abroad, as in December 1684 the Bristol customs collector and naturalist William Cole asked what had become of Beaumont, 'sometimes beyond sea'.<sup>26</sup> In January 1682, Beaumont was apparently the anonymous gentleman who edited the new publication *Weekly Memorials for the Ingenious* (Lister identifies him as the person 'that writ the first weekly memorials', and Sloane confirmed his role in this in his memoir in 1740), which first appeared on 16 January 1682. This was an 'account of the books lately set forth in several languages with accounts relating to the arts and sciences', partly taking over the role that had been played by Oldenburg's summary of



foreign books in the early *Philosophical Transactions*, then in abeyance, and the preface appealed to the Royal Society to support his new venture. 'If the R.S. shall think my endeavours in this kind any way subservient to their designs, it may animate my industry to perform things in the best manner I may, being more devotedly their servant than my self'. After the seventh issue on 27 February 1682 there was a falling out between the author and his publishers (Faithorne and Kersey). Two rival journals with the same name were issued, each claiming to be the genuine continuation of the original and attacking the other, Faithorne criticising the 'certain huffish gentleman stiling himself an author' and Beaumont's new publishers urging readers to 'have the greater regard to the laborious industry of an author'. The author's version, now published by Chiswell, Basset, Crook and Crouch, restarted with number one on 20 March and continued for 29 parts until 25 September 1682, with a title page and index appearing in 1683, while the Faithorne and Kersey version lasted until issue 50 in January 1683, when it was also made available as a single bound volume.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, Beaumont prepared four further articles for *Philosophical Collections* and then *Philosophical Transactions* between 1681 and 1685, taking advantage of his 'residence in London' to get some of his specimens engraved in 1683.<sup>28</sup> In late 1684, Hooke presented him as a candidate for membership of the Royal Society and he was approved at a council meeting on 22 April 1685, proposed on 29 April and accepted into membership on 13 May 1685. However, there is no evidence that Beaumont ever attended meetings after that, and he never paid a fee other than his admission money nor published anything later with the Royal Society, nor claimed his fellowship in any of his later books.<sup>29</sup>

He was, however, the friend of several prominent Royal Society members. John Aubrey knew him and refers to him several times in his writings, citing this 'great naturalist' on stones and wells in Wiltshire, on Cheddar cliffs and on Lamb Leer Cavern in the Mendips, which Beaumont had explored in the 1670s. In his *Treatise* Beaumont refers to 'my late friend Mr John Aubrey ... whose letters he showed me before he printed them' (in his *Miscellanies*), and in *Gleanings* he reported that 'the late Mr John Aubrey SRS told me that at Avery [corrected to Avebury] in Wiltshire two great stones, which are of the sand-kind, stand up high above the ground, betwixt which within the memory of man a coach and horses could pass, whereas now those stones keeping still their erect posture, a man on horseback cannot pass betwixt them'.<sup>30</sup> It may be through Aubrey that he came to know John Vaughan, third earl of Carbery, to whom his *Treatise* was dedicated, as Vaughan had offered

Aubrey a post with him when he was governor of Jamaica: on his return he was president of the Royal Society 1686–9, but otherwise his reputation is rather as a rake than as a scholar. Alternatively, Sloane may have been the connection to Vaughan, as he also spent time in Jamaica (after Vaughan's return), and Sloane was admitted to the Royal Society on 21 January 1685, the same day as Vaughan was readmitted. It was Vaughan who on 5 December 1688 invited Hooke to prepare an account of the second part of Burnet's *Theory*, although Hooke had been developing a critique of Burnet for some time.<sup>31</sup>

Beaumont was also a friend of John Houghton, author of the *Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade*, whose publisher, Randall Taylor, produced the first edition of Beaumont's *Present State of Europe* in June 1694 and the *Postscript* to his *Considerations* in July 1694 (and also in April 1695 advertised another work, *Scala Naturae*, which may be associated with him, as discussed below). In 1697 Houghton, discussing tin, notes 'there was a volume of stanary-laws in Q[ueen]. Eliz[abeth's] time, printed; and I think that or some other like not long since by my good friend Mr John Beaumont of little Easton near Wells'. By this he presumably means the Mendip mining laws, as Beaumont notes in 1724, 'I have by me a transcript of all the mineral laws belonging to those hills which I took from the books lodg'd in the hands of the lead-reeves belonging to the four lords-royal to whom the body of those hills belongs; to which Laws I have writ a preface, giving a general account of those hills, relating both to the mines and the herbage; which laws and preface I intended to have printed in the natural history of that county'. In 1687 a seven-page duodecimo entitled *The Ancient Laws, Customs and Orders of the Miners of the King's Forrest of Mendipp in the County of Somerset* was printed for the bookseller William Cooper, based on an Exchequer account of Edward IV's reign, but this has no preface of the kind described and seems unlikely to have been Beaumont's work, as in the same year Cooper also published a similar but longer text on the laws and customs of the miners in the Forest of Dean.<sup>32</sup>

In 1692 Sloane wrote to John Ray reporting that he had 'lately seen a collection of petrifications with Mr Beaumont', some of which he describes, before adding 'which he talks of publishing, together with some figures of and reasonings upon them', and in reply on 25 May 1692 Ray wrote, 'Mr Beaumont is a person that has been very diligent in searching out and collecting and curious in observing of petrified shells and other bodies, and I suppose well qualified to write concerning them. I heard that he once threatened to write something in contradiction to Mr Burnet's Theory of the Earth, which piece I would wish to

see'.<sup>33</sup> Ray may have heard this from Hooke, who noted in his diary on 16 April 1689 that Beaumont's brother was 'to enq[ui]re about ans[wer] to Mr B[urne]ts last p[ar]t of Theor[ia] Sac[ra]' [the original Latin title of Burnet's work]. Beaumont renewed his acquaintance with Hooke in the 1690s, appearing regularly in his diary for 1692–3, and on 9 September 1692 Hooke recorded a meeting at Jonathan's coffeehouse, where Beaumont 'read the first book of his answer to Burnet's theory and his conclusion enthusiastic'. Beaumont dedicated his *Considerations* to Hooke, though he discovered this only after Beaumont had given him a copy on 24 February 1693. Hooke 'read a full account of Mr Beaumont's answer to Dr Burnet's Theory' at the Royal Society on 8 March and was presumably responsible for the long summary of the book in *Philosophical Transactions*. Despite his reservations about Beaumont's 'enthusiasm', they remained friends and the British Library copy of the first edition of the *Present State of the Universe* is Hooke's, subscribed on the title page by Hooke as presented to him by 'his worthy friend the author' on 4 July 1694. Ito argues that Hooke converted Beaumont from a neo-Platonist view of fossils as inorganic products of nature into a supporter of Hooke's cyclical theory of the earth by the time of his *Considerations*, but it may be worth considering whether Beaumont and other friends may have helped direct Hooke into the close study of the ancients which he underwent in order to challenge Burnet.<sup>34</sup>

If so, one of these friends might well have been Edward Tyson (1651–1708), with whom Beaumont is almost invariably found by Hooke in various coffeehouses in 1679–80. Tyson, a leading London physician and anatomist, was a Royal Society stalwart in the 1680s and became anatomical curator, thus making him the main experimentalist at Royal Society meetings apart from his close friend Hooke. Tyson was from Bristol, and his family also owned lands in North Somerset at Clevedon, not far from the Mendips, so he may well have known Beaumont before he came to London and perhaps introduced him to Hooke and others.<sup>35</sup> I shall argue below that Beaumont and Tyson shared a number of interests and approaches to nature, including a fascination with the 'scale of nature' and a determination to combine experimentalism (in Tyson's case his pioneering work on anatomy) with an exhaustive use of classical and biblical scholarship, in which Tyson was extensively versed as a cultured physician. It is possible that Tyson was the author of *Scala Naturae*, which takes the form of 'a letter to his much honoured friend J.B. of C. Esq.'. The author explains, 'I know no man who distinguishes religion from bigotry, or scripture from comment better than yourself. 'Tis you who have taught me that religion is a plain, short and wise

institution, which excludes all unintelligible mysteries, because they are puzzling and unapplicable and consequently useless'.<sup>36</sup> Of course, there could be many 'J.B.'s, but in 1727 a 'John Beaumont of Clapham esq.' is recorded as subscribing to Henry Pemberton's *A View of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy*, so perhaps our author was based there while in London. A Mr John Beaumont also subscribed to Richard Bradley's *A Philosophical Account of the Works of Nature. Endeavouring to set forth the several gradations remarkable in the mineral, vegetable, and animal* (1721), another work on the scale of nature.

By contrast with these documented links to leading London naturalists, Beaumont's Somerset connections are very poorly recorded. In all his writings the only Somerset people mentioned, apart from the Mendip miners, are a 'gentleman residing not far from the Bath' and 'my late honoured friend William Strode esq. at Street, two miles from Glastonbury in Somerset, who carried me into his laboratory, and showed me a piece of pottern ore', many years before 1724.<sup>37</sup> Although Beaumont might be the 'ingenious friend' who helped Joseph Glanvill with his accounts of the Mendip mines, drawn from the evidence of experienced miners, that appeared in *Philosophical Transactions* in 1667 and 1668, he is not recorded as a participant in the short-lived efforts by Glanvill, Andrew Paschall and others to set up a Somerset corresponding branch of the Royal Society in 1669. Beaumont's two papers on the geology of the Mendip area, published in 1676, contain no reference to any other local collaborators except miners.<sup>38</sup> In June 1683, when Paschall and his friends began to plan for a county history and developed a 'natural, civil and ecclesiastical' model for its contents, they do not know 'when a person can be found' to undertake it, so they do not seem to have had Beaumont in mind. Beaumont's 1685 proposal derives not from Paschall's model, but from that provided by Robert Plot, derived from his *Natural History of Oxfordshire*. In November 1683 Tyson had passed on Aubrey's request to Plot (Tyson's Oxford teacher) for some of his queries on nature for a 'gentleman in Somerset' desirous of imitating Plot, but adding civil and ecclesiastical history – it is not clear if this refers to Beaumont.<sup>39</sup> In his epistle to Hooke in *Considerations* Beaumont claims that the natural history of Somerset was a 'design first recommended to me by yourself, which would have taken up my thoughts for some years' and in 1724 that it 'was recommended by some gentlemen of the Royal Society to be undertaken by me', so it seems to have been his London friends that proposed that Beaumont take up a modified version of what was being proposed in Somerset, focusing it solely on natural history, on Plot's model.<sup>40</sup> On 1 July 1684 Aubrey

noted that Beaumont would assist in the history, along with William Cole, the Bristol customs collector and naturalist (from Aubrey's native Wiltshire), and in December 1684 Cole was writing from Minehead (where he was staying) to Plot asking about Beaumont and how 'I may be helpful to him in the discoveries made since I came into his province'. It is only in early March 1685 that Paschall 'understands by a letter' that Beaumont is 'fully resolved to set forthwith upon writing the natural history of the county' and intends 'to be amongst us in a very short time', while on 25 March Cole tells Plot that Beaumont intends to attend the gentlemen of the county at the Taunton assizes to deliver his proposals and receive their subscriptions. Cole notes that Beaumont has 'particular experience in things subterranean' but will need assistance in the 'vegetable and animal parts of nature'.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile, Beaumont's printed *Draught of a Design for Writing the History of Nature and the Arts in the County of Somerset* had been presented by him to the Royal Society on 23 February 1685 and 'was well approved of by that society who declared that they thought him a fit person for the undertaking and would be ready to give him any assistance' and then approved by the Oxford Philosophical Society on 17 March 1685. Based avowedly on Plot's model, this included a section on 'antiquities', but no civil or ecclesiastical history. The draught explains, 'the undertaker has thought fit to publish the following short account of what such a history contains (extracted for the greatest part from certain heads of enquiries formerly publish'd by the said Doctor Plot) and of its use; both for the satisfaction of those who may not yet have considered it and with hopes that all the gentlemen and observing persons of the said county of Somerset will freely and fully communicate to him, as he is in his progress, what has occur'd of most remarkable to their observations, in reference to any of the particulars beneath mentioned'. It is clearly not the history that Paschall's group had initially envisaged, and it is significant that Beaumont presented it first to his backers in London and Oxford, and only then to the Somerset groups without whose active support (both financial and in terms of expertise and access to information) it was never going to succeed.<sup>42</sup> There may well have been resistance to Beaumont's version, as in November 1686 Paschall referred to Beaumont's 'dislike' of 'our design about it' when urging Aubrey to try to 'prevail' with Beaumont in returning to the project, observing that Aubrey was more likely to be effective as he had the prestige of the Royal Society. Plot, meanwhile, in his 1686 *Natural History of Staffordshire* continued to wish 'all imaginable encouragement' to 'the ingenious Mr Beaumont, now laudibly designing the Natural

History of Somersetshire'. In his epistle to Hooke in 1693, while recording his 'providential disappointments' in 1685, Beaumont continued, 'nor has it been in anyway uneasie to me to have been baulkt in writing the natural history of a county, the considerations in hand here being as far more noble than the other, as they are of a more general extent'. In 1696 William Nicolson hoped (perhaps rather despairingly?) that 'these more noble considerations as he calls them have not enlarged his thoughts too much for the finishing a work of so narrow a compass' as the county history, as he 'is a person of that known ingenuity that the world has just cause to hope for a most excellent performance'.<sup>43</sup> But there is little sense here of Beaumont as a Somerset patriot fitting happily into provincial life. Beaumont and his collections are never mentioned by any of the Somerset writers, such as Thomas Palmer (d.1734) of Fairfield in Stogursey or John Strachey (1671–1743) of Sutton Court in Chew Magna, who sought to produce a county history in the 1710s to 1730s. Strachey does not cite him in his (much more methodical) work in the 1710s on the strata of the Somerset mining region, nor is he cited by John Woodward, who collected numerous specimens from the Mendips for his collection (using the services of John Hutchinson, who was to develop his own anti-Newtonian philosophy of Bible-based natural history in opposition to writers like Woodward).<sup>44</sup>

During the 1690s, what we know of Beaumont reinforces this impression of a man eager to return to London intellectual life. As noted, Beaumont had apparently started work on his refutation of Burnet by 1689 (like many others, including Cole's patron, Sir Robert Southwell of Kingsweston, near Bristol). Sloane reports that Burnet's work had irritated the clergy and 'quelques uns de ces ecclesiastiques inviterent Mr Beaumont a Londres, a fin de publier un Livre qu'il avoit compose contre la Theorie de Burnet, et que les Libraires avoient refuse d'imprimer auparavant' (*Considerations* was 'printed for the author', though sold by the bookseller Randall Taylor, perhaps suggesting it was a subsidised publication). These clergy may have included Edward Fowler, later bishop of Gloucester, with whom Beaumont was corresponding before 1705, who later expressed his admiration for the book. However, he appears to have written *Considerations* in Somerset, stating, 'I must confess I have not many of the authors here quoted [by Burnet] by me, my poor country study not affording them'.<sup>45</sup> When Edward Lhwyd, who had been told by Plot that Beaumont 'has made a considerable collection at Mendip', visited him in Somerset in April 1691, he was shown his manuscript 'against Dr Burnet's theory of the earth, which he designs for the press' and also his collection of stones and fossils, which Lhwyd

did not think 'very considerable'. In 1694, after Martin Lister had visited Ston Easton with a Hamburg colleague, Beaumont wrote to Lhwyd saying that he was 'some way disposed to part with my collection of stones for a reasonable value' ('if worth anything, worth £20'), as his studies were 'at present otherwise bent'. Many of the stones were 'undescribed by any author' and they would be secured in the Ashmolean from 'contingencies of life', and he hoped the figures might be drawn and published 'for an instruction relating to subterraneous knowledge'. Lhwyd noted, 'I doubt whether he has many things we have not', so 'I know not whether that may not be too much money', and nothing was done, but it seems that Beaumont had either changed the focus of his studies, or needed the money, or perhaps both.<sup>46</sup> The only references to him in Somerset after this are records of his visits to William Cole in June and December 1695, when they discussed Cole's collections: Cole called him 'an underground labourer' like Lhwyd and admitted that Beaumont was a more competent judge of some of his stones than he was himself. In 1702 Beaumont tried to help Sloane purchase Cole's own collection for the Royal Society, after efforts to get Cole to bequeath it to the Ashmolean had failed. In the end it was bought by the physician and industrialist Dr John Lane of Bristol: Hooke had met Lane with Beaumont in London on 19 August 1680.<sup>47</sup>

It was in the same year (1694) in which Beaumont had offered to sell his own collection that he produced the first of the seven versions (in four editions) of his *Present State of the Universe*, which appeared in various sizes (octavos, duodecimos etc.) in June and November 1694, February 1697, February 1698, February 1702, June 1704 and finally in late 1708 or early 1709. In the advertisement to the reader, Beaumont feels the need to defend himself from accusations of transcribing his text from two other recent books on the genealogy of the princes of Europe, which he does by stating that 'it is well known to many gentlemen in London that the year before Mr Gadbury set forth the births of some European princes in his almanack I had a collection of them ready for the press'. John Gadbury had published 'the birth days of divers illustrious persons who are now regnant and vivant in Europe' in his *Ephemerides* for 1687, so that implies Beaumont had his volume in preparation in the mid-1680s.<sup>48</sup> The title and layout of his book also appears to draw on *A New Survey of the Present State of Europe* by Gidion Pontier, first published in 1684 and reprinted in 1689. Pontier's work only covered Italy, Germany, France and Spain, beginning with a lengthy (and generally favourable, or at least neutral) account of the papacy. Intriguingly, the 1684 edition is said to be 'done into English by

J.B. doctor of Physick'. If that were Beaumont, then perhaps he was planning his own enlarged version of Pontier's text in the mid-1680s, and it was another victim of his disappearance in 1685. It seems quite likely that in 1693–4 Beaumont was trying to establish himself again, as in the early 1680s, as an intellectual with Europe-wide interests making a living from the press in London, rather than a Somerset-based naturalist. In the *Treatise* he draws more often on reports from acquaintances in London than on Somerset cases, and he reports specifically about an experience he had 'about six years since [i.e. c.1699] lodging then in Fetter Lane', when he had been visited by a man from Cane-Wood the morning after he had been woke from sleep at 3 a.m. by a voice crying 'Cane, Cane, Cane'.<sup>49</sup> However, he may have been back in Somerset while writing the book, as he reports a Somersetshire poltergeist case 'last year'. Although he might have read about this case in a contemporary pamphlet, he reports what 'a person from Glastonbury told myself the last summer at Wells' about the case, 'though now I hear it's ceased' so presumably he got it first-hand.<sup>50</sup>

It is worth at this point noting other volumes from the early 1680s that might have involved Beaumont and which would reinforce the view of Beaumont as a cosmopolitan intellectual seeking to publish works that brought continental learning to the English. The first is a translation of Nicholas Venette's *The Art of Pruning Fruit-Trees*, published in 1685, published anonymously but stated by Aubrey to be by Beaumont. The second of these concerns Tyson, who in 1681 wrote an introduction to *EPHEMERI VITA OR THE Natural History AND ANATOMY OF THE EPHEMERON. A Fly that Lives but FIVE HOURS*, a translation of a 1675 text by Dr Swammerdam. 'This curious piece being in a Language less known to the generality of the Learned here, a Translation of it was undertaken, (tho' otherwise out of his way) by a person of my acquaintance, who had no other design than to gratifie the Ingenious and Curious in these Studies, that are unacquainted with that Language; and since this was his aim, 'tis hoped he may receive a favourable Censure, if in all things he have not so fully answered Expectation'. The publishers were Faithorne and Kersey, who soon afterwards published the *Weekly Memorials* for Beaumont.<sup>51</sup>

The third is *The Paradoxical Discourses of F.M. van Helmont concerning the Macrocosm and Microcosm, or the Greater and Lesser World and their Union set down in Writing by J.B. and now Published* (1685). In his introduction, dated London October 5 1684, 'J.B.' explains that 'I and my companion passing through Holland' heard that Franciscus Mercury van Helmont was 'here in England, whereupon we hastened thither' and lodged in



the same house. His companion 'offered to set down his discourses in Latin', but after he had finished one sheet he was 'seized of a distemper and forced to desist whereupon then I undertook to put it in High-Dutch', in which it first appeared. He apologises for its faults 'as well for want of skill and capacity with reference to the language, I not being a German born; as especially by reason of the weightiness of the things themselves', plus 'haste in which I did it, by reason of my unexpected departure out of the land after I had undertaken it'. Somewhat curiously he then states that 'this treatise hath been now translated into English by a Hollander', rather than by himself. Helmont's philosophy, both hermetic in content and irenic in purpose, centres on the interrelationship of microcosm and macrocosm theme, and on the reincarnation of human souls as they progress to the recovery of their innate perfection, rather than on the action of spirits. The first half of the work, on the macrocosm, certainly seems to chime with Beaumont's interests, in its focus on the influences of the sun and moon on the earth's workings, on the substratum of 'water and quicksand' which Helmont believes underpins the earth's surface, and on the nature of stones and metals. However, there is no real parallel in Beaumont's other work for the second half, on the human microcosm, which focuses on the nature of human reproduction (with detailed anatomical drawings of the early stages of conception) and reincarnation. All of these are understood to show that 'spiritual' forces (although fully natural) are required to explain all natural processes and that they are simultaneously the working out of the moral and spiritual unity of God's creation. Detailed exposition of scriptural passages intermingle with detailed practical recommendations for medical remedies, technical improvements or better ways of teaching reading and writing.<sup>52</sup>

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We do not know when Beaumont began work on his *Treatise* of 1705. He tells us that it was written as a response to his own experience of spirits, and the title page says that this has been over 'many years', and he apologises 'to the reader' that the book has been 'long promised'. We learn that he was 'above forty years of age' when the spirits first came to him and that the first episode, which began about Christmas, lasted about two months. The second period, also starting about Christmas, was 'some years after' and lasted above three months. He kept a journal of his visitations, and of 'what passed in his dreams', for some years. His fullest statement is 'when they first came to me, I was just upon a

recovery from an intermittent fever, which had held me above twelve months; and I confess at that time I was unfortunately involv'd, in an unnatural suit in law, with a too near relation', which might somewhat discompose my Mind; and at the spirits second coming, that suit in law was continued'. It is not easy to tie any of this to a specific period: the lawsuit cannot be that concerning his wife's inheritance, as this did not begin until around the time the book was published. It seems likely, however, that the episodes and hence the genesis of the book must go back to some period between the mid-1680s (perhaps coinciding with his disappearance from public life after 1685?) and the early 1690s. In the Sloane/Bignon papers it is stated that the spirits had instructed Beaumont to marry his wife, but we do not know when this occurred, though as she was born in 1668 it cannot have been before the mid-1680s at the earliest.<sup>53</sup>

Notestein suggested that Beaumont's text was primarily intended to respond to Bekker's attack on witchcraft beliefs, originally in Dutch (1691–3) and then translated in an enlarged edition in French. In 1695 an English translation of the first part of the French translation (with a summary of the rest by the author) was published (it offers no clue to its translator), reprinted in 1700: the rest of the promised translation never appeared. Beaumont tells us that he read the four-volume French edition and then sent to Holland for other literature in the controversy, though the only work he cites (extensively) is the *Idée generale de la theologie payenne* (Amsterdam, 1699) by the Huguenot Benjamin Binet. This suggests, however, that he did not really begin to engage with Bekker until after 1699, and, despite its appearance on the title page, refuting Bekker is not really a main theme of Beaumont's book. Bekker is regularly mentioned earlier in the book, along with van Dale and others, as someone who is unreasonably sceptical about the existence of spirits, but there is no systematic account of his work until the final chapter, and then all he offers is a very selective response to certain issues in Bekker concerning the action of spirits, which he refutes largely by long quotations from Kircher, Bodin and some medical writers, with almost no engagement with Bekker's views on witchcraft. It seems likely that the Bekker material was an afterthought, perhaps to make the volume more marketable, especially in Europe, since the English do not seem to have become engaged in the Bekker controversy. As we have seen, the ploy succeeded in attracting a German translation.<sup>54</sup>

Equally, pace Goodwin, anyone turning to the *Treatise* as a collection of supernatural stories, or as a close account of Beaumont's own dealings with spirits, is likely to be disappointed. Although he states,

'I have hundreds of times seen, heard and convers'd with those they call *genii*, *angels*, spirits or *daemons*, appearing to me in humane shapes; of which I shall give some relation beneath, beside the experiences of many other persons, known to me and now living, in the same kind', and he does recount a number of short episodes reported to him by his acquaintances, these add up to only a few pages of his 400-page book, and his reports on his own dealings with spirits are equally brief, amounting to about ten pages in all.<sup>55</sup> Nor does he lay particular store on his own experiences as a means of convincing others of the reality of the spirit world, since he is well aware that any specific experiences can easily be written off by sceptics as the consequence of illness or delusion. Instead, he relies on the combined testimony of the authorities of the past, supplementing these with recent accounts: in this respect, his book is much less dependent on carefully validated modern testimonies than are the collections of Glanvill/More and Baxter (on which he draws), although he is keen to defend their reliability, for example in the case of the Drummer of Tedworth.<sup>56</sup> Instead, he shows his debt to modern empiricism by the organisation of his book, which devotes separate chapters to each of the senses: sight, hearing, touch and so on, asking in each case 'what perceptions men have had of *genii* or spirits and their operations by' that particular sense (in the case of sight, subdivided by those cases which are visible to one person but not to others, and those visible to all). In this approach he shows his debt to John Locke (a physician brought up at Pensford, some six miles north of Ston Easton) and his *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, but his style of argumentation is very much a traditional one, quoting large passages from numerous authorities from all ages. Indeed, his volume could be characterised as largely a patchwork of learning drawn from other writers, only occasionally interspersed with any lengthy passages of his own.<sup>57</sup>

At the end of his book, Beaumont acknowledges that, having promised 'some account of my particular experience as to a sensible perception of spirits, perhaps it may be expected from me, that I should set forth more particulars, than I have yet done concerning it'. Although he does then add some further information, he notes, 'in regard I do not urge my own experience as argumentative, for proving the existence of spirits and their operations, I think it may be looked upon as a thing of more curiosity than use to enlarge upon it'. He adds, 'if you ask me, whether I really think these apparitions to be spirits, or only an effect of melancholy, I can only say, what St. Paul said of the nature of his rapture, God knows, I know not, but they appear'd to me real.'

He then goes on to note the circumstances (illness, the lawsuit and drinking wine) which might point to the effects of melancholy or delusion, but concludes, 'as these visitations of spirits, gave me an occasion to consider how far humane reason could bear, as to a making out of the existence of spirits, and their operations, so I must declare, I firmly believe, that as the whole visible world has proceeded from the invisible world (which will hold good even according to the Epicurean doctrine) so, that spirits both good and bad are concerned in the administration of it, as agents subordinate to the first cause, and this I adhere to as well by a medium of reason, as that of faith, in which, I think, we are all bound to acquiesce. And it appears plain enough to me, that those that will not do so, will but lose themselves in a vertiginous doxomania, and never center, in any solid truth.'<sup>58</sup>

Theologically, Beaumont admits, there is no demonstrative proof of the existence of spirits, as God might not have created them, since all their effects might have been produced by God alone or other causes. But both revelation and the constant tradition of all Christian divines did show their existence, and there is nothing in what they say concerning spirits that is inconsistent with human reason. Moreover, since the earliest period the wisest and greatest men of the world have supported the doctrine of spirits as the best hypothesis to explain the phenomena found in the world. The alternative naturalistic explanations offered were always more unlikely than the explanation by spirits. Attempts to deny all such facts as the results of impostures might apply to individual cases in which it might seem more likely 'for that person to lye than that so strange a relation should be true'. 'But if a considerable number of persons of several countries, several religions, several professions, several ages, and those persons looked upon to be of as great sagacity as any the centuries afford, agree in relations of the same kind, though very strange, and are ready to vouch the truths of them upon oath, after being well-consider'd circumstances, I think it is a violation of the law of Nature to reject all these relations as falsities, merely upon a self-pressing conceit, unless a man can fairly show these things to be impossible or wherein these persons were imposed on'. Hence his focus on the collective wisdom of the ancients and on numerous well-attested cases from leading writers, not his own personal experience.<sup>59</sup>

Accordingly, his account of the spirits he encountered is brief. During their two-month first visitation, they remained at his chamber window and in the court and garden outside, whence 'they called to me, sung, play'd on musick, rung bells, sometimes crowed like cocks etc', but even so 'their first coming was most dreadful to me'. He goes into

most detail about the bells he has heard 'of all sorts, from the greatest church bells to a little hawk's bell', some funereal and others merry. 'The first ringing sound I heard was of a bell gently tolling at one of my chamber windows...and at the same time, at the same window, I heard a spirit striking gentle strokes with a small rod, as it seem'd to me, on a brass pan, or bason, tuning his strokes to a call he us'd, *Come away to me, Come away to me*; and just upon it another spirit, at another of my chamber windows...called to me in a louder and earnest tone, *Come away to me, Come away to me*'.<sup>60</sup>

The three-month second visitation was much more intrusive. 'I have heard every night, for some time, hundreds of spirits coming, as it seem'd to me, first at a great distance, singing and ringing hand bells, who gradually approach'd my house, the sound seeming nearer and nearer, till at length they came to my chamber windows and some would come into my chamber'. Outside, 'there came hundreds, and I saw some of them dance in a ring in my garden, and sing, holding hands round, not facing each other, but with their backs turned to the inner part of the circle'. Inside, there were five spirits, 'two women' and 'three men'. He gives the fullest description of the 'two that constantly attended myself', both 'in women's habit, they being of a brown complexion and about three foot in stature; they had both black, loose network gowns, tyed with a black sash about their middles, and within the network appear'd a gown of a golden colour, with somewhat of a light striking thro' it; their heads were not drest with top-knots but they had white linen caps on, with lace on them, about three fingers breadth, and over it they had a black loose network hood'. None of the earlier spirits had names, but these two 'call'd each other by their names [not given] and several spirits would often call at my chamber door and ask, whether such spirits lived there, calling them by their names, and they would answer, they did'. The other three male spirits are not described, but 'I ask'd one spirit which came some nights together, and rung a little bell in my ear, what his name was, who answer'd *Ariel*'. The spirits also visited him when he had company by the fire, but they were not visible to the others. 'And one spirit, whom I heard calling to me, as he stood behind me, on a sudden clapt his finger to my side, which I sensibly perceived and started at it; and as I saw one spirit come in the door which I did not like, I suddenly laid hold of a pair of tonges, and struck at him with all my force, whereupon he vanish'd'.<sup>61</sup>

As this last example suggests, Beaumont did not find all the spirits friendly. The first visitation he felt were 'all good spirits, for I found nothing in them tending to ill; their drift in coming, as far as I could

perceive, being only to compose my mind, and to bring it to its highest purity; they used no threats to me, but the surprise kept always a terror upon me'. The second time the spirits were 'of a promiscuous nature, some good, some bad, as among men; for some of them would now and then curse and swear, and talk loosely, and others would reprehend them for it. Yet none of these ever perswaded me to any ill thing; but all would dissuade me from drinking too freely, and any other irregularity.' He reports about his dreams that 'the genii which have attended me, as I have lain in my bed, have bid me go to sleep, saying, that they would suggest something to me in my dream; which they have performed', then nudged him awake and 'bid me consider of what I had seen in my sleep. And though I have then generally found the things enigmatically represented, yet the meaning was obvious enough, and I have guided myself by it.' 'I ask'd them also several things relating to my own concerns in the world, and I found sometimes both in their answers, and in what they suggested in my dreams, things very surprising to me'.<sup>62</sup> However, he also reports a darker side to the five spirits in his chamber, for when they first appeared, 'they told me they would kill me, if I told any person in the house of their being there', and later 'one of these spirits in womans dress, lay down upon my bed by me every night: and told me, if I slept, the spirits would kill me, which kept me waking for three nights'. The fourth night he confronted them at 2 a.m., telling them, 'I have done the part of a Christian, in humbling myself to God, and fear'd them not'. He then called a near relative to join him, told the person about the spirits and their threats and that he would 'now stand in defiance of them', after which he slept well but was still visited by them. Later he reports that 'one of them lay down upon my bed by me, every night, for a considerable time, and pretended great kindness to me, and if some others at any time would threaten me, that spirit told me, they should do me no hurt'.<sup>63</sup>

Beaumont shows surprisingly little interest in the nature of these spirits. 'I had a perception of them by four of my senses, for I saw them, heard them, and three of them [the men?] had a dark smoak coming out of their mouths, which seemed somewhat offensive to the senses, it being like the smoak of a lamp; and three of them bid me take them by the hand, which I did, but it yielded to my touch, so that I could not find any sensible resistency in it; neither could I perceive any coldness in them, as it's said some apparitions have had'. They had voices of different tones, those singing outside having 'clear voices', some 'a low-sunk voice, as many persons have in colds' and 'that spirit which came nightly to me for some time, with a bell in my ear, had a very clear

and resonant voice'.<sup>64</sup> How such attributes might fit with the characteristics of angels, demons, ghosts or other intelligences is never stated and not explored, just as he never calls these spirits 'fairies', although his small, dancing creatures calling him to come away seem redolent of fairy lore. However, he reports being told (by a JP on the bench) of a Gloucestershire case of a woman tried at the assizes for her ability to predict the death or recovery of her ill neighbours, who claimed that when 'she had a mind to know the issue, a jury of *fairies* came to her in the night time, who consider'd of the matter, and if afterwards they look'd cheerful, the party would recover; and if they look'd sad, he would die'. Beaumont comments that before he heard this relation 'I saw a jury of *fairies*, or *ghosts*, or what you please to call them, summon'd, and pass a verdict on a person known to me'.<sup>65</sup>

He seems more concerned with the religious status of the spirits who visited him. He declares 'with all the sincerity of a Christian, that it never so much as entred into my thoughts to use any practice for raising or calling spirits, as some men have done; and that when they came, it was altogether a surprise to me'. He explains, 'I did not ask them many curious questions, as I find many men think I should, and, as they say, they would have done; but I always kept me on my guard, and still requir'd them to be gone, and would not enter into such familiarity with them'. This might suggest that he feared they were demons and should not be trusted. But he immediately continues, somewhat contradictorily, 'Indeed I ask'd them once, what creatures they were, and they told me, they were an order of creatures superior to mankind, and could influence our thoughts, and that their habitation was in the air'.<sup>66</sup>

For a fuller account of why these spirits visited him, we have to turn to Beaumont's later publication, *Gleanings of Antiquities*, whose third section is entitled 'Some notes concerning familiar spirits' and refers back to his *Treatise*, which interestingly he consistently calls 'a book of Genii or familiar spirits'. Here he repeats the standard defence of the reality both of his own experiences and of spirits in general: 'If any man shall confidently tell me that these are all illusions, as many are apt to do, and laugh at such experiences; when I am convinc'd that these laughers are men of more learning and candor than the foregoing testimonies, I may consider farther of it; meanwhile I hope they will give me leave to have such regard for their negative against three good positive evidences, as a court of judicature is commonly wont to have'. Because spectres are sometimes 'the fancies of melancholick and weak persons' 'must all apparitions be so?' Apparitions which are seen by all present, not only by sight but by touch, which can move things and have 'given

other marks of some real and understanding agents', are hard to explain 'but by the hypothesis of spirits'. He gives various poltergeist examples, ending 'there is now a house in London, in which, for the three years last past, there have been heard, and are still, almost continual knockings against the wainscot and over-head; and sometimes a noise like the telling of money, and of mens sawing, to the great disturbance of the inhabitants; and often lights have been seen there like to flashes of lightning; and the person who rents the house has told me, that when she has removed eight miles from London, the knockings have followed her... I say as these facts must be allow'd, unless we take all history for a ballad, this seems to me a strong proof for the existence of spirits, or invisible intelligent beings; and if any man will be refractory, and admit those facts, but deny the existence of the other, I desire him to shew me wherein the admittance of these facts, sits more easy on his understanding, than the admittance of the other. And so I conclude this work'.<sup>67</sup>

However, Beaumont's own experience of spirits had been rather different, as only he, not those around him, could see or hear the spirits that visited him. Here he draws upon a different account of what is occurring. 'As I have averred my own experience in this kind, I must declare, that as often as those genii have appear'd to me, it has always been with that swimming motion through the air, and not setting one foot before the other, as usual with men, when they pass from one place to another. I know many persons laugh at apparitions and it's not for those I record such things, but for those to whom such genii may appear; who, as they will be much surprised at the sight of them, I know will be glad to find that others have had the like experiences, and to be instructed in the manner of their appearance, and in what they may portend. I shall farther here observe to you that whenever such genii have appeared to me, I have always look'd on myself to have been, for that time, in an extatick state of mind, and conclude that most persons, who see apparitions, unseen by others, present with them, are in such a state, though many times unobserv'd by themselves; the various dispositions of mens minds not being to be understood without a good share of philosophical learning, and much application used.' It was no wonder if 'in this extatick state of dreaming (during which the astral impulses are incomparably stronger than in common dreams, or in the ordinary course of life) that prophetick energy more efficaciously exerts itself, so that persons then, both sleeping and waking, surprisingly see, foresee and predict what the mind of man in a common state cannot bear to'.<sup>68</sup>

Returning to the *Treatise*, one can understand its character better if one views it not so much as a defence of the existence of spirits as a



demonstrable part of normal experience (like the work of Glanvill or Baxter), but rather as a treatise about spirits understood through the eyes of those with that 'great genius to a contemplative life' with which Beaumont credits his dedicatee the Earl of Carbury (and, of course, himself). Sceptics about spirits are men like van Dale who 'have not had any experience of any such thing in themselves', 'it being usual with those who are trained up to a contemplative life, to have visitations of that kind, both internal and external....I know the contempt many men have for studies of this nature, but it is not to those I here write, nor is it every man's talent to be master of a contemplative life'. After sketching out the 'Platonick philosophy, by the benefit of which one man perceives what another does not', he apologises to readers for whom this is 'too speculative', 'but only say that in all ages and in all religions there have been contemplative persons, or such as have spiritualized themselves in the study of divine things, for detaching souls from the creatures, by bringing them to an opening of their inward senses, to fix them in the being infinitely perfect'.<sup>69</sup>

Beaumont's (unsystematic and brief) treatment of witchcraft follows from this. 'I am thoroughly convinced that if an apparition presents itself to any person, as many have to myself, if that person be fallen from God, and sunk into despair, thro' the miseries of human life, having not that Christian armour on which St Paul speaks of, he may make a covenant with him, as well as with a man, and if they say there can be no covenant with a spirit, how comes it that there has been a covenant betwixt God and man?'<sup>70</sup> As the use of 'he' suggests, Beaumont's model of the witch is more the 'magician' dealing with evil spirits than the traditional witch, and much of his discussion deals with such cases of the magical raising and use of demons, including the case of Thomas Perks of Bristol, as reported by Arthur Bedford in 1704, which is reproduced at length.<sup>71</sup> He does discuss some witchcraft cases, citing Hopkins and Stearne on Elizabeth Clarke in 1645, and both Mather and his opponent Calef on the Salem cases in 1692, but he is interested in them only as they offer proof of the reality of spirits. The Clarke case is noted because 'eight unexceptionable persons concurring in one thing' testified to the activities of the imps: 'I do not tell you of afflicted persons who pretended to see spectres, which were seen by none but themselves, nor of an old distracted woman who fancies she has or sees spirits attending her, when there is no such thing, nor do I give you the testimonies of crafty, melancholy wenches, or old women, as some such there may have been.' The Salem cases provide 'full information of the last considerable visitation by witchcrafts, or so supposed, that has

happned in any country in the world, and I hope it may be a farewell to them'. He disagrees with Calef's scepticism about the possibility of spirits and spectral sight: 'nay I believe they saw the spectres of persons who, as they conceived, tormented them; all histories of witches both in England and in all other countries testifying the same, though I no way think that such spectre-sights should be received as judicial proof against any person'. This was because there might be mental communications between 'miserable people, being impregnated with notions of *daemons*' that could not be trusted.<sup>72</sup>

He returns to this issue in *Gleanings*, noting that an 'extatikal disposition of mind' is contagious, citing the Salem cases 'where one person happening to have the specter sight, it became in a short time so general, that two hundred were accused of witchcraft and about twenty executed'. He explains that for those 'who either by some severe circumstances of human life, or by being magically wrought on by some villainous abusers of that art, are brought into this extatick state without a due training, so that they have not pass'd a purgative life, but have their minds strongly possest with passions and vicious habits; These persons, I say, though their strong impulses may now and then direct them to deliver useful truths, yet they more often deliver vain falsehoods and many times are led away by deplorable delusions; as we may see on those wretches who are accused of witchcraft and who commonly confess things as really transacted, which only pass in them in these extatick dreams, and who for want of judges knowing in this mysterious state of mind, have been barbarously prosecuted and murdered, even to the ridicule of mankind; since men may as well be executed for falling into a fit of epilepsy, the other being as involuntary and as much out of the person's power to avoid.'<sup>73</sup> This may explicate his more mysterious statement in his *Treatise* that there has been 'a science in the world, call'd *scientia umbrarum* ... the ignorance of which possibly may have been the occasion of many mistakes in judicial proceedings relating to witchcraft, the dispositions of astral man being known only by that science. And though many severities may have followed upon it, yet good policy perhaps, has rather chosen to suffer them, than to admit the publick teaching of that science, which might have been of more pernicious consequence to the publick.' In his *Considerations* Beaumont had also discussed those who used Ovid's Medea, one of the main classical texts cited on witchcraft, criticising the 'mere physiologer' who would say it was the 'mere fancy of the poet', as well as 'some literal tribunitial writers' who 'will tell you that an old woman having the devil at command may do all these fine things as they are literally

set down'.<sup>74</sup> In short, whilst Beaumont believes in the action of the devil and of evil spirits, he is highly ambivalent about the reliability of most testimony or the desirability of continued legal action against witches.

Discussing 'scientia umbrarum', Beaumont notes that 'the publick teaching of it has been suppress'd upon good politick grounds, though there are still some societies of men in the world who allow the study of it, and teach it to persons of whose integrity they are satisfied'. However, elsewhere in his *Treatise*, while noting that some people have a 'prophetic spirit', he does not discuss how this might be obtained.<sup>75</sup> This theme becomes much more explicit in *Gleanings*, in which he discusses at length how men may experience a 'regeneration' or inward birth and adds, 'when I speak above of the regenerate, I write to those who practically know what a regeneration is, according to the intimation of Dr Wallis [in his 1681 Oxford sermons on 'The Necessity of a Regeneration'], there being somewhat extraordinary which passes in it, beside the common practice of a Christian life'. He states that 'we find three ways of bringing men to this regenerate state': the immediate call of God; the common training of church discipline; and 'a means more than ordinary used to bring the mind of man to be delivered of this birth'. He then discusses how the initiation ceremonies of native Indians in America, as well as ancient practices, embody this third method for 'subduing the luxuriant spirit of man' so as to set the 'mind of man on a new foot after its being purged and cleared of the vicious habits contracted by it'. He adds, 'but I must here tell you that a magical operation works a greater mortification, and brings the mind of man to a greater purity than all these severities; which Truth perhaps nothing but experience may convince some men of'.<sup>76</sup>

This 'magick art' had been well-known to the ancients, and 'these secret sciences' were openly taught in Spain and Italy until suppressed in public schools by Charles V, 'though they are still privately taught by a certain body of men, who are thought fit to be entrusted with them. I do not mean the invisible body of the Rosy-Crucians, which much amused our Dr Flood; but another body which may not improperly be called by the foregoing name; they generally carrying about them a rose (tho unobserved by many) as a symbol of silence; and are many of them crucified Christians, as all who experimentally know what a regeneration is, must be.' ('As for the Society of Rosy-Crucians, which has made some noise in the world', he repeats a story that it started as an imposture.)<sup>77</sup> He compares the process of bringing men to a regenerate state and the process for making the philosopher's stone, noting 'these

two commonly go together', but though he asked many learned men to explain it to him, he 'could never be gratify'd in it, till some person who keeps himself conceal'd and will not vouchsafe to be known to me, gave me some intimation of it in some secret way'. He adds, 'there is a body, a select number of whom apply themselves to some secret sciences for the end mention'd', and 'an intimate acquaintance of mine, on whose veracity I can rely, has assured me more than once that he has been invited to be of that society, who would freely communicate all their ways of proceedings to him, and let him make his choice to live in what part of Europe he pleas'd and have all things allowed him to his desire, if he would join with them. But, though he would willingly have been let into the whole mystery, which must be a great satisfaction, and perhaps the greatest scene which this world affords, and highly desirable by any man; yet he could not prevail with himself to comply with some conditions propos'd to him, and did not proceed. And as by what he has practically known in their proceedings, he finds it's a two-edg'd sword they manage, which will cut both ways, and may be well or ill applied; he wishes them well in making a good use of it, and that they would well consider the subjects they work upon.'<sup>78</sup>

Beaumont also discusses other means towards regeneration and mystic experience. He claims, 'there were antiently among the Gentiles, as there are still among Christians, some contemplative persons, who lived in the woods, and used some uncommon ways of training for their pupils; they played on the seven-reed pipe of Pan, and sang their lays to those they made love to. The lessons they gave, carried a double meaning, so that many times it was long before they were observed, but when they were, their charms were such, that they seldom fail'd of success. I knew a person who, as soon as he heard a Corydon sing to him in the woods, presently wrote the following answer, under the name of Alexis... If you desire to know what these curetes really were, I will tell you; as I am assured by a person who says he has often seen them and conversed with them; they were those Genii or familiar spirits, which now and then attend some persons, either coming to them of their own accord, or being caused to appear to them by some art.' He argues that 'those curetes or genii attend with their various harmonious sounds, chiefly at the time of that new birth, though those sounds and apparitions are then perceived only by the persons concerned, to whom they seem, or are real, though not to any stander-by'. Further describing the regenerative experience he states, 'Note that in the work of regeneration, men are carried out of themselves, by passing into an extatick state; in which, though they are not asleep, they are in a sort of waking

dream, like to those who dream in their sleep... In the work of regeneration the divine impulses are so strong that the persons concerned find themselves transported into a kind of extasy, in which a new birth is brought forth, which may be called the internal Messiah; and upon that birth some of the persons concerned hear heavenly musick... some are then brought to a communion with spirits, and other knowledges are communicated to them, with which the rest of mankind are no way acquainted.<sup>79</sup>

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Taking his *Treatise* and *Gleanings* together, it seems clear that Beaumont's chief interests were indeed hermetic, even occult, in that he was less concerned to convince the public as a whole of the experimental reality of spirits than to explain to himself and to like-minded people how the experience of spirits might be understood as part of a perennial tradition whereby wisdom and spiritual regeneration both engendered and drew upon states in which humans could communicate with spirits. To what extent, however, did this involve a complete break with his earlier work on natural history? Had his own experience with spirits, whenever that was, led him to reorientate his interests away from the external world into an inner realm, abandoning his collections and his experimental approach? In the absence of any extended personal material, this is very hard to explore, but there is considerable evidence of an overlap, at the very least, between his two phases of activity.

To start at the end, it is worth noting that in *Gleanings* Beaumont still devoted his opening section to 'an essay for explaining the Creation and the Deluge according to the sense of the Gentiles', describing himself as one who has 'amused myself many years in philosophical studies and am a well-wisher to natural history'. He recalls that, though Burnet had said he 'would give any man thanks that would show him any failure' in his theory, 'which I think I have effectually done in many respects... I never received thanks for it, nor did he think fit to offer any reply... but I have been told by some persons who used to converse with the author that they heard him say he did not think any man could have offered so much against his hypothesis, as I have done'. Now he offers a brief (c. 22 pages) but incisive critique of John Woodward's work, which had replaced Burnet's as the most discussed theory of earth's history in England. Woodward was a bitter enemy of Beaumont's friend Hans Sloane (with whom Beaumont was still corresponding and sending geological specimens after 1700), so this may have led Beaumont to focus

on attacking Woodward. He questions the accuracy of Woodward's claims for the gravitational pattern of post-diluvial strata, and, as he had done with Burnet, doubts whether a single modern theory seeking to reconcile natural history with the scriptures is feasible. He claims that to write all he has to offer on Woodward's book would require a work as long as the original, but 'neither have I thoughts of writing farther on it, my hand much failing me in writing, and it not agreeing with my present circumstances to keep an amanuensis, neither will my spirits long bear a due attention'.<sup>80</sup> Admittedly, this section is only a minor part of the book, and it is sandwiched by his personal reflections about how both his natural history work and his critique of Burnet had been opposed or unappreciated by others, so one could see this as a gesture by one who was now an amused amateur towards his former areas of expertise, rather than a wholehearted continuation of his earlier studies. He makes no attempt to incorporate, or respond to, the work in his own region of men like Strachey and Hutchinson since the 1690s. Nevertheless, Beaumont (who was, after all, some 84 years old by now) had clearly not given up all interest in this field.

More significant, however, is the evidence that his earlier work on natural history, before 1694, had been shaped by the hermetic interests so evident in his later publications. His only acknowledged publications before 1693, namely his letters to the Royal Society, are available only as edited for publication and are largely confined to observations. Their only reference that might strike us as esoteric is in his second letter of 1676, when discussing nature's powers of petrification, in which he refers to the ideas of the ancients and peripatetics on 'that seminal root ... which in the first generation of things made all plants and I may say, animals rise up in their distinct species, God commanding the earth and water to produce both, as some plants and animals rise up still in certain places without any common seed'. He adds, 'I have now and then essay'd to find the nature of this efficient which works these figures in stones' and finds 'Nature is most busie in this kind where her intentions are highly raised by the presence of her chief principles, Salts, Sulphurs and mercuries promoting her ferments, which cause some internal light and drought', but such language is not untypical of many natural historians at this period. It may reflect a neo-Platonic approach, but not necessarily a hermetic one.<sup>81</sup>

However, his first extended work, *Considerations*, together with the responses to it, gives much clearer evidence of his interests. Several of those who admired his expertise were critical of his 'enthusiasm', and this led him to publish his *Postscript* of 1694, answering his critics. Robert

Hooke makes two remarks suggesting his anxieties. First, his reference to 'his conclusion enthusiastic' in Beaumont's draft response to Burnet (though conceivably this could refer to Burnet rather than Beaumont being enthusiastic), and then his brief diary entry for 14 January 1693, reading simply 'John Beaumont occult astrology'.<sup>82</sup> John Ray's response, however, is much less ambiguous. He wrote about *Considerations*: 'I think he hath fundamentally overthrown it [Burnet's theory], but a great deal of stuff he hath about the mystical and allegorical physiology of the Ancients which I understand not, nor, I believe, himself neither', and later he wrote, 'His book in many places smells rank of the Enthusiast.' In his *Postscript* Beaumont notes that 'many persons ... having used cavillations against some parts of [*Considerations*], viz. When I seem to leave some things in Mystery, which they will needs have to proceed from Enthusiasm: some having done this in my presence and others where I have not been present, as I have been inform'd by many Friends'.<sup>83</sup>

He responds by asking, 'are there not tacenda on many accounts in the common practice of life?' and claiming that 'the greatest writers among mankind have left a great part of what they have writ, wrapt up in enigmas'. He admits that many men 'have often been sinking themselves in mystery' with no bottom, while others out of ignorance claim no truth or use in such things, but 'are there not many realities in nature that cannot be brought under every man's apprehension'? 'I hope what I have openly offer'd in my considerations may be thought tolerably plausible by indifferent judges; and if I leave a few things veil'd I think there may be no great reason for censure. Some may object that if we give way to obscure writing, all enthusiasm breaks in upon us and we know not how to distinguish betwixt the one and the other. To this I can only say that if, when a man reasons openly, he reasons soundly, and writes in a free and unaffected manner, I think it may be a rational inducement for us to believe, that though sometimes, for reasons known to himself, he leaves some few things in mystery, there may be some worthy learning contained under them, which he conceives not fit to be openly explained.'<sup>84</sup> Here Beaumont appears to be appealing to a distinction between different types of knowledge, and the argumentation appropriate to each, which had long underlain attempts in Christian thought to distinguish between philosophical and religious truths, and in his writings generally Beaumont (perhaps as a Roman Catholic) appeals frequently to this distinction, while stressing that ultimately the religious truths of revelation take precedence, and that philosophising should know its limitations. As he had stated in *Considerations*,

'I proceed generally in a philosophical way, arguing from the nature of the thing, though no man can treat of these matters without a scripture grounds...I freely submit what I have philosophically asserted to the judgement of those who apply their studies that way, so I hope if I have any where toucht upon divine matters, I have in no way interfer'd with what Christian divinity maintains'. When instructed in religion, men receive by faith a doctrine with which they are bound in duty to acquiesce, but as they grow in years, 'the mind of man, urg'd on by strong and luxuriant instincts, falls naturally a considering how far they may be resolvable by humane reason. And though, perhaps, how great soever a man's instincts may be, we may not arrive at a full satisfaction in these matters, but by an enlighten'd and prophetick spirit, which God vouchsafes not to all men, yet, at least as far as reason will bear, men may be obliging to each other by an intercommunication of thoughts, while we stand waiting at the gates of truth, till God is pleas'd to open to us.'<sup>85</sup>

As this last quotation indicates, Beaumont also clearly has another, less orthodox, distinction in mind in his *Postscript* than between reason and revelation. He explains, 'there are many truths in nature which cannot be known but by experience (as all masters of a contemplative life testifie) and that the greatest man of parts in the world cannot apprehend them without having had a peculiar and practical initiation for taking knowledge of them'. He asks, 'Are Roger Bacon, Picus Mirandola, Joannes Trithemius Cornelius Agrippa, Joannes Reuchlin, our Dr Dee, any of the whole tribe of Hermetick Philosophers, or any masters of a contemplative life, among the Jews, Gentiles or Christians...open in all things they write?', noting specifically that Reuchlin 'is no muddy-brain'd enthusiast using an affected obscurity to beget admiration in his readers'. He makes clear his acceptance of the notion of a perennial wisdom preceding the Greeks, citing Averroes, 'the soundest reasoned and most learned among all the Arabians', on the height of philosophy among the ancient Chaldeans equal to Aristotle. This wisdom was largely astrological, based on the signs of the zodiac and the planets. Jerusalem's temple had items relating to the 12 signs of the zodiac and seven planets, which were based on this 'astrological Arcanum'. He had referred in *Considerations* to a 'Promethean Arcanum Astrologicum' and the seven-reeded pipes of Pan: 'some will needs have this to be enthusiasm'. But the seven-reeded pipe referred to the seven planets, while 'there are many men living in the world, who know themselves to have been touched by the Rod of Prometheus or of some priest of Apollo touch before at the chariot of the sun, whereby they are become



animated with a lively and penetrating aetherial spirit, whereas before they were as lumps of clay conversant only with the outside barks of things...I know men in our nation who have seen this fire [Zoroaster's fire of the magi] and hearkened with dread to the voice of it.<sup>186</sup> It seems unlikely that Ray's concerns would have been allayed by comments of this kind!

Turning to *Considerations* itself, while much of the text consists of a detailed refutation of Burnet's hypothesis, with reference both to ancient texts and to modern natural history, the underlying framework of the book closely reflects Beaumont's other works. He thanks Burnet for 'having given me an occasion to look into some things of antiquity with more attention than perhaps otherwise I might have us'd'. While he acknowledges that Burnet was trying to silence the cavils of atheists, 'I am so far from thinking that we ought to endeavour to smooth things to their reasons who will not receive the miracle, that I look upon it as a breach of decorum towards our divine law to attempt it.'<sup>187</sup> The deluge, like other particular providences, was miraculous, and attempts first to explain it and then to use the evidence for how a deluge had occurred to underpin belief in the scriptures and in God were inherently problematic, methodologically as well as empirically. This is because the ancient texts, both scriptural and pagan, that needed to be interpreted had to be understood properly, which required distinguishing both their various levels of meaning and how one should correctly use them.

Beaumont offers us only glimpses of his own account of earth's history: 'it being not my business here to set forth a theory of the earth, but only to show the inconsistency of the author's hypothesis, I shall not enlarge at present in making out those things, but refer them to a particular tract, I design to publish with what convenient speed I may, the demonstrations whereof will refer to certain cuts taken from a collection of fossils I have by me, where I hope to satisfie the author in some tolerable way concerning the rise of mountains, iles etc.' 'The world from its first existence had mountains, a sea and the like as now', although 'I am of opinion that there is no mountain on the earth now, that is an original mountain, or that existed when the world first rose, and conclude with Aristotle that the sea and land have chang'd places and continue so to do; and I think it is not possible for any man fairly to solve the phenomenon of marine bodies found in mountains, by any other principle; especially as by a deluge caus'd as the author has propos'd.' 'I could produce much matter on this argument, were it not that I am unwilling to anticipate here what I have thoughts of setting forth in a particular tract.' 'When we come philosophically to assert a

thing, it would require a more than ordinary consideration before we go about to unhinge a frame of providence, as thinking to put it in a better state, than an infinite wisdom has done.' The sea, according to Beaumont, is as necessary to the macrocosm of the earth as juices are to the microcosm of the human body, and so are mountains, without which, *inter alia*, there would be no mines or minerals, as 'metalline-ores lie not in horizontal beds, as they are all in level countries; but in beds either standing perpendicular to or some degree rais'd above the horizons; the reasons of which I may set forth in some other tract'. 'I know a great part will agree with me that a level country can never be so pleasant as a country diversified in site and ornament, with mountains, valleys, chases, plains, woods, cataractal falls, and serpentine courses of rivers, with a prospect of the sea etc.' 'The globe of the earth therefore, as well as the particular bodies in it, have been set in order by an understanding principle, and have every where a rational distribution of parts for their proper uses.'<sup>88</sup>

In using ancient writings to understand earth's history, one has to distinguish between sacred writ and pagan accounts. 'Even though those great facts recorded in scriptures (according to the more generally receiv'd opinion of divines, to which we ought to submit) are receiv'd as realities; yet it seems it was not the design of providence we should chiefly attend to those facts, but rather to the symbolical mysteries contain'd under them, which far more nearly concern us.' The end of the scriptures is 'of higher nature than to instruct us in natural history and in sciences grounded on second causes, to which God has left them, as useless to the salvation of men', so they are to be applied not literally 'but in holy things of faith and morals for which they were dictated'. The prophets who wrote the scriptures did not intend their account of the creation, deluge, or conflagration (at the end of the world) 'should ever be brought under a physiological consideration', not because we should doubt their reality but 'because I look upon them as works grounded on an extraordinary providence'. Nevertheless, all such events in the scriptures 'and many other strange things there mentioned unaccountable from natural principles, were and will be realities besides their being symbols; whereas whatever is set forth by the gentiles concerning any of those things, or any other strange facts, it's merely symbolical'.<sup>89</sup>

Pagan accounts, therefore, should not be regarded as good evidence for natural history: Greeks and barbarians knew nothing directly about antediluvian times, and there is 'no reason to think the ancients were as good egg philosophers as the world has now, by the help of late anatomical researches, assisted by our opticks'. Pagan accounts were essentially

political in aim, 'and being greatly skilled in adept philosophy (as some of our prophets also transcendently were) they knew how to adapt the great phenomena of the earth to the microcosm and moral world and there is a mystery in what they intimate, as to these changes, which I think not fit here to explain'. Pagans did understand much about the natural world, as they had access to the same sources of ancient wisdom as Bible writers; for example Pythagoras and Orpheus are 'judged by many to have been knowing in the Mosaic cabala concerning the true system of the world', and their works incorporate much astrological cosmology, as do the scriptures. But their writings are never to be understood literally. 'Those who are seen in the Promethean Arcanum Astrologicum and have heard the seven-reed pipes of Pan, know on what grounds the above-mentioned astrological causes for deluges and conflagrations were originally introduc'd and whither they tend.' On the one hand, the key to both magic and true knowledge is astrological cosmology: Moses' account of creation may be 'arithmantical divinity according to certain symbolical mysteries contain'd in numbers', and 'the antediluvian patriarchs, as well as the postdiluvian, were in their respective times the most absolute masters of the foresaid science, of any men on the earth, and that from them it has been convey'd down in its pureness to us, is what I know not how to disbelieve'.<sup>90</sup> But equally, the interrelationship between microcosm and macrocosm means that this same knowledge is fundamentally about man's moral and spiritual regeneration and is conveyed mystically rather than openly.

Discussing paradise Beaumont notes that, to treat of it 'according to its dignity', a man ought to have had 'a due institution among the mystae (by such I mean those excellent Genii, whose better stars have so dispos'd their understandings, that they have penetrated the allegories and aenigmas of the ancient sages and are able readily to run through the whole system of nature, everywhere adapting superiours to inferiours according to those scales of numbers which a learned adeptist has set forth) and to have us'd great diligence in study, undisturb'd by worldly circumstances, both which I well know to have been wanting in me. A man ought to be thorowly seen in the analogies between the intellectual, celestial and sublunary worlds, and of the microcosm to them all. For otherwise he shall never be able to discern what is deliver'd literally, what figuratively by the ancients; and for want of persons thus qualified, those infinite tautological volumes have been written by schoolmen and others on this and other parts of the scriptures.' 'I would not be understood all this while as though I pretended myself a master in symbolical learning; for I think there is but one of a town and two of

a tribe that so are; yet I may pretend myself a scholar in such a classis of it that I see a multitude of errours introduced into natural and civil history through the ignorance of it.' So he wishes Burnet had regarded his figures of the stages of the earth's history as symbolical of the seven states of man's life – first a chaos of tabula rasa, then the smoothness of youth, then a deluge of passions and vice, then the unevenness of troubles of life, then the conflagration of the baptism of fire and spirit, then things go smoothly again, until 'at last the mind of man comes to its seventh, sabbatical, astral, and glorious state' with 'the intellectual world of intelligences on either hand to attend him': surely an account of how Beaumont already saw his own life? 'Those who are in any way initiated in these mysteries know how far they may be free to express themselves in them; concerning which I have nothing more to offer than to pray that love in the moral world, as well as in the natural, may still overpower the other perverse and refractory principle, and beseech God in his mercy to enlighten every man in his appointed time.'<sup>91</sup>

It is clear then that by 1693 Beaumont was already fully committed to a hermetic and esoteric view of the world, including illumination by spirits, although he never explicitly states that he has received any visits from such spirits. 'I make no doubt but there are sibyls still in the world who can and do perform the like pious offices to man, though the outward typical part of caves and tripods be left off; the caves only denoting a deep mental recess; the tripod the three successions of Time, all known to Apollo'. The 'God within us who sometimes is pleas'd to manifest himself to Man' offers his grace so that 'such as having apply'd the powers of their Soul to the knowledge of that divine Nature which governs the world, are, at length initiated by a certain divine Institution, disposing to the supernatural act, which God has been pleased to reveal to man, by which also a regeneration is truly wrought, and Paradise is open'd to us', though this will be transient as man relapses into sin without a particular providence to uphold him.<sup>92</sup>

The other work I have suggested may be linked with Beaumont is *Scala Naturae: a treatise proving both from nature and scripture the existence of good genii or guardian-angels. In a letter to his much honoured friend J.B. of C. Esq.*, a 48-page tract printed for John Lawrence at the Angel in the Poultrey in 1695. While this discusses the scale of nature in all things, including vegetables and insects, it focuses on man and his relationship to spiritual beings: 'I did intend this discourse as a rational proof of the genii.' Its writer notes that 'there are several sorts of men distinguish'd from each other as metals, minerals, stones, birds, fish and beasts differ amongst themselves in their respective classes'. It is, he wrote,

unreasonable to suppose that there is nothing between man and God in the scale of nature and more likely that 'there are at least as many orders and degrees of substance in the spiritual and invisible nature as in the corporeal and visible'. Hence 'the lowest degree in the most inferior order of these spiritual beings', being 'the very link which joyns the rational visible to the rational spiritual subsistence, should (methinks) be some way discernible to us', and 'profane and sacred authors both bear joint testimony to the truth thereof', citing both Plato and the scriptures. Discussing the angels of the Bible, he concludes that 'the doctrine of the genii or guardian-angels is set forth in holy scriptures ... to convince us of our own weakness and the need we have of God's ministerial powers to support us', but 'their ministration shall be continued only to those who improve by it'. He also asserts that 'bodies politick as well as individual persons have their spiritual watchmen allotted them'. He ends, 'if purity be the nature and charity the office of the good genius, I need not name to you the man who has particularly recommended himself to their frequent conversation and especial assistance', presumably the dedicatee, 'J.B. of C. Esq.' himself.<sup>93</sup>

Given the theme, and the use of the term 'genii' favoured by Beaumont in his 1728 work, it seems quite likely that this is connected with Beaumont's experience of spirits and once again establishes that, within his cosmology, there was no polarity between natural history and communication with spirits – rather they all were part of a single 'scale' of nature. It is tempting to suggest that a similar interest underlay the work of Beaumont's friend Edward Tyson, and his most important work, which Anita Guerrini notes 'exercised an extraordinary influence on both anthropology and popular culture in the eighteenth century'. This was his *Orang-Outang, sive Homo Sylvestris: OR, THE ANATOMY OF A PYGMIE Compared with that of a Monkey, an Ape, and a Man. To which is added, A PHILOLOGICAL ESSAY Concerning the Pygmies, the Cynocephali, the Satyrs, and Sphinges of the ANCIENTS. Wherein it will appear that they are all either APES or MONKEYS, and not MEN, as formerly pretended*. In his earliest major tract, *Phocaena, or The anatomy of a porposs dissected at Gresham Colledge: with a praeliminary discourse concerning anatomy, and a natural history of animals* (1680), he had justified his detailed anatomical work as revealing 'something of nature's working and the gradual formation of the different species of animals', progressing through 'a scale or gradation of beings' and ending 'at last in man and intelligent beings that are a boundary between divinity and the creation'. And in his dedication of *Orang-Outang* he tells Lord Somers, "Tis a true Remark, which we cannot make without Admiration; That from

Minerals, to Plants; from Plants, to Animals; and from Animals, to Men; the Transition is so gradual, that there appears a very great Similitude, as well between the meanest Plant, and some Minerals; as between the lowest Rank of Men, and the highest kind of Animals. The Animal of which I have given the Anatomy, coming nearest to Mankind; seems the Nexus of the Animal and Rational, as your Lordship and those of your High Rank and Order for Knowledge and Wisdom, approaching nearest to that kind of Beings which is next above us; Connect the Visible, and Invisible World.' Furthermore, like Beaumont, Tyson combines a detailed anatomical analysis with a detailed account of all the ancient texts concerning 'pygmies', noting, 'tho' on this occasion, it may be, the *Poets* have *Enigmatically* represented some Nobler Secrets of *Philosophy*, by what they relate under the *Fables* they have made of these *Satyrs*, the *Fauni*, the *Nymphae*, *Pan*, *Aegipan*, *Sylvanus*, *Silenus*, or any other Name they have given of this sort of *Animal*; yet I think myself no farther concerned at present, than to shew what might give the first rise to and occasion of these Inventions: or rather to prove that the *Satyrs* were neither *Men*, nor *Demi-gods*, nor *Daemons*; but *Monkeys* or *Baboons*, that in *Africa* were worshipped as the *Gods* of the Country; and being so, might give the *Poets* the Subject of the Stories which they have forged about them'.<sup>94</sup>

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The discovery that, rather than being polar opposites, the worlds of nature and spirits were inextricably intertwined in the thinking of John Beaumont will hardly come as news to historians of science, who have established over the last four decades that such thinking underlay the work of many of the leading scientists of the period, not least Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle.<sup>95</sup> If anything makes Beaumont special, it is perhaps his willingness to make public in his writings many of those connections which others may well have made in their private writings and conversations but increasingly saw as inappropriate for public discussion. In 1724, Beaumont wrote, 'I well know there are some things relating to natural knowledge which naturally carry an injunction to secrecy in them, so that those who are let into the mystery, if they are in their senses, will not divulge them, nor communicate them to others, save by some secret ways known to themselves and so that the parties to whom they are communicated shall never know whence it comes',<sup>96</sup> yet (ironically) he persisted in revealing in his publications at least some of those experiences and ideas which influenced him. In doing so, he

attracted to himself those charges of 'enthusiasm' and of mental instability which were increasingly used in this period to police the borders of polite culture and public knowledge: others like him doubted if a man who did this was 'in his senses', and perhaps he doubted it himself. His willingness to reveal himself and his experiences in public may have been both a result of, and also a further reinforcement of, his 'margin-ality' – despite touching the lives of great men and of the Royal Society and the London press, he never successfully escaped from his provincial status or his 'outsider' position as a Roman Catholic, and he remained at best a very minor gentleman. Yet his writings and his career did make an impact on men like Sloane who, for all their success in forging a new public identity and culture, retained a profound interest in the reality of spirits and the experiences of men like Beaumont.

## 6

### Public Infidelity and Private Belief? The Discourse of Spirits in Enlightenment Bristol

Recent work on the history of witchcraft and magic has identified three themes or approaches as of particular importance in our understanding of a subject which, although it has been centre stage since the publication of *Religion and the Decline of Magic* in 1971, has continued to trouble historians. The first problem, acknowledged as 'the most baffling aspect of this difficult subject' by Thomas himself, is that of its decline: by rendering early modern witchcraft beliefs intelligible, historians have highlighted the issue of why and how far they ceased to have meaning (or function), and many have regarded this as the least satisfactory feature of Thomas's account.<sup>1</sup> The much greater interest now being displayed in the culture of the long eighteenth century, including its occult aspects, has rendered this theme of pressing concern.

The second issue concerns the need for case studies. It is broadly agreed that witchcraft must be studied as a conjunctural phenomenon, operating at a whole series of levels and affected by the interplay of a variety of institutions, interests and languages. While these can all be analysed separately, it is equally crucial to study their interrelationship, and this, for the moment at least, is best done in specific settings where the evidence survives to allow a full reconstruction of the development and resolution of a witchcraft episode. Thirdly, historians have become particularly interested in witchcraft as a linguistic phenomenon and one embedded in narrative. This involves a concern to reconstruct the role played by conflicts over the use of contested terms (such as 'witch') and the provision of alternative stories of a specific case (whether produced by an interrogation, trial pamphlet, a learned demonology



or whatever). But it also involves an interest in the intertextuality of witchcraft cases – that is, their shaping by reference to previous stories, authorities or cultural models of how, for example, a possession might develop and be resolved.

The case to be discussed here fulfils all three of these criteria. It dates from 1761–2, some 25 years after the repeal of the old statutes by the Witchcraft Act of 1736, and some ten years after the last English witchcraft episode that has been studied in any scholarly depth.<sup>2</sup> Unlike that case, when a man was executed for ducking a witch and thus causing her death, the Bristol case never generated any legal proceedings. However, it did lead to a long series of exchanges in the Bristol newspapers, followed by the preparation of a 60-page narrative of what had occurred, and the keeping of diaries or narratives of the events by other participants. Taken together, these enable us to reconstruct much of what occurred and to follow the process whereby various rival understandings of what was going on were constructed and presented to the public. Furthermore, we have a great deal of contextual evidence to explain the position of those who believed in the reality of supernatural forces in this case and sought to defend this view publicly. Even though the identities and motives of the sceptics are less clear, and no detailed work has been done on the social circumstances of the family at the centre of the case, enough can be deduced to draw tentative conclusions about what the episode may have meant to them as well. However, the focus here will be on the efforts of two men, Henry Durbin and William Dyer, to interpret the case.

In an earlier essay I used the diaries of William Dyer (a Bristol accountant), covering the second half of the eighteenth century, to question some of the assumptions of Keith Thomas and others regarding the ‘decline of magic’ and ‘secularization’ of healing in the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Outwardly a typical enlightened humanitarian in a modern profession, Dyer’s own beliefs and medical activities, and those of the circle he moved in, with their extensive interests in electrical and chemical medicine, were shown to arise from their pietist and anti-materialist philosophies, which attracted them to spiritual accounts of nature and its powers, as embodied in such movements as Hutchinsonianism, Behmenism and, later, Swedenborgianism and mesmerism. In religious terms they sought an ecumenical alliance of groups emphasizing biblical and Trinitarian ideas against deist and Unitarian tendencies within both dissent and Anglicanism, though their response to evangelical Methodism was mixed. Dyer and several of his closest friends, including Durbin, were drawn to Wesleyan Methodism but remained attached

also to the Church of England, many of whose clergy in Bristol shared similar pietist inclinations, but in religion, as medicine, they were eclectic, seeking out effective spiritual remedies just as they collected and purveyed what they saw as effective medical treatments. Indeed, this 'experimental' emphasis on spiritual vitality might be seen as their overriding concern.

In that essay I referred briefly to an episode of supposed witchcraft in Bristol 1761–2 and considered its relevance to the themes discussed.<sup>4</sup> I now wish to examine that episode more closely and with a particular emphasis. Four main sources have survived to enable us to report this affair, usually known as the Lamb Inn case after the inn near Lawford's Gate at the Gloucestershire exit from the city where the episodes began and, for the most part, occurred. As we shall see, the inn itself and its associated carrying trade were central to the rival explanations of the meaning of the episode. The sources are: Dyer's diary; a series of newspaper letters during early 1762; two letters written by the Rev. James Brown, then undermaster of the grammar school, to William Legge, second earl of Dartmouth, describing the case and enclosing various documents; and a narrative account of the episode prepared by Dyer's friend Henry Durbin, a Bristol chemist of some standing, uncle to a later alderman, Sir John Durbin, and a leading figure among the Wesleyans in Bristol who opposed the separation of the movement into a denomination outside the Church of England.

In the case of Dyer's diary, we have two versions of events in 1762, because around 1800 Dyer produced a condensed version of his original diaries for the last 50 years. Having done this, he then destroyed all the originals save, fortunately, that for 1762, probably because of his interest in the Lamb Inn case.<sup>5</sup> Thus we only have his retrospective account for late 1761, when the affair began, but then both contemporary and retrospective accounts for 1762, as well as some extracts from Dyer's diary (for 15 December 1761 and some dates in January and early February 1762) in Brown's letters to Dartmouth. Dyer's diary reveals that a number of his fellow pietists, such as Stephen Penny and George Eaton, also began narratives of the affair, as did Dyer himself; Brown's letters to Dartmouth include neatly copied extracts from Eaton's journal from 14 December 1761 to 10 January 1762, and on 24 February Dyer had read out 'Mr Eaton's journal of that affair' to three ladies who wanted 'a succinct account of the affair at the Lamb'. Brown had clearly written to Dartmouth first around the beginning of February, as his letter of 24 February is called a 'further account' written at Dartmouth's desire, and it states that 'just after' his last letter he had visited the inn,

describing events which occurred on 2 February. He offers to 'get the diary of some friend who has kept an account from the beginning' if Dartmouth wants further information. In his second letter, of 5 April, he apologises for the delay, explaining, 'I had apprehended many had minuted down all the particulars that occurred, but I found myself well mistaken; two or three had done something of that sort but very imperfect and a gentleman that had attended most and taken down most of the things that happened is unwilling at present to part with his journal, fearing it may steal out into the world'. However, while he was writing this letter, 'the enclosed was sent me' (presumably the Dyer and Eaton extracts), and he adds that he has 'just run it over and can attest the truth of it'. On 1 April Dyer records: 'draw'd up an abstract of Mr Giles's affair for Mr Brown'.<sup>6</sup>

Dyer's circle were also involved, as we shall see, in the newspaper controversy that developed in February and March 1762 over the episode, with a sequence of 11 letters putting forward rival explanations of the incidents and how they should be approached in philosophical and religious terms. We know from Dyer that other letters on the subject appeared in other Bristol newspapers, now lost, and that Penny also wrote at least one letter to the London papers, in which the matter was noted. *Lloyd's Evening Post* of 5 February reported, 'They write from Bristol that a sham ghost is playing tricks there and that a house near Lawford's Gate is haunted by a mischievous Devil, who pinches the children there and won't let them sleep quiet in their beds'. The national attention it attracted arose largely from its coincidence with the so-called Cock Lane ghost affair in London, which was widely reported and discussed. Ten days later the same paper informed its readers: 'The following letters from Bristol, written by persons of different complexions, giving an account of a transaction of a similar, but rather more wonderful nature, than that lately exhibited in Cock-lane, will, doubtless, be acceptable to our readers, as they will serve to shew that Credulity, the child of Fear and Superstition, is as deeply rooted in the minds of some of the good people of Bristol, as it was lately in some in this metropolis'. One of the letters, dated Bristol 13 February, was probably Penny's (which also appeared in *London Evening Post* the next day) and described briefly how the children were 'afflicted externally in a preternatural way' in what was 'no imposture, but something like witchcraft', adding, 'answers are likewise given by scratches to most things you ask, either in English, Latin or Greek'. The second letter, signed from '(Not a London conjuror, but) A BRISTOL CONJUROR' is an entirely satirical account of 'the various gambols and wonderful exhibitions of the Witch at the Lamb',

claiming 'when the Cock-Lane Ghost stalked first in Bristol, the general cry was "It is certainly the Witch without Lawford's Gate"'. The author offers a joke history of the witch, tracing her Lancashire and Welsh ancestry and referring to the *Spectator's* Sir Roger de Coverley, before offering, as a 'conjurer' descended from white witches of old, to make the witch make 'a publick triumphant entry at Temple-Bar, riding upon the original broomstick of Mary Squire'.<sup>7</sup>

Brown's 'gentleman' who would not let his journal be used for fear it would become public was almost certainly Durbin, who began to prepare his account in 1762, and in subsequent years the account, and his testimony, formed the basis of comment on the incident in the manuscript annals of several Bristolians (see below), but his narrative was not published until after his death, which occurred in December 1798. In 1800 was published *A Narrative of Some Extraordinary Things that Happened to Mr. Richard Giles's Children at the Lamb, without Lawford's Gate, Bristol; supposed to be the effect of witchcraft. By the late Mr. Henry Durbin, chymist, who was an eye witness of the principal facts herein related. (Never before published.) To which is added, a letter from the Rev. Mr Bedford, late Vicar of Temple, to the Bishop of Gloucester, relative to one Thomas Perks of Mangotsfield, who had dealings with familiar spirits.* The editor of this 60-page pamphlet is not identified; William Dyer prepared for publication other manuscripts by his pietist friends, but there is no reference to his editing Durbin's work in his diary extracts for this period. The appended letter by Bedford, whose relevance will become clear, itself had a long publishing history. It was first published in 1704, the year after Bedford wrote it to Bishop Edward Fowler, and was subsequently reprinted on several occasions, as well as being copied into manuscript collections and referred to in other books on spirits.<sup>8</sup>

I have gone into some detail regarding the sources for this case because my aim is not so much to consider the Lamb Inn events themselves, but rather to explore the responses of those involved and the way in which the episode was portrayed, both at the time and subsequently. As my title suggests, my concern is with the possible divergence of public and private responses in 'the discourse of spirits' and, in a broader sense, the implications of this for our understanding of the decline in the 'public discourse' of witchcraft, magic and the supernatural during the eighteenth century. The standard interpretation of this has been to see public discourse following changes in private belief and understanding, as new views of religion, natural philosophy and the like cut back, if they did not excise, the realm of the supernatural in educated thought. The evidence presented here suggests instead that public discourse may

be only an approximate guide to private belief, dependent on the rules of public debate, but also that those very rules of public debate may themselves have moulded private belief, at least in the longer term.<sup>9</sup> If so, the outcome was not necessarily just secular enlightenment but also the range of beliefs that fed into nineteenth-century occult and spiritualist traditions.

In my earlier article I established that many of Bristol's mid-eighteenth-century intellectuals shared some or all of the beliefs in revelation, providence, spirits, and anti-Newtonian philosophy which ran counter to the supposed 'enlightenment' tone of intellectual life at that period.<sup>10</sup> Whether Bristol was untypical in that respect may be debatable, but there is no doubt that, despite their position in Bristol life, most of these people felt themselves to be living in a world of 'public infidelity' – subject to the mockery or neglect of a sceptical public. Such a belief did much to shape their reaction to the Lamb Inn affair. Dyer and his friends kept notes and began narratives of the affair in order to put on record their side of the story in what they concluded was a 'clear case' of 'supernatural Agency'.<sup>11</sup> Yet their motive in doing so was certainly as much to convince and edify themselves and their friends as to convince the broader public.

It was the sceptics who first brought the affair into the public domain, through a letter that appeared on 6 February 1762 in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*. A week earlier the same newspaper had published a sceptical account of the Cock Lane affair in London, and on 4 February Dyer reported that lawyers at the Nag's Head had been diverting themselves concerning the credulity of Durbin and his friends. The letter began: 'As the two principal cities in this kingdom are supposed at present to be very much plagued with witches and spirits (to the terror of some, amusement of others and concern of most people)', an extract from Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584) would be 'not unentertaining nor uninstrusive' to readers. At the end of this piece, which carried over into the next week's issue, the lesson was drawn that, as the 'far more amazing' case reported by Scot had turned out to be one of 'ventriloquy and plain cousinage', so would the modern cases. Thus the JPs should interfere to see 'if the arts of present witches can escape their cognizance and acuteness', bearing in mind what was being achieved in the way of ventriloquy by 'Mr Bilinguis', who was putting on public shows in Bristol at the time. Thus it was the sceptics, not the believers, who brought the affair to press attention and also called for judicial intervention to make public the facts of the case.

In Durbin's narrative it is the day after this second letter appeared, on 14 February, that he notes the need for 'a certain Fact' to convince the world that the case is not one of imposture, given the 'many reflections thrown upon me in the public papers'<sup>12</sup>, and on 18 February Dyer reported that Durbin was taking down details of the affair in writing; the next day one of the clergymen involved told Dyer that the affair was being ridiculed in a London paper (presumably *Lloyd's Evening Post* of 15 February, discussed above). On 20 February *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* carried two more pieces, the first continuing the attack, though from a different angle (discussed later), while the second letter, 'Some Seasonable Queries relating to the Affair without Lawford's Gate', offered the first public defence of those involved in the case. The title and tone of this piece are significant, implying a cautious response to the intemperate certainties of the previous letters, and this is indeed the theme of the letter, which focuses on the 'self-conceit' of those who say something cannot be because they cannot assign reasons why it should be permitted. It then appeals to God's inscrutability and biblical examples. Just because of 'many cheats' and a 'thousand silly stories', 'well-attested' cases should not be disbelieved, for 'total denial of witchcraft' should be left to 'the shallow coffee-house critics and weak sadducees of Robbin-hood'. It became neither 'a gentleman' nor a 'Christian' after the 'testimony of so many credible persons in Bristol to print such a paragraph as was in the last papers, reflecting on Mr G---s' family and insinuating that the justices of the country ought to punish them for that which is really an affliction permitted of God'.

A number of themes are being developed here, including the fear, widespread at this time, that the press could be abused to harm private reputations,<sup>13</sup> together with the associated denigration of coffeehouses and debating as well as of Walpolean Whiggery (both implied by 'Robbin-hood') as centres of a shallow public opinion based on destructive scepticism.<sup>14</sup> The believers had begun to develop their public case, although we do not know who wrote this letter. Three days later, however, Dyer read some queries concerning the affair that the accountant Stephen Penny had written to be published in 'Sarah Farley's paper' (that is, the rival *Bristol Journal*), and the next day he read and posted Penny's queries for publication in the *London Chronicle* (which does not appear to have published them). After two more severe attacks had appeared on 27 February, Dyer noted with pleasure on 6 March the paragraphs in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* and queries in the *Bristol Journal* which 'very much pleased' those who believed in the reality of the affair: only the former survive. This prompted two further attacks

in the next week's issue, after which the sceptics fell silent. Penny, who was a regular newspaper correspondent on religious matters, may have produced the first 'queries'; it was he who, with Dyer's help (see diary for 28 and 29 April and 5 May), drafted the penultimate newspaper letter (published on 8 May), purportedly written by Richard Giles the innkeeper himself, in which he vindicated himself and his family, a version of events which was supported by 'Philaethes' in the next issue. To this extent the believers apparently had the final word.

However, from Dyer's diary we learn that Penny saw the affair rather differently. On 30 March Dyer noted that he was 'writing most of the remarkable transactions I can recollect concerning the Lawford Gate affair with a design to give to Mr Penny who had some thoughts of publishing a narrative of that extraordinary affair with remarks thereupon', but that same evening 'I find his mind is altered fearing it might hurt the minds of the people by filling them with jealousies and fears'. This remark is susceptible of two interpretations, both perhaps valid. The first is that Penny was concerned lest accusations of witchcraft and the diabolical fuel popular 'jealousies and fears'. Critics of the affair suggested that its effect would be to fan ignorant superstition and bring innocent old women into suspicion, and there is no doubt that the Lamb Inn case did lead to the revival of old fears and the public surfacing, if not creation, of new ones. Durbin's narrative for 4 and 8 February shows that reported afflictions in Bristol had spread beyond the family first involved,<sup>15</sup> and by 10 February Dyer was noting that 'people now began to be staggered concerning this affair'. On 21 February he noted further that people were remembering similar affairs in the past. As we shall see, the Durbin circle were profoundly ambivalent about the development of the Lamb Inn affair into a witchcraft case or its movement into the public sphere, and in that sense alone the publication of their side of the story was bound to be, in some senses, an own goal. Furthermore, as their comments on public debate of such matters have already suggested, this group was distrustful about the benefits of airing spiritual matters in the press. One of the repeated themes of their publications (ironically enough), as well as their private writings, is that vital religion was being damaged precisely by the growing torrent of words and opinions, distracting people from the simple truths of the Bible and quiet contemplation of their souls. This was one of the points of divergence between this group and the wholehearted evangelism of John Wesley and Whitefield, who were willing to use the media to stir up public attention whatever animosity and divisions it caused. Pietists like Penny and Dyer disliked and distrusted controversy.<sup>16</sup>

Such concerns, of course, explain why Durbin never published his narrative in his lifetime. The preface makes this quite clear. It opens by noting, 'In an age naturally inclined to Infidelity, it requires some courage in a man to stand up against the current of public opinion, to express his conviction that there is a *spiritual world*, and that its inhabitants, through the inscrutable economy of Divine Providence, are permitted at certain times, to manifest themselves in a variety of ways to the children of men'.<sup>17</sup> Later it notes:

It may be asked, 'If Mr Durbin was so well convinced of the truth of these transactions, why did he not publish the Narrative in his lifetime?' This he was often urged to do by many friends, to whom he related all these circumstances, with several others not mentioned in the Narrative: To all of whom he regularly gave one answer, which in substance was as follows: 'The present is an age of Infidelity – men scoff at spiritual things – if they believe not Moses and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles, they will not, of course, believe my feeble testimony concerning a World which it may be their interest to discredit. When I first engaged in the Examination of this business, I was abused in the public Papers for what was termed my *credulity*. Should I publish the Narrative, the same abuse would be revived, and I wish to live and die in peace with all men. It will doubtless be published after my death, and the matter will then speak for itself'.<sup>18</sup>

The quietism of this latter statement offers an ironic perspective on the notion of 'courage' in the opening quotation: it seems that it was courageous enough to stand up against public opinion in one's own mind, without being required to enter the fruitless struggle to reverse that public infidelity. And yet, the preservation and planned publication of the narrative clearly imply a belief that it might, after all, have its uses in converting a sceptical public, as well as its more private purposes for sharing with 'friends' on an individual basis. Significantly, moreover, we learn that some circumstances told to friends are not mentioned in the narrative (notably Durbin's interview with the spirit, discussed below, which is referred to only by the editor).<sup>19</sup> We are thus alerted to the likelihood that the narrative is shaped to win over a sceptical public, not to divulge its meaning for the already sympathetic. This can be substantiated both by close examination of Durbin's narrative itself – its language and its silences, its structure and its baffling lack of structure – and by comparing its account with that provided by the newspaper pieces and, in particular, by Dyer's observations, which, while



not spontaneous, do show a complexity of response and circumstance largely, though not totally, excised from the published narrative.

From its title page onwards, the tone of the narrative is one of cautious empiricism. Although the modern facsimile of the text is boldly entitled *Witchcraft at the Lamb Inn Bristol by Henry Durbin*,<sup>20</sup> the original title promises us only a 'narrative' of 'some extraordinary things' 'supposed to be the effect of witchcraft', as related by 'an Eye and Ear witness of the principal Facts herein related', one who is named and whose position in Bristol life is very specifically emphasized, together with his occupation of 'chymist'. The main discursive strategies of the text are in fact encapsulated in these points. We are offered a 'narrative', written entirely in the first person as an account of what Durbin himself was involved in, from the first entry:

December 18, 1761, hearing that Mr Giles's children, Miss Molly and Dobby, were afflicted in an extraordinary manner, for a fortnight past, I went there this day, and saw Molly sewing, and found she had marks on her arms given on a sudden, like the marks of a thumb-nail; which I am satisfied she could not do herself, As I watched her, I saw the flesh pressed down whitish, and rise again.

Each subsequent entry follows the same format, with no attempt in the text itself to impose a pattern or explain the chain of events to the reader. The purpose throughout is to establish that Durbin was an actual witness of a series of very precisely described physical events, along with many other unimpeachable witnesses, and that what they saw happening could not be the result of imposture but had occurred in a fashion beyond 'natural' explanation.

To understand this narrative strategy it is necessary to look at the terms of the debate over the affair conducted in the newspapers. What these show is how public consideration of the incident was confined within a tight and highly polarized model of alternative possibilities. What was occurring was either fact or imposture. As we have seen, the first public reporting sought very firmly to place the episode in the setting of the latter, with its use of Scot and of parallels with conjuring and its appeal to public authority to uncover the true facts. Throughout the letters written by the sceptics runs a determination to explain away the events as tricks, impostures or artifices and to brand the witnesses of these events as, at the very least, 'credulous' (the word which Durbin found so abusive). No effort is made either to provide an alternative naturalistic account of what was occurring or to concede that the events were baffling but deny

them a supernatural explanation. Instead the sceptics admitted, on occasions explicitly, that if the events as described were occurring, then they were supernatural, but that this could not be the case (see the opening of the letter on 20 February). In taking this stand they rested their case primarily on two premises. The first, Scot-like one, was that all such incidents always turned out to have a natural and usually fraudulent explanation and were within the powers of conjurors. The second was that, in a modern and enlightened age, witchcraft was no longer accepted by the law, but fraudulent pretences at spiritual powers, such as fortune-telling, were now the essence of the crime of witchcraft, as defined by the 1736 Act. The sceptical position was thus the consequence of a long-lasting sceptical stance, epitomized by Scot, together with a modern legalistic position. Strikingly absent from any of the sceptical accounts is any effort to appeal to modern natural philosophy or medicine to explain the events described as true but natural.<sup>21</sup>

In one sense we may be struck by the extremism and stridency of this approach: it certainly represents a 'strong' form of denial of the reality of 'preternatural' events in daily experience. Yet its very intemperance left open many inviting targets for the believers. If it sufficed to show that the events in question were really happening and were not the outcome of imposture, then a simple narrative that established the credibility, not the credulity, of the witnesses, was sufficient. As the editor of Durbin's narrative puts it:

He hopes it will not be supposed, from the publication of this Narrative, that he intends to enter the lists with Unbelievers in general, or with those who might wish to shake the credit of Facts, such as those related in this Pamphlet: he has no such design: he is willing that every man should abound in his own opinion; being convinced, that they have the same *right* to disbelieve relations of Witchcraft, &c. in general, as he has to credit those which he believes to be sufficiently authenticated. He thinks the following is a *clear case*, and that from it, every impartial reader will drawing the following conclusion: Either this is a *real* case of Supernatural Agency: or, Mr Durbin has knowingly imposed on the World and gone into Eternity professing to believe what he knew to be false. – But in this case, Mr D's character swears for him; and will for ever preclude, with all who knew him, the possibility of such an imputation.<sup>22</sup>

Hence the preface devotes itself in large part to establishing Durbin's social respectability, as an alderman's uncle and a charitable man of

‘ample annual income’, of probity and piety. Further, it presents Durbin as approaching the affair:

through a principle of critical curiosity to detect and expose what he deemed to be an imposture. The means he made use of to effect this end are sufficiently detailed in the Narrative; and shew such prudential caution, and rigid, critical examination, proceeded in with the most patient perseverance for a great length of time, as no *trick* or *imposture* could have possibly shielded itself from.<sup>23</sup>

And this is indeed the burden of most of the text, with its details of what Durbin himself or other credible witnesses saw or heard or experienced directly and the repeated efforts they made to ensure that there was no fraud, by checking for wires or hairs, holding the children or masking things from their view and the like. Those engaged with this task alongside Durbin are not named (though Dyer’s diary allows us to put names to many of them), but their social and intellectual credentials as witnesses are established by references to their status. Many of them are presented, like Durbin, as initially sceptical, but all are convinced by their sense testimony. As the preface sums up: ‘Several Clergymen of learning and piety, and Gentlemen of considerable abilities, some of whom were professed Deists’ attended, and all were ‘fully convinced that there could be no imposture in the case’. This is reinforced in the preface by reference to the preservation of bent pins and a warped glass, referred to in the text, for display to sceptical friends.<sup>24</sup>

The classic case is that of Major D--- (Drax, according to Dyer). He found himself unable to hold one of the girls down: ‘the force was so great, that he thought three hundred weight pulled against him’. ‘The major for a *certain* experiment, (for he did not believe there was any thing preternatural in the affair) tried again above ten times’, but to the same effect. The hands supposedly pulling the children also left ‘black and blue marks’ on them so:

the major took a candle to look under the bed, to see if he could find out any trick, and he said he felt three or four fingers catch hold of his wrist, and pinch him so hard that the prints were very visible and grew black next day, and were sore for some time. He was now very certain, no visible power did it, and was fully convinced that the whole was preternatural.

Later the major, like Durbin, tried marking pins to catch the children out in this aspect of the affair, but 'he marked a great many pins, which were returned by the invisible agent in the same manner, which he carried up to London, and shewed them at Court to many Bishops and Noblemen'.<sup>25</sup> At several points in the narrative Durbin emphasised that at no point were the children ever discovered performing any fraudulent tricks.<sup>26</sup>

The critics of the affair therefore faced a considerable problem in discrediting all this evidence without violating the code of respectability by openly claiming, in the press, that the witnesses were either complicit or stupid. Their tactic was to avoid such direct accusations whilst casting doubt on the value of the witnesses indirectly. One way this was done was to suggest, perhaps correctly, that not everybody was welcome to witness the manifestations and that not all of the episodes were as clear-cut as presented in Durbin's account (see, for example, 'Anti-Pythonissa' on 27 February). They also, as we have seen, sought to present the witnesses as credulous rather than credible, thus avoiding outright accusations of falsity while implying that they were predisposed to credit what they were being asked to believe. Without knowing all the parties involved, this is hard to judge. Dyer, perhaps inevitably, largely mentions the presence of his friends, so that the laymen and clergy that he mentions attending the affair are people who, like Durbin, were far from sceptical about the existence of spirits. Most of them at some stage tell Dyer of apparitions, dreams or other 'spiritual' experiences, quite apart from their common interest in metaphysical schemes with a heavy role for an active spirit world.<sup>27</sup>

Not all of the clergy who attended, however, can be associated with Dyer's outlook, one such exception being the grammar school headmaster, later Rector of St Michael's, Samuel Seyer, who 'asked many questions in Greek and Latin' on 10 February.<sup>28</sup> His son and namesake (who collected extensively on Bristol history and published a two-volume history in the 1820s), when he was collecting notes about the affair around 1800, refers to conversations with Durbin but was apparently quite unaware of his own father's involvement. Seyer junior noted that 'Durbin was said to be a credulous man' but that he was known to be honest and could hardly be mistaken about what he had touched. The presence of hundreds of witnesses, gentlemen and ladies, convinced Seyer that the events recorded happened, but he left open the question of whether 'they were performed by supernatural agency or imposture', though noting that if the latter it was never discovered.<sup>29</sup>

Another Bristol antiquarian, George Catcott, also hedged his bets in his annals of Bristol history. At first he described the case firmly as 'pretended witchcraft', but later he amended this opinion, not least because it was never detected, concluding that there was at least 'something supernatural in it'. Finally, reflecting his anti-intellectual leanings, he concluded that if it was a trick it was 'so artfully managed that all those learned gentlemen with all their scholastic knowledge' were unable to detect the fraud.<sup>30</sup> An anonymous annals compiled in 1790 gave a long account of the affair, concluding that 'some were filled with awe and astonishment' leading to a 'belief in the doctrine of witchcraft', while 'other persons of understanding staggered in their opinions concerning the causes of such unaccountable noises and sights'. But 'the people without doors in general treated the affair with derision'.<sup>31</sup> This offers an interesting inversion of the normal assumption of popular credulity and elite scepticism.

Thus it might appear that, both at the time and in later years, the 'believers' had made good the relatively simple task of offering credible enough evidence to undermine the 'imposture' interpretation.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the contemporary accounts show matters in a rather different light. Brown tells Dartmouth on 24 February, 'the affair of the witchcraft makes a great noise here, but there are but few comparatively give credit to it', though he adds, 'I am as much persuaded from what I have seen of something supernatural in this affair as I am almost of my own existence'. Eaton's diary entries make clear his own belief but also the incredulity of others and the difficulty of presenting clear evidence. On 7 January he notes, 'the W--ch not liking the company then present was not so mischievous as at other times', and the next day, as there were 'pretty many persons in the room, the W--ch seem'd backward in showing her pranks'. 'It having been often observ'd that this was the case and in order the more fully to convince a Gentleman then present who was very incredulous', Eaton arranged for him and Rouquet to be left alone in the room holding the child's arms, after which bites appeared upon the arms. 'After this all the company having left the room except my wife and some other woman, the Witch seemed to act as if at more liberty' but 'when the company re-entered the room, she was much quieter, as if she was under some restraint or apprehension of danger from the presence of several bystanders, especially men'.<sup>33</sup>

If Durbin's claim to initial scepticism is questionable – he was already a convinced Wesleyan following a vision,<sup>34</sup> and in later years he stands out among Dyer's friends for his interest and belief in possession (see below) – then Dyer's own reactions as the affair unfolded, and those he

reports among others closely involved, suggest a continuing tendency to doubt the whole affair. In Durbin's account people, including the Giles family themselves, move from initial scepticism to conviction of the reality of the affair. Dyer's verdict in his condensed diary for 10 December 1761, when he first mentions the case, is that the affair was 'at first unaccountable, at length imputed to diabolical magic or witchcraft', but in his diary for 1762 their belief ebbs and flows with the twisting turns of an affair which lasted over a year in all and had several distinct periods. In particular, the period from early March until May, which is passed over rapidly in Durbin's account, and when the newspaper controversy died down, emerges from Dyer's diary as one when many of the supporters of the Giles family, notably the gentry Haynes family of nearby Wick, where the children were often taken to stay, concluded that it was 'a cheat' (9 March).<sup>35</sup> On 13 March Dyer reported that people were very clamorous about Mr Giles, as their suspicions were now confirmed that the witchcraft was 'merely a contrived thing' to lessen the value of the inn, in which Giles had subsequently bought a share.<sup>36</sup> When the children then made a (short-lived) recovery, Dyer himself noted on 18 March, 'Lord pardon my weakness and what I have done amiss.' Dyer later recovered his belief in the supernatural character of the affair, as we shall see, but he continued to record the belief that it had all been to lessen the price of the house (10 April), and on 15 May he again noted that one of the Haynes family was 'very angry' over the affair and added: 'May the Lord prepare me for calumny.' Dyer's own employers, the leading Presbyterian merchants Ames and Bright, were very distrustful of Giles and 'interrogated' him concerning the matter both on 5 February and on 22 June.

It seems likely that this explanation, which remained the standard sceptical explanation in the nineteenth century,<sup>37</sup> was formulated very early on, since Durbin's narrative notes on 10 January that the children had been sent to other houses to see if the manifestations continued, as if they did this would provide 'clearer evidence that it was no imposture'<sup>38</sup> (although this may just mean that the children would find it harder to play such tricks in a different setting). 'Some Seasonable Queries' on 20 February had questioned whether the Giles family could have any interest in manufacturing so 'long and troublesome' an affair and noted that Giles was suffering in business because some looked upon the affair as a judgement of God on him. More mundanely, the Durbin narrative notes in passing that the family were losers because customers were moving to other inns.<sup>39</sup> In the letter published over his name on 5 May Giles himself explicitly denied that it was a plot to

reduce the inn's value, claiming that he was unaware of the decision to sell until three months after the affair began, and again drawing attention to his sending of the children away from the inn.

Without definitive proof of fraud, however, the case for imposture remained purely circumstantial and it was thus possible for the supporters to argue that, in their rejection of the evidence presented, it was the sceptics, rather than they, who were being dogmatic. As their letters to the newspapers emphasised, sense testimony had to be accepted even if it could not be explained by what currently passed for 'reason'. As 'Philalethes' put it on 15 May, reason was a 'necessary handmaid' to the senses, but 'a poor weaksighted girl without their assistance'. The first asserters of the existence of the Antipodes had been regarded as 'heretics' by the 'reasoners' of 'those dark times'. Reason needed to be 'enlightened' by experience, and it was the testimony of 'eyes and ears' that brought certainty. In their insistence on the need to rely on sense testimony, experiment and credible witnesses, the believers were thus presenting themselves, not their opponents, as the champions of Enlightenment values. 'Some Seasonable Queries' neatly reversed the usual charge by arguing that it was 'more credulous' to see as fancy the bites, cuts and flying objects appearing before the eyes of many than to accept the reality of sorcery or demonic contracts. Here empiricism could be turned to the advantage of supposedly occult beliefs, just as it could be used by non-professional healers to justify their cures, even if these ran contrary to accepted medical theory. The analogy is important, since, as I documented in my earlier essay, many of Dyer's circle adopted just such a medical empiricism. In a relatively free society where public opinion and its correlate, market demand, were held to be superior to professional or state control, the discourse of empiricism and enlightenment was open for appropriation by all sides.<sup>40</sup>

Yet it would be misleading to imply that the believers in the Lamb Inn case could win the argument easily by reliance on the evidence of the senses alone. There is considerable evidence both that they could not and that they themselves were dissatisfied with a purely sensory investigation of the affair. The consequence was that investigation of the case took on a further dimension with the questioning of the 'spirit' involved. This, while intended to strengthen the case for a supernatural force at work, offered the sceptics a much more congenial ground on which to criticise the believers. It was on 8 February that, according to the narrative, Durbin proposed asking the spirit questions in Latin 'which I thought would remove all suspicion of a fraud, if it answered right, but I find all the evidence insufficient to convince some'.<sup>41</sup> This

process gradually grew more elaborate as questions were later put not only in Greek but also with the questioner's back to the children, then in whispers and finally silently. The answers were made by scratching a number of times to signify yes, no or the correct number to answer the question asked. This procedure, and the use of learned languages to prevent comprehension by the children or uneducated, was of course a well-known technique in possession cases. However, its shortcomings were equally well established and these were quickly pounced upon by its critics. Even in Durbin's narrative a number of inconsistencies can be detected: sometimes the spirit scratched and 'took no notice of the question', while its answer to a query concerning the number of satellites of the planet Saturn was wrong (though the editor notes that, since more had since been discovered by Herschel in nearby Bath, perhaps the spirit's higher estimate would be proved correct!).<sup>42</sup> The narrative also observes, 'I cannot think why it will not scratch or answer questions to a stranger the first time, unless it intends thereby to throw a reflection on the family, as if they did it by artifice'.<sup>43</sup> Dyer's diary reveals that one answer, incriminating an autodidact collier of involvement in the affair, was rejected as unacceptable or, as Dyer put it, 'no doubt a lying spirit'. All this gives credence to the criticisms made by 'Anti-Pythonissa' on 27 February. He pointed out that the answers were not in Latin and Greek but just by scratches and these were often wrong, while all the questions asked in Hebrew had been answered mistakenly although Hebrew was, surely, the devil's first language! Any child, even a lapdog or canary bird, could perform the 'mere trick' of answering by external signs or noises, since there were witnesses to the fact that questions were answered right only if the questioner reacted at the correct number of scratches.

Reliance on such questions also subjected the believers to a more profound criticism, and one the more effective because it reflected their own doubts about the procedure. The critical letter of 20 February noted with astonishment:

serious believers...men of sense and learning...formally turning their faces to the wall, proposing questions which the Devil is to answer by scratches or knocks? ....[I]f it should prove supernatural, I would humbly propose prayer to the Almighty God, instead of so much time spent in hearing the devil scratch.

Dyer, well aware that the answers might be of 'a lying spirit', noted on 18 February that he was 'fatigued' about the affair and hoped he was



'behaving with prudence' as became 'a Christian' and the next day recorded that 'some may say' that they were being too free with Satan in their constant visits but reassured himself that he, at least, was doing so 'not to converse with that evil spirit' but to profit both himself and the children by 'dropping any little word of use'. Hence, presumably, Durbin's failure to record his interview with the spirit, as reported in the preface. 'His often repeated request to the Spirit, as it was termed, to favour him with an interview ... on any terms consistent with his character as a Christian' led eventually to a meeting in which Durbin:

adjured it in the most solemn manner, to shew itself in any form, or way it thought proper. After a short time spent in waiting, a loud knocking took place on the opposite side of the wainscot (it was at night, and the place in deep darkness.) Lifting his eyes towards the place where the noise seemed to be, he discovered a coloured luminous appearance, of a circular form, about the size of a common plate: the colours resembled those of a rainbow: the brighter ones were extremely vivid, and deeply shaded with the *red*, *blue*, and *indigo*. The Writer believes that Mr. *D* said, he then asked some questions, but what they were, he cannot now recollect.<sup>44</sup>

The sense of unease is palpable.

Why, given the mixed advantages of turning to this procedure, had recourse been had to asking questions? The simple answer to this is that the initiative in this respect was taken not by Durbin and his circle but by the women of the household, and that, as Durbin's account suggests, their intervention was to some extent a matter of stepping in to establish the credibility and experimental rigour, that is the learned male control, of a process already unstoppable. But, in doing so, Durbin and the others also took the opportunity to extract from the process the kind of religious message which, arguably, had underlain their interest from the start. Both Dyer and Durbin agree that questioning began on 23 January, and the narrative makes it clear that the initiative was taken by the girls' grandmother, Mrs Elmes, who 'spoke to the invisible tormenter, when it was knocking and scratching, and said "Art thou a witch? if so, give scratches:" which it did'.<sup>45</sup> By the next day, Durbin himself was also asking questions by this method, although he also cautioned against reliance on the answers given, 'as it [the spirit] might put it [the accusation of witchcraft] on an innocent person'. The following day he was actively leading the questioning, repeating the queries put first by the women.<sup>46</sup>

As far as we can tell, all the early questioning related to the afflictions themselves, but once the questioning shifted into the learned languages, a new dimension appeared. The last recorded question, on 8 February, was 'Si Maximus est Deus' (if God be supreme) to which the scratching replied, of course, in the affirmative.<sup>47</sup> By 10 February, with a whole crowd of clergymen present, Durbin notes, 'we were willing to see if it would acknowledge the great truths of Religion'. These were 'Si Jesus Christus, est deus eternus' (if Christ be the eternal God), 'Si hos liberos protegit Dei angelus' (if an angel of God protects the children), and (asked in Greek) 'If Christ be God and Man', to which an affirmative reply came 'very loud'.<sup>48</sup> On 16 March the spirit also 'scratched as if in a passion' when asked, in thought, 'if Jesus Christ would come to judge the World'.<sup>49</sup> Thus the spirit affirmed both the existence of a world of angels to oppose that of evil spirits and Trinitarian orthodoxy. The latter emphasis fits very nicely with other evidence that hostility to Unitarianism was one of the unifying forces among the 'anti-materialist' groups in Bristol. Furthermore a new and aggressive proponent of Unitarianism, the Rev. Edward Harwood, was just entering the Bristol scene as pastor of the Tucker Street Presbyterian meeting, precipitating a doctrinal dispute that engulfed the Bristol newspapers through the mid-1760s and led to many pamphlet publications. During this dispute, significantly, Harwood accused his main Trinitarian opponent, the Baptist minister Caleb Evans, of 'credulity and blind zeal' of the sort that led to the 'patronizing of extravagant delusions' such as 'a Cock Lane Ghost' or 'a Lawford's Gate witchcraft'.<sup>50</sup>

Harwood's main intellectual project at this period was the publication of his *Liberal Translation of the New Testament* (London, 1767), intended to purge earlier translations of all their Trinitarian errors, as he saw them.<sup>51</sup> This crystallised a row concerning the status and interpretation of the Bible which quickly surfaced during the Lamb Inn affair. 'Some Seasonable Queries' had referred to the Bible evidence for possession and witchcraft, including the story of Simon Magus and the Pauline texts. Both responses on 27 February took up this challenge. 'Anti-Pythonissa', criticizing the 'true puritanical arguing' of the queries, followed Scot in arguing that the Bible's witches and wizards were only pretenders using natural means and 'Remarks on the Queries' expanded on this point, arguing that the witches were never 'like these witches torturing the bodies of men but like our conjurors and fortune-tellers against whom as impostors and encouragers of superstition the laws are still in force'. Gospel references to evil spirits were 'never imagined as owing to commerce with the Devil' but probably referred to

natural diseases, and modern possessions were either natural diseases or frauds.

This was then responded to on 6 March by a letter insisting that biblical witchcraft was not just a matter of 'poisoners' or 'natural diseases', quoting William Perkins.<sup>52</sup> 'You will say Perkins lived in the unenlightened ages of the Church', but 'I am so old-fashioned as to think that our venerable reformers and many of the divines of that age understood their Bible full as well as the enlightened literati of modern date'. However, for good measure the writer then cited Henry More, Anthony Horneck, William Burkitt and the German scholar Bengelius as modern authorities for witchcraft in the Bible as a compact with the devil by God's permission.<sup>53</sup> This provoked two responses the next week (13 March). One reasserted the Scot position by reference to Samuel Shuckford on Exodus and modern physicians of known Christianity like Richard Mead,<sup>54</sup> accusing his opponent of approving of notions 'that prevailed in times of comparative darkness and bigotry when a mere speculative opinion was thought enough to expose a man to everlasting punishment', whereas now there was 'a more generous way of thinking'. This 'liberal' attack on old-fashioned Puritanism was taken further by another diatribe from 'Anti-Pythonissa' criticizing the 'foul and vulgar phrases' of his attacker: 'Can this be the sober, serious, prudent, pious, sanctified Mr xxx? What will the brotherhood of the saints say?'

Once again, the linking of this affair to debate over the meaning and authority of the scriptures may have had an ambivalent effect. Many concerned at liberal theological developments may have been alienated from the sceptics and pushed towards belief, just as Dyer and his friends were. On the other hand, the smearing of such belief as the product either of past Puritanism or modern Methodist extremism (hence the reference to the 'brotherhood of the saints' and so on) may also have had an effect. In a larger sense, the debate over the meaning of the Bible was fundamental in encouraging all sides to demonstrate, both from natural philosophy and from contemporary spiritual experience, that their understanding of the Bible was validated by external evidence. This was the strategy underlying such movements as Hutchinsonianism, Behmenism and Swedenborgianism and it also, of course, had a major part to play in Methodism. Yet, as noted earlier, it was hard to be sure how such evidence could be weighed against rival interpretations of the Bible itself. As the critic of 27 February tellingly observed, many who believed in the scriptures and all its 'important truths' doubted the reality of 'diabolical converse in the vulgar sense' and felt 'no need of

the testimony of evil spirits to strengthen their Faith in the Doctrines of the Gospel'.

Indeed, it was possible to extend the critique of the Christianity of those who chose to explore the affair. The letter of 20 February which criticized the questioning of the devil by scratches also made a number of other charges: it was 'astonishing that serious believers should find pleasure in seeing these performances repeated for weeks and months together. They enter the room and there wait with eager expectation to see the children pricked, pinched, cut, hit or scratched.' What were 'men of sense and learning' doing sitting 'dumb for an Hour while something is cooling over the fire that is to bring the witch to the door?' Finally, if, as hinted, a witch was being identified as to blame: 'Certainly every man of Religion or Humanity must tremble at the thought! As some poor person deformed by age or worn out by mere decay might fall a victim to the furious spirit of the credulous. In my opinion this affair has a manifest tendency to revive superstition and ignorance amongst us!' These queries require us to consider the process whereby what could be presented, as the Durbin narrative begins by doing, as the scientific investigation of what we might now call a 'poltergeist' phenomenon, became a case both of possession and of witchcraft. It also raised the question of the appropriate Christian response in the face of such phenomena. Was empirical enquiry compatible with the duty of comfort and healing? And what forms of remedy were appropriate and legitimate? In answering these questions, a considerable gap seems to emerge between the attitudes of the family, especially the women and children, and those of Durbin, Dyer and friends. In the most simple terms, this complies with the classic distinction between a concern for maleficia and identifying and neutralizing the witch, coming up 'from below', and the learned's concern for the religious issues involved, focusing on the reaffirmation of spiritual control. To a considerable extent that can also be seen as a gendered distinction, between the girls and their female relatives and servants on the one hand, and the men involved on the other.<sup>55</sup>

But this simple dichotomy should not be overstated. For one thing our evidence is all drawn from the Durbin-Dyer-Eaton-Brown perspective – the meaning of the episode to the children and women involved can only be inferred from their reported behaviour and words as filtered by these men. Secondly, these men were far from immune to the fears and concerns of the family as they became drawn into the unfolding drama. Furthermore, this is one of the areas in which Durbin's account and the other sources, the public and the private, diverge considerably. Whether

deliberately or not, Durbin's narrative, while forced to reveal the growing element of anti-witchcraft behaviour in the affair, never commits itself on this matter and, without actually criticizing their behaviour overtly, maintains a clear distance between the narrator and the women and children. Dyer, struggling to understand what was going on and to help the family, was drawn into much closer empathy with their position, while retaining severe doubts, at times, about their behaviour and interpretation of events.

Of all the men involved, the one drawn most closely to the family was George Eaton, a Quaker schoolmaster, who was their next-door neighbour. He, his wife and his children, especially his 15-year-old daughter Nancy, became witnesses of the events at the inn and also regularly had the afflicted children to stay in their house in the hope of relief, and they became directly involved in many of the early episodes (Eaton's account survives only for the period up to 10 January). Compared to Dyer and Durbin, Eaton records the case as one of witchcraft, both implicitly and explicitly, much earlier, though it is possible that the neat version we have of Eaton's daily involvement may have been written up later, prior to being given to Brown on 5 April to send to Dartmouth. As early as 14 December Eaton refers to being called in by Giles to see 'his child, a girl between 13 and 14 years of age who was supposed to be bewitched', and in describing the afflictions of the girls, which included a force pulling down the front of their shifts to reveal their breasts, he refers to how hard it was to pull up the shifts 'till the W—ch quitted her hold; as my wife and Mr Giles both experienced'. The next day he refers to moving the children to his house 'to see whether the W—ch would follow them' and then, after nothing happened and they went home, 'they had no sooner entered their own house but the Witch began pinching them both'. Later, when the younger child goes back to their house 'the Witch also followed her and began pinching her'. At this point Eaton's daughter, holding the girl on her lap, herself received a pinch 'on the back of her hand and saw a little hand withdraw at the same time'. The next episode Eaton records comes on 29 December, when he refers again to 'the W—ch' being present in the room, and that both children saw 'part of a hand move about', but he and Giles could not see anything. During early January Eaton continues to refer regularly to the activities of 'the W—ch' (occasionally written out in full as 'Witch'), noting on 9 January that he was present when the children could not eat or drink because of the witch, so he and Mr Giles stood around the child striking at the air with knives: 'The child could then drink without the least molestation. This seems

to confirm the received opinion that W—ches are afraid of edge-tools and capable of being hurt by them’.

Even more dramatic is Eaton’s casual reporting of countermeasures against the witch. On 2 January he states, ‘About one o’clock this day I was at Mr Giles with a few friends waiting to see the issue of an experiment that was trying in order to afflict the W—ch’, during which the elder daughter went black in the face and claimed a hand was strangling her. No details are given of the ‘experiment’ that day, but on 6 January Mrs Giles’ mother tells Eaton ‘that whilst they were boyling the children’s urine’ the children saw the woman they thought was the witch cross the room. On 7 January, ‘while the children’s urine were boiling over the fire’ the children saw a hand with a knife. Then on 8 January, ‘while they were repeating the experiment of boiling their urine, the eldest daughter said the W—ch whispered in her ear twice at different times “Tonights a coming” and spit on her arm’. It seems clear that Eaton and his family shared the Giles family’s fear of a witch and were not shocked by their attempts to harm the witch by boiling the children’s urine. By contrast Brown told Lord Dartmouth, ‘I believe the prayer of faith is the only expedient they ought to have recourse to in this distress, though they are continually trying one ridiculous nostrum or other prescribed in such cases’. Critics of the family picked on such countermeasures: the ‘Bristol conjuror’ noting, ‘charms have been devised, the waters of the purest virgins have been preserved in urinals and tortured in a burning cauldron’ before adding, more fantastically, ‘whereto hath been added a select number of crooked horse-nails, ditto beheaded pins, the skin of a rat, the claw of a cat, the wing of a bat, the white of a rattle-snake, and the slime of a toad &c, &c, &c’. A remedy against witchcraft printed in *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal* on 25 November 1752 had noted that a mixture of urine and other exotic ingredients, if boiled, would cause the witch agony and, if it boiled quite away, she would die. The recipe ‘to perplex or kill a witch’ was taken from an old collection ‘written when the laws of our country admitted of witches and punishing them’ and included, besides urine, foal’s heart, apple, a lock of hair, blood and pins. The guilty party would be found naked, with their skin turned black and in most horrid torments.<sup>56</sup>

Eaton’s evidence may make one suspicious of the delayed references to witchcraft in Dyer and Durbin’s accounts. The first sign of witchcraft in these comes on 5 January, after several weeks of things done ‘contrary to the course of nature’. Durbin’s account before this refers several times to ‘an invisible power’ and ‘the invisible agent’,<sup>57</sup> but the only indication of the nature of this power had come in Molly’s claim on 22 December

to see 'three dirty fingers'.<sup>58</sup> However, all of the manifestations up to 3 January essentially involved the work of hands: knocking, scratching, making nail marks, unravelling knitting, overturning tables and throwing objects about, slapping the children on their cheeks, trying to strangle them and knocking over teacups.<sup>59</sup> Then on 3 January the younger child, Dobby (aged eight) suddenly disappeared from a room with three or four persons in and, when found under a bed an hour later, claimed 'her mouth was stopped and she carried upstairs and thrust under the bed, and held there all the time, but she saw nothing'.<sup>60</sup>

Two days later, however, when the same happened again, Dobby told Durbin 'a woman in a ragged dress, put her hand before her mouth, so that she could not cry out' and carried her away and 'the woman had a brown chip hat on, a ragged cap, and a brown gown: she told her, she would torment her ten times worse in five days time, and cried, a witch! a witch! several times, and threw her under the bed, and lay down by her, and pinched her neck'.<sup>61</sup> The next day (6<sup>th</sup>) Durbin was told, 'Molly and Dobby had seen the woman that afternoon and had been beat several times by her'. On that same day the first manifestation appears of a new theme in the afflictions, namely the biting of the children (and later others), with large quantities of associated saliva or spittle of rank smell, and also 'something squeaking several times, like a large rat caught by a cat'.<sup>62</sup> Taken together these episodes suggest that classic elements of a witchcraft narrative, namely the old woman and her familiar, were being introduced into the affair. The following day (7 January) Dyer (but not Durbin) reported a conversation he had with the innkeeper Giles, who told him of an old woman who had come to the inn and 'behaved very oddly' and who 'could give but little account of herself'.

It may be no coincidence that it was on 7 January that Dyer first referred to prayers being said over the children for their relief, by the Methodist-trained Anglican curate James Rouquet. Durbin's narrative is silent about this procedure, although two days later it mentions that 'a clergyman went to prayers, and [the affliction] ceased directly, and was quiet all night'.<sup>63</sup> Dyer was explicit that Rouquet was praying for their relief, as enjoined in the scriptures but (in official eyes) forbidden by the Canons of 1604, which outlawed Anglican exorcism; the narrative's indirect reference fudges this important question.<sup>64</sup> By 10 January 'the maid, nurse and two children' had seen 'a hand and arm', but there were few new developments until 21 January, when pins first make their appearance. However, Dyer referred on 15 January to 'the witch's pranks' and on 21 January to a dream of his about 'witchcraft' and 'the

witch'. The spirit was also finding a voice, speaking to the children on 12 January and to the nurse on 21 January.<sup>65</sup>

The stage was thus set for the role of the witch to be made explicit on 23 January when the grandmother first asked questions, starting, as we have seen, with 'Art thou a witch?'<sup>66</sup> Durbin's narrative then rather distracts the reader (intentionally?) by describing other incidents before returning at the end of that day's narrative to note: 'By asking questions this morning, it answered that Mr. \*\*\*\* had employed it. Mrs. Elmes and the children heard it cry out, "Jee woah", as waggoners used to say in driving horses.'<sup>67</sup> Dyer's diary supplies the crucial details, naming the man concerned as Mr James, a wagoner, and saying that the scratches placed the blame on him and 'the old woman at the door'. Dyer also added the crucial information, omitted by Durbin, that the family had also 'tried the experiment of boiling the children's urine'; as we have seen, this is several weeks after Eaton first recorded this practice. It is not until 21 February that the narrative mentions that a 'person proposed relieving [the children] by casting their urine into the fire'. When this was done, 'as soon as it burned clear, *that* child was as well as if nothing had happened. They did the same with the other's water, and she recovered in the same manner. But it returned in three hours as bad as before.'<sup>68</sup> There is no suggestion here that the action was a counter-measure to flush out or harm the witch. The final episode of this whole affair, in both Durbin's narrative and Dyer's diary, came when Mrs Giles, after consulting a cunning woman, boiled the urine once again. She had been told to 'take the two children's first water in the morning, and put it in a pipkin on the fire; and if, when it boiled, all colours of the rainbow came out of it visibly, she [the cunning woman] could cure it; and she would do the rest at home'. The procedure worked, and the children were relieved. Durbin notes, 'how far the cunning woman may have contributed to this, I will not pretend to say'.<sup>69</sup>

The 'reply' to the questions introduced not just the witch but William James, who ran a wagon business to London from 76 Old Market in Bristol. As the affair developed it became clear that, in the family's account, the whole episode revolved around the commercial rivalry between James and Giles in running wagons to London. On 20 February the narrative, after describing one of several incidents in which Giles' wagons were stopped at Kelson Hill near Bath, their chains broken and the horses frightened off, observes, 'The first week Mr. Giles set up the flying Waggons for London these troubles began'<sup>70</sup>. On 9 February the porters testified before the Commissioners for Turnpikes, who were meeting at the inn, about a similar incident 'at the beginning of the



affair with the children', and another occurred on 24 February.<sup>71</sup> On 25 January questioning of the spirit established that James had hired the witch for ten guineas and that it was her work that had stopped Giles' wagon on Hanham Hill 'when he was obliged to put on ten horses before he could move it', for which he 'paid 5l penalty for halling with so many horses'.<sup>72</sup> On 17 June Dyer referred to the threats facing Mrs Giles from 'her adversary Mr. James, may Jesus oppose any diabolical charm which may be levelling at her'. On 15 September questioning of the spirit elicited the claim that the witch had been hired for a further year's tormenting for another ten guineas, although voices heard by the children and the maid on 15 November seem to reflect an uncertainty about whether there would be further tormenting and, if so, for how long.<sup>73</sup> Finally the cunning woman confirmed that 'a man in Bristol had given many pieces of gold to a woman in Gloucestershire to do it'.<sup>74</sup> For the family then, anxious about a new and risky commercial venture, a malevolent rival in trade had become the ultimate explanation of their misfortune.

The final twist of this misfortune came in May 1762 when Mr Giles fell ill and died. Durbin's narrative of this makes it clear that, to Giles at least and perhaps, by implication, to Durbin and the reader, this was tied up with the wagoning affair. The narrative reads:

Mr. Giles was a little out of order. He told me he had been to Bath in his one-horse chair, and coming home, near the place where his wagon used to be affected, the leather broke belonging to his horse. He got out of the chair to mend it, and went round the wheels of it, but saw nobody. After it was mended, he saw standing still by the wheel, a woman dressed in a cloak. He looked at her. She said nothing but stood still. He then thought it was the woman that troubled his family, and that said, She wanted to speak with him [on 5 May the spirit had appointed a time 'to discover some secrets' to Mr Giles, but though he had 'waited in his counter' it did not come]; but as she did not speak, his heart failed him, so that he got up into his chair, and did not speak. He drove on a little, and then looked back, but she was gone.<sup>75</sup>

By the next day he was 'feverish and sick', and although a physician was sent for the following day, Friday, and he was bled:

Saturday he thought he should die, and was earnest in prayer to God. Sunday the doctor had but little hopes, as his disorder seemed a little

uncommon. He settled his affairs, was very sensible and willing to die. Sunday evening May 16, I was there when he died, which was about nine o'clock; but whether any witchcraft hastened his death, God knows.<sup>76</sup>

The report of the death of this 'industrious, honest man', who had 'cheerfully and reputably supported' his 'very large family', in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* on 22 May just noted 'mortification in his bowels'. In his retrospective diary for 1762 Dyer recalled that the symptoms did not fit the prevailing influenza and that Giles had been sensible till he expired.<sup>77</sup> In his contemporary account Dyer recorded on 18 May his suspicion that:

the same infernal diabolical tormenter which persecuted his poor children may have had some hand in Giles's death. Though to outward appearances his decease seems natural, yet these spiritual wickednesses are capable...of executing their horrible deeds in such manner as to deprive a man of life though as not to be perceptible by any man present nor the person so assaulted. May Jesus preserve and protect us against this accursed spirit.

Dyer also recorded 'another odd circumstance, that the very evening Mr Giles died an old woman with a straw hat looked in at the kitchen door' and asked a servant if her master was not dead yet. The maid went to get Dobby to see if the old woman was the witch, but she had gone before she returned. This was reported to Dyer by George Eaton, who had been with Giles as he died. The death was followed by six weeks of quiescence, partly reflecting the absence of Molly, who had been sent for the summer to Swansea, but in mid-July a few incidents again affected Dobby and in reply to questions the spirit claimed that 'if Mr. Giles had spoken to the woman that day...his life would have been saved'.<sup>78</sup>

Despite all this, William James, as far as we can tell, was never accused directly by the family or the believers. Dyer referred on 16 May to a suspicion that 'Mr Giles' adversaries' might 'enter a persecution against his friends', but no further explanations are given, and there is no reference to this aspect of the affair in the press. If it became public at all, it certainly did not destroy James' business, as he was still running his wagoning business to London from Old Market in 1775, and his son, John Sartain James, was still carrying on the business into the 1790s.<sup>79</sup> As the description of Giles' fatal encounter suggests, the

drama of the episode lay with the witch and the spirit, and we need to return to these.

The witch, once embodied, soon began to take on further and more specific characteristics. Although the narrative always refers to the spirit as 'it', the family clearly saw the spirit as a woman. On 24 January the nurse (Mrs Beezer):

asked if it lived without Lawford's Gate? It answered, 'Yes:' and answered some other questions. Mrs. — said in haste, 'She's a liar, don't ask the lying old whore any more questions:' (it had answered before it was a *woman* witch) it answered aloud, for them all to hear, 'no more than yourself: kiss my a—:' and they heard her smack her bottom aloud several times; presently after it smacked Molly's bottom very loud, which made her cry out much.<sup>80</sup>

Confusingly, no clear distinction was apparently being made between the spirit and the witch. Questioning the next day (by Durbin, not the family) established that it was a widow, acting not on its own malice but because of being hired and that it lived in Mangotsfield.<sup>81</sup> On 19 February Dobby again disappeared, and her description of the witch repeated the same dress but added 'she was of a middle size and had a sharp nose', describing how the witch had promised not to hurt her 'but only undress you to see where I did hurt you', taking off 'all my cloaths and stays, except my under petticoat'.<sup>82</sup> The only other reference to this came on 16 September, when again the woman was 'dressed as usual'.<sup>83</sup> Otherwise, the spirit continued to take on at times rat- or cat-like characteristics,<sup>84</sup> while at other points forming a disembodied hand. When, after a rash of biting, they found 'it was afraid of a knife' and they gave Molly a penknife to hold, the immediate effect was for the spirit to begin cutting the children with a knife, which the children claimed to see. At one point Durbin 'cut at it with [his] knife with great force; it shrieked, and Molly said "[he] had cut the arm and that it had fallen to the ground"'.<sup>85</sup> The other main development was the growing tendency for the spirit to speak to the children reporting its intentions and, in particular, issuing instructions about the movement of the two children to various houses.<sup>86</sup> This, interestingly, aroused the suspicions of the mother, who at one point suggested that perhaps Dobby was lying about the voices 'in order to go over with her sister to Mr. —'s'. The outcome of this was the paroxysm of violent movements that so astounded Major Drax, after which the voice 'told Molly that it had tormented them so much that night to convince the father and mother

that Dobby did not tell lies, when she said that it spoke to her that she must go with her sister'.<sup>87</sup>

There was clearly a tendency for the children to become evermore directly and dramatically involved with the spirit, but equally clearly there was an adult suspicion if the children were too directly controlling what happened. One explanation of the growing scepticism evident by early March is that this factor, and the lack of any further new dramatic developments, led all concerned to feel dissatisfied. But at the same time, the process the children had begun was taking on a momentum of its own and moving beyond the confines of the Giles household to make contact with wider Bristolian beliefs about possession and witchcraft. When Durbin had questioned the spirit on 25 January, he had 'named several parishes, to find out where the woman lived' before suggesting Mangotsfield and getting the expected response 'very distinctly'.<sup>88</sup> On 26 January they again asked about the witch, establishing that she was 43 and had practised witchcraft 13 or 14 years and that there were many witches in the village of Mangotsfield. On 9 February further questions were asked about imps and familiars and whether there were good spirits to restrain them, whether men witches lived in Mangotsfield and how long it was since the witch had made a compact with the devil (12 years). From this they learnt that the witch's name was Elizabeth Hemmings (or Emmings) of Mangotsfield, aged 43, and that she was 'Mr Sartain's sister'. Although Dyer's diary makes it clear that Durbin was one of the questioners, there is no account of this in the narrative, in which the witch is never named; Durbin refers to asking "two Latin questions", but he does not give them nor discuss the replies.

Why the focus on Mangotsfield? One possibility is because Elizabeth Hemmings was already suspected, due to her relationship with William James, and this focused attention on her parish. The clue here lies in the statement that she was 'Mr Sartain's sister', since it seems clear that the Sartain family were linked with William James, who named his son John Sartain James. William and John Sartain were substantial inhabitants of Mangotsfield circa 1724–31, and the will of Samuel Sartain gentleman of Mangotsfield was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 6 June 1767; this is probably the Samuel Sartain who ran the London carriers to Bristol from the Three Cups in Bread Street London in 1755, although at that date the service ran to the Warehouse in Peter Street Bristol and James is not mentioned. It seems likely that Elizabeth Hemmings was Samuel Sartain's sister. Several Hemmingses are recorded in Mangotsfield at this period, with John

Hemmings baptising numerous children there between 1750 and 1765, while a broadsheet, undated but referring to an accident in a coalmine in Kingswood in 1762, was printed for one of the miners involved, a Thomas Hemmings of Mangotsfield. A Michael Hemmings was a carpenter involved in building work in Walcot/Bath from 1767, and this may have involved working with the several Sartains based in Bath at this period, who also became active in Bath building work in the later eighteenth century.<sup>89</sup>

Alternatively, suspicion may have rested first on Mangotsfield, as may be suggested by the identification of numerous witches there in addition to Hemmings. The resonance of Mangotsfield is clarified in the narrative of 10 February, which reports the questioning of the spirit as to 'its true name'. One of the party then asked 'Si nomen tuum Malchi est' (if thy name be Malchi), which it affirmed. The significance of this is then made clear as the account continues:

About sixty years ago, one Perks of Mangotsfield had a familiar spirit that was named Malchi, agreeable to the account written by the Rev. Mr. Bedford, a late Minister of Temple parish in this city. And as it had said the woman lived at Mangotsfield that did this mischief, it made us suppose it might be the same.<sup>90</sup>

Hence the reproduction of Bedford's letter at the end of the pamphlet. However, no further reference is made by the children to Malchi, as reported by Durbin, and the Faustian case of Perks, who had conjured up the spirit to satisfy his curiosities in astronomy, mathematics and the like, and had seen spirits dancing at midnight, was completely alien to the vulgar violence of the Giles children's spirit. Malchi returns to the story only when Mrs Giles visits the cunning woman at Bedminster in November, when she learns:

it was a very powerful spirit that was employed; it was a chief of the familiar spirits; it was Malchi (which was the name it told me [Durbin] it was called by) and therefore she was in doubt whether she could stop it. And this spirit knew all languages, and all thoughts; for there were some learned spirits and some ignorant.<sup>91</sup>

In these terms, Durbin's Malchi was 'learned' but Molly and Dobby's spirit was 'ignorant'.

The choice of Malchi and Mangotsfield may not, however, entirely reflect the imposition of a learned print tradition on the nursery tales of

the children. On 20 December 1760 Dyer recorded that 'Stephen Penny had conversed with a Mangotsfield man who knew the noted Thomas Perks of Mangotsfield who had the art of raising spirits of whom Mr Bedford minister of Temple church gives some account in a letter to the Bishop of Hereford' (actually the bishop of Gloucester, but Bedford opens the letter by referring to his having told the bishop of Hereford first). So we know both that the Dyer circle were well aware of the story and that it was part of Mangotsfield tradition. Furthermore, the children, or someone else present, may have had another parish Faust in mind when they conjured up Mangotsfield. Dyer records that, the same day it named Malchi, the spirit also accused William Llewellyn of Mangotsfield (as well as a 'William Flew', but this may be a curtailed effort at Llewellyn's name), who was another self-taught astronomer, a collier who spent his nights stargazing, had saved up to buy himself an extensive collection of books and ground his own lenses for telescopes, about whom, one suspects, a folklore of magical activity could easily have developed.<sup>92</sup> It was this accusation which Dyer hastily dismissed as that of 'a lying spirit' (on 10 February) and which Durbin's narrative omits altogether.

Llewellyn's magical aura was probably enhanced because he came from the countryside and from the mining neighbourhood on the Somerset side of Bristol, which had become associated in urban minds with all that was 'uncivilized' and strange. Robert Southey, brought up in Bristol, noted in 1803 that cunning people lived just outside all England's major towns. Two reasons may account for this. One was their ability to avoid detection by vigilant city magistrates: a fortune-teller had been condemned to death in Bristol for extortion of goods under false pretences in 1739.<sup>93</sup> But the other reason was probably the mystique of the country area involved. The cunning woman Mrs Giles consulted was a Bedminster woman, although she had regular sessions at an inn in town. When Mrs Giles first consulted her over the affair she went out to Bedminster, although subsequently, as Dyer (but not Durbin) records, the woman visited her at the Lamb Inn. The Kingswood forest where the coalmines were situated was often cast as the 'other', for example in accounting for mob violence in Bristol, but had also become, since the Methodist evangelizing there, a place of extreme piety as well as extreme impiety, its coal-stained inhabitants central figures in the struggles of black and white, good and evil.<sup>94</sup>

It is tempting to assume that this cunning woman was 'Mrs Biggs a pretended conjuror or cunning woman of Bedminster' whom Norman reports was consulted concerning the possession of George Lukins of

Yatton in 1788 (see Chapter 7 of this volume). She promised to cure Lukins of his fits by driving the witches or devils out of him and sent several packets to be burned on the fire during his fits, which consisted of brown paper rolled up with pins driven through it. When the packets were thrown on the fire, Lukins apparently uttered 'horrid execrations'. This assumption was made by John Evans in his account of the 1762 affair: 'This "cunning woman," the want of whose veritable memoirs we know not how posterity can survive, had afterward the honour to be mother-in-law to a knight-companion of the useful order of rags and lampblack, who printed the maiden-volume of our fellow-native (born in the house now occupied by Messrs. Goss and Fowler, in Wine-street), the Poet Laureate. But, that our inky brother was not ambitious to share the Sybilline honours of his stepmother was evidenced by the fact that when, within our own knowledge, she flourished in the graces of supernaturality as well as *quant, suff*". of the grease of full-blown mortality (for she was "a ton of flesh"), her husband's son right worthily filled the office of singing-clerk in Castle Green Meeting-house.' This cunning woman was Martha Biggs, (the wife of Richard Biggs, a victualler), who died aged 57 and was buried at Bedminster on 12 December 1804. She was almost certainly the Martha Hughes baptised at St Mary Redcliffe 19 July 1747, who had first married William Marshall at St Philip and St Jacob 6 May 1771, then John Bromfield at Temple on 6 February 1781. Again a widow by 1784, on 14 July 1785 she married Richard Biggs at Bedminster; in 1785 Richard Biggs was acting as trustee for a tenement that had been Bromfield's behind the poorhouse in Bedminster. Hence she became stepmother to Nathaniel Biggs (born to Richard's first wife Ann Barton (buried 15 April 1785) and baptized at Bedminster 29 December 1771), who became a printer in Bristol (from 1794), where he printed (for his partner Joseph Cottle) all the earliest works of the Romantic poets Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth, before moving to London around 1802 to continue his printing career (he broke off the partnership with Cottle in 1803, and by 1814 seems to have given up printing, being now described as a stationer and rag merchant). However, if Martha was born in 1747, it hardly seems possible that she had established herself as 'the cunning woman of Bedminster' by the time she was 15 years old in 1762 (and Dyer refers to the cunning woman as 'old' on both 16 October and 7 December, though he never met her himself): perhaps this was her mother, Ann Hughes (Thomas Hughes had married Ann Gage at St Mary Redcliffe 30 September 1744).

On 28 July 1791 Martha Biggs was tried and convicted at the Somerset quarter-sessions at Bath under the Witchcraft Act of 1736, for claiming to be able to identify the thieves who had stolen property from three Somerset men in the Shepton Mallet area who had travelled to Bedminster to her husband's alehouse to consult her; in two cases she had charged them each one and a half guineas over two consultations, while in the third case she had also provided a cure for rheumatism. She was sentenced to a year in Ilchester county gaol and four sessions in the pillory, starting with one in her home village; this first pillory session was revoked at the request of the chairman of the bench (Berkeley Bowland), who feared that 'her life would be endangered by the disposition of the populace towards her' (he also noted the 'excessive terrors which had agitated the witnesses when giving evidence against her', suggesting perhaps that she had a reputation to be able to cast spells as well as counter them). Biggs herself presented a petition (signed by the local clergymen, churchwardens and eight other parishioners) claiming that she was a midwife who had 'bred up a large family of 9 children with reputation', and Bowland also referred to her 'advanced age' as a reason against the pillory. This might seem a rather odd claim if she was born in 1747 and so only 44 at the time, but Bowland was clearly looking for every reason to give the Home Office to suspend the pillory sentence. However, in a later letter Bowland made clear that he had no sympathy for her (local magistrates were exasperated by receiving accusations of theft against people for whom there was no other evidence but her responses to clients) and he did not want the other pillory sessions revoked, as this 'would be attributed by the yeomanry and common people of the country to the interposition of preternatural agency' with 'very ill consequences to the public'. He had requested omission of the first punishment only because of his fear of public disorder from the 'tumultuous and disorderly set of people' living in Kingswood.<sup>95</sup>

Kingswood became further involved with the Lamb Inn affair through the visions of a journeyman smith in Gloucester Lane (just round the corner from the Lamb Inn) called Barnes, who worked for a coachmaker near College Green; his wife kept a shop at their house. We have accounts of this case both in Dyer's diary and in Brown's letter to Lord Dartmouth on 5 April, which is devoted largely to reporting his meeting with Barnes the previous Monday (29 March). Dyer reported that this man had been tormented by voices for all but six weeks of the last seven months and for the last fortnight had been very affrighted every night by evil spirits and had felt something creeping over his legs. He was often told that the spirits had no power over his wife because



she was big with child, but they threatened what they would do to her by and by. The torments had begun in August, when after three nights of threatening voices, Barnes was ordered by the voices to get up at 5 a.m. and walk into the country, telling anyone who asked that he was looking for a person who kept a fighting cock. He was then led through Kingswood, pausing (according to Brown) at a cot, thinking, 'surely this is the old witches!' before being inwardly tormented and then led on to the house of Betty Cottle, a woman with four children who sold milk in Bristol, including to Barnes' family, to whom he gave the things he had felt impelled to bring with him (Brown reports that he brought tea, sugar and money from the wife's shop but not a loaf and butter as also demanded). He was sure hers was the voice he had heard. She ate and then returned to town with him, accompanied by one of her children, a son of 13–14 years, warning him to stay in and reminding him of a man who had recently drowned himself. Dyer notes, 'Her husband's name (who is now living) is Cottle but she is sometimes called by the name Hill, her maiden name': an Isaac Cottle married Elizabeth Hill at St Philip and Jacob 30 April 1752.

After they had parted and he went home, Barnes began to think he had made a compact with the devil and would go to hell and was in great agony, which led his wife to send for a 'good man to pray for him' (Brown), identified by Dyer as 'a methodist preacher'. Barnes was in 'such miserable horror of mind that he cou'd not kneel down nor say the Lord's prayer, tho' after sometime (it seems) he became able to kneel and confessed the whole affair'. Brown reports, 'during this time the wife and sister of this tormented man were so weak as to go to a person in Bedminster... who is reputed to be what they call a White witch'. She knew they had come 'to be informed concerning the author of her husbands distress and to get some relief', named Betty Cottle as the culprit and ordered them to buy a sheep's heart, stick it full of pins and throw it 'into a pretty good fire to be burnt to a coal' as soon as the tormentor had left the house (Dyer reports about the heart but merely states it was procured 'by some person's advice'). When Betty Cottle came to the house again Barnes accused her, repeating, 'Thou hast undone me'; she denied all knowledge and said he had not visited her that day but 'was out of his mind'. However, when 'the company prest her on that point and could prove that he was at her house that morning', she 'was extremely confounded at the detection' but said 'it was only what a kind neighbour might do'. After she left, the family began to burn the sheep's heart, and 'before the heart was consumed this woman returned in a most violent hurry with all the things in her lap (this was about half

an hour afterwards in which time she had gone near 5 miles) [i.e. presumably back to her house to fetch the goods Barnes had brought her] and threw them down in the shop in a great passion, saying she had never suffered so in all her lifetime, she had, as it were, been inwardly broiled (but she knew nothing of what they had been doing)'. Brown, who thought this 'as convincing a proof of witchcraft as in the affair of these children', reported that 'all these circumstances confirmed the many people present in their belief in the guilt of this woman' but also that Barnes' 'neighbours (some of them) would persuade him that it is all whim and fancy'. Brown tells Dartmouth, 'I really believe it will be instrumental to the good of his precious soul, he was constantly desirous of my prayers and joined with me I believe with all his heart'.

This story reached Dyer just as he was collecting information on the Lamb Inn affair for Penny, and on 31 March Dyer noted that he hoped 'the afflictions of the journeyman in Gloucester Lane will prove serviceable'. On 5 April Dyer recorded further that the wife had at first thought Barnes fanciful, as he was 'whimsical', but when she saw his jaw twisted she began to believe it had some reality; the spirits would also tell him where she had concealed money that nobody else knew of. Then, after Giles' death, Dyer reported Durbin telling him on 18 May that Barnes had been 'very perplexed with voices' last Thursday evening when Giles was taken ill and '[heard them say] they had not much power now over the children at the Lamb but they said something about having power over the old one', which Dyer noted probably meant Giles. Durbin's narrative, which had not previously mentioned the Barnes case, gives a fuller version of this episode. It reports that on 13 May:

I went that afternoon to Mr. —'s, a smith in Gloucestershire [an editorial misreading of Gloucester Lane?]. (He had been troubled for two months past, with two different voices in the Kingswood language, threatening to do him a mischief. His neighbours thought him disordered in mind, but he always talked very sensibly to me and related a variety of odd circumstances. The voice foretold him many things concerning himself). He told me, that last night he was troubled again with the voices, and that amongst other things he was told that they should have but little more power at the Lamb, (meaning Giles's) over the little ones, but they should get power over the old one there, the father. They seemed to dispute together about it, and at last seemed pleased that they should have power over Giles himself and said something else about him, but he could not understand them. He told me he was troubled for him, though he had no

acquaintance with the family, I did not tell him Mr. Giles was ill, lest he should tell some of Mr. Giles's family of it.<sup>96</sup>

This suggests Durbin's unwillingness to encourage the family in accusations of witchcraft. On 26 May Dyer reported that Barnes had again been much tormented the previous night by threats against both his life and that of Mrs Giles. 'The infernal wretches talk to him in the Kingswood language', Dyer observed, opining that they were the 'spirits of sundry witches'.

As noted before, news of the Lamb Inn case had begun to bring other supernatural incidents to light. Apart from the Barnes affair, only one other case is specified, but on 4 February the spirit, when questioned, spoke of tormenting six people at that time. It was then asked if it 'had any power to torment Mr. —'s daughter', and more questions were asked about this case the next day, when the spirit said she would be cured in four weeks: 'and accordingly in a month she was cured, but left very weak'. Dyer, who dated these questions to 8 February, named the girl in this case as Nancy Tudway. Durbin's narrative continues:

The doctor thought her incurable, and would take no fees. She used to bark four or five times and then crow somewhat like a young cock; turning her head from the right shoulder to the left, backwards and forwards twenty times, and yet her neck not swell. I have seen her tongue pulled, as it were, out of her mouth very long, then doubled down her throat; then after having rolled on the ground in great agony, she would go about the house, as usual, or sit and sew, barking and crowing all the time. She has continued very well ever since it stopped.<sup>97</sup>

These symptoms are, in many ways, much more the classic symptoms of a possession than those displayed by the Giles children. Their presence in Durbin's narrative takes on a rather tragic irony in view of incidents later in Durbin's life, of which Dyer informs us. On 10 April 1769 he reported that he electrified Durbin's daughter Hester, aged 14, who had 'an unaccountable complaint', 'a convulsive motion in her tongue' so that she:

sometimes made a singing noise, at other times like the crowing of a cock, yet in perfect health in all other respects. Dr. Drummond [who had also attended Giles before his death] had prescribed nervous medicines but without effect. It was suspected to be preternatural,

as Mr. Durbin had been an assiduous attendant on Giles's children and fully convinced of a preternatural agency in regard to them and a zealous advocate in their defence against the unbelieving. He himself was led to think that his daughter's complaint proceeded from one and the same cause.

On 22 January 1775 Dyer again noted that she was ill, adding 'he [Durbin] calls it a possession'. Finally on 29 November 1788 Dyer refers to Durbin visiting his daughter at the asylum run by Richard Henderson, a fellow Methodist known for his religious piety and sympathy for patients.<sup>98</sup> Dyer comments: 'conceiving her disorder proceeded from diabolical possession he mentally without uttering a word abjured the spirit [Malchi?] which he believed possessed his poor child. She instantly felt it and said "Father what have you done?" She appeared better afterwards but unhappily relapsed.' This tragic replaying of the earlier episode within his own family may help to explain both Durbin's obsession with the earlier episode and his unwillingness to make it public. Dyer's own comment here is 'Query whether this [her relapse] was not due to a want of faith or at best a continuance of faith. Our Lord speaks of a possession that this kind cometh not forth but by prayer and fasting or to that effect.'

Whatever their original doubts about viewing the Lamb Inn affair as a matter of witchcraft and possession, Dyer and Durbin had become drawn in to seeing the affair in that light. Yet in one respect, at least, they kept very firmly at arm's length from the family, and that was in the matter of counter-remedies. But here too they failed to keep control over the affair, a failure reflected in the ending of the narrative. Whereas the perfect ending would have been a deliverance through 'prayer and fasting', or at least waiting on God, in fact it was traditional counter-magic that finally broke the spell. As Durbin notes:

Mrs. Giles asked my opinion, whether they should not go to those called *White Witches*, to have these troubles stopped. I told them, if *they* could stop it, it must be done by the power of the devil; therefore I thought it not lawful to go to them; but to trust the providence of God for deliverance.<sup>99</sup>

But eventually 'they were determined to go to the woman at Bedminster', and 'Mrs. Giles and two neighbours' went 'resolved not to tell what they came about, to see if the woman knew their thoughts'. Of course she did and 'told Mrs. Giles that she should have come to her before, for that

there had been horrible Witchcraft at her house' and 'so for an hour and a half told them every thing that had happened; and some secret things, which Mrs. Giles said, she thought she could not possibly have known by hearsay'. Durbin distanced himself by adding, 'as all these things had been long and publicly talked of, she might easily have heard the whole, and yet no WISER than her neighbours'. The cunning woman's comments on the spirit and success in remedying it have already been described. Durbin's final sentence in the narrative, 'How far the *cunning* woman may have contributed to this, I will not pretend to say', might be read as a final rhetorical flourish of cautious empiricism, but perhaps it was more of an expression of defeat.<sup>100</sup>

Dyer's reporting is rather fuller and more revealing. On 20 November he noted that Mrs Giles told him about going to a woman at Bedminster 'who rents a room at the Queen's Head' about a gold coin which she 'had lost or mislaid but is since found agreeable to her prediction', from which Dyer concluded, 'it appears pretty evident that the poor wretch has a familiar to attend her'. It was nine days later that Mrs Giles went to the 'cunning woman' at Bedminster [surely the same woman?] to ask advice about her affliction – 'may the Lord pardon her folly'. Then on 7 December 'Mrs. Giles told me the old woman of Bedminster had lately been there and given instructions how to manage the children in order to counteract the charm, likewise gave expectation that she would bring to light the persons concerned in that affair'. To which Dyer again appended, 'Oh may Jesus be the refuge of that family and may they not flee to the Devil for assistance'. In his retrospective diary he was even more forthright: 'Mrs. Giles's serious friends blamed her for having recourse to a woman of equally bad repute with the miserable wretch who was the author, in conjunction with the spirit of darkness, of all the troubles experienced by poor Giles, his children and family'.<sup>101</sup>

In Dyer's reproach, we may detect the censure of one who put religious purity before the urgent search for remedy that those actually afflicted might feel. Yet more was involved than a simple choice between Job-like patience and pragmatic counter-magic. Dyer himself described the two afflicted girls as 'my little patients' on 13 January, and he offered medical advice to the family. Though he does not record treating the two girls affected, he prescribed for Giles the day he died, and during the autumn months he gave regular doses of his 'hemlock pills' as well as Dr James' powder to a younger sister (Jane) aged three and noting their effects: on 6 November he recorded that she had received 'amazing benefit' from the hemlock, though she died in April 1763. In this

respect, the mother's decision to turn to the cunning woman might have hurt Dyer, not just for its religious 'folly', but also as a rejection of his (free) remedies in favour of 'alternative' medicine. The previous month, on 16 October, Dyer had reported with disgust that another of his clients, 'Poor Miss Roe, has now applied to an old woman in Bedminster (and therefore laid aside the Hemlock) who promises her help.' In yet another sense, the women involved in the case were pursuing a path independent of their male advisors, challenging not only their understanding of what was happening in spiritual terms but also their preferred human solutions.

For Dyer, at least, there was in fact no sharp dichotomy between providing material remedies and offering spiritual solutions to afflictions. To some extent this was natural, given his metaphysical preference for vitalistic worldviews in which the spiritual and material were interwoven, rather than sharply divided. At the same time, it reflected what he would no doubt have considered his Christian duty to bring healing in whatever form proved effective. In that sense his medical empiricism and his religious convictions were indivisible. The same was no doubt true of Durbin, who had been apprenticed to a leading apothecary and spent his life as a 'chymist', although it is not clear how far he pursued an active medical practice.<sup>102</sup> Since Dyer too had begun training as an apothecary, but had given it up in favour of accountancy, preferring to give his medical services free of charge and free of orthodox responsibility, it is tempting to see in both men an 'alternative' medical approach.

Yet, as I have argued elsewhere, this is misleading, if it implies the radical opposition to establishment medicine with which nineteenth-century models of alternative medicine have made us familiar. Dyer and his circle were not sharply cut off from orthodox medical men and often shared ideas and practices with them. Eighteenth-century medical men were themselves deeply influenced by empirical eclecticism and slow to adopt a model of professional and scientific monopoly to protect themselves from the likes of Dyer.<sup>103</sup> One reason for this may be that, while some doctors had a reputation as deists or materialists, many were active members of various denominations, from whom they often drew their patients. They thus found it necessary to empathize, at the least, with their patients' understanding of the meaning of their afflictions, and in many cases they may have shared those understandings. A number of them participated actively in the intellectual circles that I described earlier. This may help to explain why the responses to the Lamb Inn case did not contain, as might have been expected,

confident claims to understand the episode in terms of natural philosophy or medical knowledge. Instead the clear lines of division lay in traditional religious and ideological areas – polarised around the concepts of fraud and enthusiasm, on the one hand, and of scriptural example and Sadduceeism on the other.

Ultimately then, although the notion of ‘public infidelity’ and ‘private belief’ captures part of what was going on, and something of the mood of men like Durbin and Dyer, it creates too neat a polarity. The public world still offered many cultural resources to justify the opinions of Dyer and his circle, if properly deployed. At the same time, they were privately well aware of the contradictions and failings of their position. Recent work on witchcraft has indicated that this state of uncertainty was a characteristic feature of most cases, when we can recapture episodes in the kind of detail attempted here. It is clear that, as events unfolded, they were viewed from many different perspectives by the different parties involved, and a simple dichotomy between ‘believers’ and ‘sceptics’ fails to do justice to the range of both convictions and doubts felt by those involved about what was happening and how best to react to it.

This conclusion would undoubtedly be strengthened if we had more direct access to the mentalities of the women and children at the centre of the episode. I have suggested repeatedly that the men could not control the activities of the women and children as they wanted. It would be wrong to assume, however, that the women and children were not themselves struggling to control a sequence of events that none of them had fully anticipated or desired. It is not my intention here to attempt a reading of what was happening within the Giles household, but there were surely tensions between the female adults and children, both overtly over the children’s possible manipulation of their afflictions and, if one chooses to read the material psychologically, in the rather sinister pattern of physical abuse by an older woman (initially pinching and the slapping of bottoms, breasts etc., and the removal of intimate clothing, and then later the bites and lacerations) played out in the children’s accounts of their sufferings. On the other hand, the two girls, Dorothy/Dobby/Doppey (aged eight/nine) and Mary/Molly/Polly (aged thirteen/fourteen), were part of a family of eight children, with at least two younger sisters (Betty/Betsy and Jane).<sup>104</sup> None of these other children were afflicted, even though Betty initially shared a bed with the other two as the incident began, while a number of the physical episodes directly involved the nurse, the maid and various of the other adults.<sup>105</sup> As has been suggested for other possession cases, the children’s

behaviour not only reflected their own models of the supernatural, but also involved a constant negotiation with the (often conflicting) expectations of others: this process led to a series of crises, some followed by new manifestations of evil, others by apparent quiescence. For the women and children, at least, the opportunity to put a definitive end to the episode through the agency of the cunning woman may, consciously or unconsciously, have been a blessed relief.

To some extent, then, this episode reinforces the recent stress on the problematics of witchcraft cases throughout the early modern period. In this respect, a case in 1762 shared much in common with the earlier case studies noted above. Yet there were clearly differences caused both by the change in legal position (the only prosecution to be contemplated was against the afflicted family, either for slander or for false claims to detect witchcraft) and by an undoubted alteration in the norms of public discourse. It was still possible, as I hope I have shown, to justify beliefs in witchcraft, even on enlightened principles. Yet the price to be paid for doing so, in terms of the spiritual priorities of those who might have sought to defend the reality of witchcraft, was increasingly one that did not seem worth paying.

In this respect it is particularly telling to consider the testimony of John Wesley. Historians have often cited Wesley as the last of the believers in witchcraft, both in his practices of conversion (which often, especially in the early years, involved the apparent dispossession of the convert's body from demons) and in his intellectual determination to maintain what he saw as the biblical and experiential fundamentals of God and devil (which included some reality for witchcraft).<sup>106</sup> Some have rightly insisted that this was not, for Wesley at least, incompatible with being an Enlightenment empiricist and publicist par excellence.<sup>107</sup> Wesley could be pragmatic about whether the 'discourse of spirits' would or would not forward his evangelistic mission in particular cases and with particular audiences. His comment on the Lamb Inn case, which leaves the verdict open and yet, in another sense, shuts the matter off, as something incapable of useful resolution to practical effect, deserves to end this discussion: 'The facts are too glaring to be denied, but how are they to be accounted for? By natural or supernatural agency? Contend who list about this.'<sup>108</sup>



# 7

## Methodism and Mummery: The Case of George Lukins

In the second edition of his *Provincial Glossary*, published in 1790, Francis Grose updated the section on 'Popular Superstitions'. Since the first edition of 1787, a 'farce somewhat similar' to an early-seventeenth-century 'popish exorcism' had been 'performed in the vestry room of the Temple church in the city of Bristol' on George Lukins of Yatton (Somerset). 'This impostor pretended to have been possessed by the Devil for eighteen years', but what Grose found 'most extraordinary' was that 'seven clergymen were found (one to each devil) so extremely weak and credulous as to be imposed on by this nonsense and seriously to join in expelling these evil spirits by prayer, and one of them carried it still further by returning public thanks in Yatton church for the success of their endeavours and the happy delivery of the patient'. Grose's comment was echoed by John Ferriar of Manchester, to whom the Lukins case also appeared an anomalous throwback to an earlier age.<sup>1</sup>

Their references reflected the considerable attention given to the case in the London newspapers and national periodicals in 1788–9, drawing on letters and reports in the Bristol and Bath press, and the four pamphlets published in Bristol on the affair were reviewed nationally. *Bristol: A Satire* (1794), a poem by Coleridge's Bristolian friend Robert Lovell, devoted 35 lines to the episode, ending by asking of the ejected devils, 'But who can tell where fixed their final doom, If in the red sea or the river Froome; Whether they sojourn with the men divine, Or entered (as of old) the herd of swine' (to which is added an asterisked footnote: 'Bristolmen proverbially called hogs').<sup>2</sup>

In the early nineteenth century the case remained familiar, even if its details became blurred. One of the pamphlets, *A Narrative of the Extraordinary Case*, was reprinted at Philadelphia in both 1792 and 1805

and again in London in 1814 (with the more lurid title *The Devil Cast Out: being an authentic narrative of facts*), and there was an 1818 edition of Easterbrook's *An Appeal to the Public*, while both texts were copied or extracted in various texts.<sup>3</sup> Others followed Grose and Ferriar in their views. In 1814 'R.R.', writing on exorcism for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, presumed that 'we all remember that George Lukins of Bristol was, not many years since, possessed by seven devils. He was, I presume, a dissenter, as the ceremony of exorcising him was conducted by five ministers who were not of the Established Church.' In 1820 a review in the *London Magazine* of Robert Southey's new *Life* of John Wesley, reported more accurately that the exorcism was conducted by 'a regular clergyman and six lay-preachers'. It noted, more tendentially, that 'the story made a great noise, and the whole transaction gave much offence to the members of the established church, who justly looked upon the affair as an abominable farce, which tended to bring religion into contempt. It is a fact, however, that Mr Wesley and the entire connexion of Methodists, gloried in the imposture, palpably ridiculous as it was, and represented it everywhere in preaching and in print, as an instance of the sovereign efficacy of faith and prayer.' In 1824 another article on exorcism in *The Mirror* referred to the case as 'one of the last instances of supposed demoniacal possession among Protestants' and, after paraphrasing Ferriar's account, concluded, 'his case occasioned great controversy in the western parts of England, and some accused him of imposture; but the facts were that both mind and body were disordered by the effects of epilepsy'. In 1832 a writer in the *Christian Observer* claimed that Lukins had admitted the imposture on his deathbed, 'yet even to this hour it is credited by many of the elderly inhabitants of the neighbourhood'. As we shall see, the 'facts' in all these versions are debatable, but the impact of the story is evident.<sup>4</sup>

Gradually, however, the case has become forgotten, even in Bristol historiography, except as a footnote in the history of Methodism in the region and as part of the debate about the attitude of John Wesley and his followers to the supernatural.<sup>5</sup> The fullest recent account of it is provided by Owen Davies using the pamphlets, especially those of Samuel Norman, a surgeon who had worked in Yatton and was highly sceptical about Lukins' condition and the motives of those who argued for the genuineness of his possession and the effectiveness of the prayers for his recovery.<sup>6</sup> Both at the time, and in recent comments, the case has easily been reduced to some simple polarities – between Methodism and enlightenment, between religious and secular (or medical) explanations, and between truth and imposture.

In this chapter I shall seek to recover in full the contemporary debate which took place over the affair, both locally and nationally, and outline the different positions taken both about what had actually happened and about how it should be understood. I will show that, although the polarities noted above were frequently adopted in these debates, there was much uncertainty about how to understand the events, and there was a reluctance to choose between these stark alternatives, together with a profound distaste for the increasingly bitter tone of the disputes between the leading partisans. In part this reflected a reluctance to deny the possibility of possession by, or the casting out through prayer of, evil spirits, given their gospel credentials, even from many who distrusted the potential that this would be abused by 'enthusiasts'. In part it reflected a reluctance to question the credit of those who had participated, especially the central figures, Rev. Joseph Easterbrook, vicar of Temple, who had led the prayers over Lukins and then defended his actions in print, and the Rev. William Wake, of nearby Wrington, who had originally drawn public attention to Lukins' case. The growing bitterness of the controversy was reflected in Samuel Norman's writings as they shifted away from an account of Lukins' background and medical history towards an attack on Easterbrook and Wake which was intended to destroy their credibility. From our perspective it is easy to see this, and Norman's motivation more generally, as that of a secular-minded medical practitioner dismayed by the willingness of some educated men, clergy in particular, to countenance vulgar superstition – the stance taken by Grose. Yet, as we shall see, Norman's own interest in the case may have had other motives, associated with his family history and his religious convictions. Finally, it is easy to lose sight of Lukins himself, but an effort will be made to understand his own position and recover what happened to him after 1788, including the lurid reports surrounding his death in 1805.

\* \* \*

The story of George Lukins' supposed possession and exorcism began at Christmas-time in 1769–70, when the 25-year-old tailor was one of the Yatton villagers who went mumming at the house of Mr Love. Whether Lukins then became intoxicated or not is disputed, but after this he began to have fits of about an hour's duration, during which first his right hand and then his facial muscles would become contorted, and sometimes he would throw his body around violently, though he remained fully conscious. He would begin to speak, and then sing, first

of all adopting the voice of the devil, with foul and cursing language, and then using a variety of voices (male and female, high and low) in a mixture of speech and song, including what was called 'an inverted Te Deum', with particular vehemence if religious language or objects were used in his presence. After a year or two of these intermittent attacks they ceased, but they revived again a few years later, and in May 1775 he was sent at parish expense to St George's Hospital Middlesex for a cure. Once again, what happened there was strongly disputed, but it is agreed that in October he was sent home uncured, but shortly afterwards the fits again remitted. They revived around 1787, and once again a variety of cures were attempted; Lukins himself now declared that he had seven devils in him and they needed to be cast out by the prayers of seven clergymen.

On 31 May 1788 a former Yatton neighbour, Sarah Baber, asked the Rev. Joseph Easterbrook, vicar of Temple Church in Bristol (where she had recently lived) if he would come out to conduct such prayers, but he asked her to arrange for Lukins to come to Bristol instead, which he did on 7 June 1788, staying with a brazier, Mr Jasper Westcote, a Methodist class leader, in Redcliffe Street. While he was there, he was visited by numerous Bristol people, including various clergymen (Anglican, Methodist and dissenter) and medical practitioners, some of whom prayed with him during his fits. Easterbrook asked some of his fellow Anglican clergy to join him in prayers for Lukins, but they refused, so he arranged for six Methodist lay-preachers to join him at the vestry-room in Temple Church at 11 a.m. on Friday 13 June; they were joined by eight other supporters, but also by a large crowd which had heard about the event. After two hours of Lukins' fits and prayers from the clergy, Easterbrook directly adjured the spirits to leave Lukins and he became calm and apparently recovered.<sup>7</sup>

The affair had already become public knowledge. Quite apart from the numerous visitors to Lukins in the previous week, a letter regarding his case had appeared in the newspapers. Initially it appeared in the *Bath Chronicle* on 5 June, although it had been sent to the printer almost a fortnight earlier. The author (identified only as 'W.R.W. of Wrington') was the Rev. William Robert Wake, vicar of Backwell in North Somerset, whose uncle Matthew had been vicar of Yatton until 1783 and whose family were based in Bath. He drew attention to Lukins' case as an 'extraordinary and surprising' one and invited readers to offer relief or mitigation, but he was apparently unaware of the events about to unfold in Bristol.<sup>8</sup> However, on Wednesday 12 June the letter was reprinted in the *Bristol Gazette*, and news of the planned prayer meeting at Temple

spread. As soon as that meeting on 13 June ended, someone 'carried some account of these circumstances to a printer, who instantly dispatched papers upon the subject through the streets of Bristol and its vicinage. Similar papers were shortly cried through the streets of Bath, London, and through many other parts of the land.'<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note that few of these accounts survive, so we have no idea how this story was first spread and sensationalised. An undated chapbook, printed in London, *Seven devils! A case of diabolical possession. With an account of spiritual efforts to relieve the afflicted object, George Lukins*, is in the Bodleian Library, and this may be the chapbook *The Expulsion of Seven Devils, who had taken diabolical possession of G. Lukins, a taylor of Yatton in Somersetshire, and for eighteen years tormented him* described by J.F.C. Harrison (which I cannot otherwise identify). The only song on the subject I have identified is John Freeth's, 'Seven Devils in the Taylor', which treats the whole event as a 'cock and bull story'.<sup>10</sup>

As Easterbrook recalled, 'in consequence of the papers which were published through the greatest part of the kingdom, without our consent, many strange falsehoods arose and were propagated in divers places, which being communicated to some of our friends, they were induced, in order to prevent the people at large from suffering impositions, to put together' a 'Short Account of the Singular Deliverance of George Lukins', which appeared in the *Bristol Gazette* on 18 June. The newspaper stated, 'we lay the above written before the public, as authenticated to us by several persons, on whose veracity we can depend; we forbear making any comment on the subject, but leave our readers in possession of the facts to give that credibility to the various circumstances as the whole or any part of so extraordinary a relation may deserve'. It also reprinted W.R.W.'s letter again 'on account of the extraordinary deliverance which the unhappy subject has since experienced and particularly to assist our readers to judge of the facts attendant on the deliverance by reverting to the same, which was written by a clergyman of undoubted veracity'.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile Easterbrook had also written on 14 June to the curate of Yatton, Samuel Teast Wylde, informing him of Lukins' 'deliverance', to which Wylde replied politely on 16 June. On 18 June a meeting took place at Easterbrook's house involving Wake, several other Bristolians and Joseph White (a Gloucestershire weaver's son who held the Laudian chair of Arabic at Oxford (1774–87) and later was Regius Professor of Hebrew 1804–14), who had just been made a prebendary of Gloucester Cathedral.<sup>12</sup> On the same day, the *Bath Chronicle* reported that a thanksgiving for Lukins' recovery had been observed by Wylde in the service

at Yatton church on Sunday 15 June (a report later denied) and carried a news item with a brief summary of what had happened in Bristol, although it wrongly stated that there had been two days of prayers at Temple, with the deliverance on the second day. The paper noted that the events 'seem likely in their issue to engage very much the attention of the public... We doubt not that a more exact detail of this extraordinary relation, substantiating particular facts more fully, will soon appear; and till we can be more particular, we hope none of our readers will think lightly of a matter too serious throughout to be made the subject of ridicule, and too interesting not to call for publication.' A slightly longer version of the same report then appeared in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* for 21 June, the editor stating that the events 'engage so much of the public attention, that we deem it incumbent on us to give a concise account of his deliverance as generally stated, but for the authenticity of which we cannot pretend to vouch, not having been able to obtain it from such authority as would warrant us in so doing'. *Bonner and Middleton's Bristol Journal* of the same date reprinted the W.R.W. letter and the 'Short Account', while *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal* reprinted the latter only, having printed W.R.W.'s letter the week before; both papers reported the thanksgiving at Yatton.

Publication of the 'Short Account' led, in its turn, to even greater interest, Easterbrook telling us it was 'not easy to conceive the number of letters which were addressed to me as the result of this publication' and 'I have received frequent applications from gentlemen in Bristol and other parts of the kingdom, desiring in their own name and in the name of multitudes that I would either authenticate or oppose the account therein given'.<sup>13</sup> The *Bristol Gazette* of 26 June observed that the case 'has so engrossed the public attention for some time' and published a letter from 'Candour' dated 24 June, also stating that the affair 'engrossed the attention of people of all descriptions' and calling for an 'authentic, well-attested account'. To meet this interest, supporters of Lukins were preparing an enlarged version of the 'Short Account', which appeared in its first edition on 26 June, namely *A Narrative of the Extraordinary Case of George Lukins of Yatton, Somersetshire, who was possessed of evil spirits for near eighteen years, also an account of his remarkable deliverance in the vestry-room of Temple Church in the city of Bristol, Extracted from the manuscripts of several persons who attended. To which is prefixed a letter from the Rev. W.R.W.* The preface, dated 25 June, explains, 'As several erroneous accounts are now in circulation, it was thought highly necessary that a plain and true state of the extraordinary facts here related should be laid before the public; the whole of which is

taken from the papers of several respectable people of known veracity, who were eye-witnesses and are ready (if necessary) to confirm it in the most solemn manner'. The main additions to the 'Short Account' come in the central section, which contains details of Lukins' behaviour on 11 and 12 June. The events on 11 June are authenticated as 'true and faithful' by 'J—— B——'. This must surely be Jeremiah Brettell, one of the Methodist lay-preachers who attended on 13 June (whose brief account of the affair in his memoirs is discussed below), and this would suggest that the *Narrative* was prepared by the ministers involved on 13 June.<sup>14</sup>

However, the *Bristol Gazette* of 26 June included 'A Caution to the Public', also dated 25 June, from these same ministers involved, stating, 'they have not published anything on the occasion', and cautioning 'against improper productions', adding, '[the ministers] intend in a short time to lay before the public a true state of the man's unhappy case for many years back, authenticated by respectable characters in his neighbourhood, as also what has come under their own immediate notice, until which time they wish the public to suspend their judgement'. Neither the *Narrative* nor any later production until Easterbrook's *Appeal* (in October) quite meets this description. Meanwhile on 24 June Easterbrook wrote a letter, which appeared in the *Bristol Gazette* on 26 June (and was reprinted in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* and *Bonner and Middleton's Bristol Journal* on 28 June), endorsing the accuracy (apart from a few minor phrases) of the original 'Short Account' and urging them 'to republish the narrative thus corrected'. This led to a second edition (and later third and fourth editions) of the *Narrative* appearing on 28 June, which incorporated Easterbrook's letter, noting which parts of the text it authenticated, and changing the ending slightly, including dropping the claim that a public thanksgiving had taken place at Yatton, which had been denied by that date (see below).<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, the same 26 June issue of the *Bristol Gazette* also contained the first anti-Lukins letter, written by S[amuel] N[orman] from Yatton on 21 June. In it Norman laid out in brief the case he was to develop in his later letters and publications, questioning the authenticity of Lukins' condition prior to his arrival in Bristol, using his own knowledge as a surgeon who had lived and practised in Yatton and the neighbourhood since 1770 and had himself treated Lukins several times. 'I doubt not but that many pious people will give implicit belief to the whole story, and it is with the sincerest regret that I find myself obliged, from a love to plain truth, to give a brief and faithful relation of that case.' He stresses the 'narrow limit of his abilities as a writer' and

the 'poor garb of simplicity' but trusts to 'that generosity and candour which an enlightened public will ever extend to the cause of truth' and hopes 'this plain account of the subject will prevent the honest and well meaning from being deceived by groundless pretences'. The letter is an avowed response to the publication of W.R.W.'s letter on 19 June and confines itself entirely to events at Yatton, making no comment on what had occurred in Bristol.<sup>16</sup>

Easterbrook reports that, on reading Norman's letter, he wrote to Wake, 'delivering it as my opinion that Mr Norman's attack upon his narrative required a serious answer; to which that gentleman replied that a friend of his had undertaken to defend his veracity'.<sup>17</sup>

On 28 June, *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal* reprinted Norman's letter, together with a letter from 'a Lover of Truth' dated 27 June, attacking Norman's letter. He has 'only shown his own opinion', which is 'ill-founded', and he 'has gravely vilified an afflicted object that rather deserved his pity and compassion'. *Bonner and Middleton's Bristol Journal*, withdrawing its earlier report of the Yatton thanksgiving ('copied from another paper'), added, 'and we forbear publishing any further account of him till properly authenticated'. *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* (before publishing Easterbrook's letter, W.R.W.'s letter, 'A Short Account' and Norman's letter), stated, 'we declined in our last giving a circumstantial detail of the case...because we were not then convinced that the accounts published were given on authority so respectable as they since appear to have been', but 'being satisfied on that point' the paper was reprinting these items from the *Bristol Gazette*, 'leaving the public to form their own judgement of so extraordinary and mysterious an affair'. They also published a letter from 'Investigator of Bristol' dated 27 June, setting out what the public needed in the way of a narrative about the history of the man from his youth, the general bent or disposition of his mind, and his habits of life before disordered, and the qualities required in the narrator – namely a free and unbiased mind, liberal, and free from prepossession of opinion, supplying an accurate statement of simple facts, as they occurred to the writer's own observations or were properly attested by credible witnesses.

Perhaps in response to this, the next *Bristol Gazette*, on 3 July, contained a 'card' reporting that 'genuine memoirs of the life, character, sufferings etc. of George Lukins are preparing for the press, in which those facts will be established that will enable the candid enquirer to determine on his case and will defeat the intention of all malicious and spurious productions on the subject'. The same issue contained the first reply to Norman from the pen of 'Justitiae Vindex', dated 1 July. Much



of the venom in the ensuing debate arose from the exchanges between these two and from Norman's belief that the anonymous author was Wake himself (which Wake never admitted). From the start 'Justitiae Vindex' accused Norman of 'a tissue of barbarous absurdity, in which whether wanton malice and paltry scandal or gross nonsense and wilful misrepresentation predominate, it is difficult to determine', advising 'S.N.[.] whosoever he be, ere he again exhibits himself in public, to rise superior to the little vulgar tales and silly anecdotes in a village', before congratulating him 'on the success of his malignant insinuations; the poor creature who is the object of them having, though he continues perfectly free from the fits, been harassed by the outcry raised against him into a grievous bodily disorder'.<sup>18</sup>

The letter from 'Justitiae Vindex' provoked a response in the next issues of *Bonner and Middleton's Bristol Journal* on 5 July by 'W.H.R.', praising Norman's 'zeal for truth' in having 'dragged forth concealed facts to public view' and urging that facts and proofs be the weapons of the controversy (this provoked a dismissive reply to the 'silly writer' by 'Justitiae Vindex' dated 7 July, printed in *Bristol Gazette* on 10 July and in *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal* on 12 July). Similarly, 'Clericus' in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* of 5 July thought 'the public spirit of Mr N——n has so fully exposed the impostor'. Norman had also composed a reply on 4 July, but this did not appear in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* until 12 July (*Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal* also had it by then, but did not print it until the next issue). In it Norman explains that his original reply to W.R.W.'s letter was 'to guard the public against the long since exploded tricks of Jesuits and Popish Priests. This indeed I was called upon to do by many respectable characters of this parish, in its vicinity, and in Bristol.' Norman says he will continue to use initials, since 'affixing the name of Samuel Norman to this can be of no real importance, as it is presumed the writer would be well known without it', but he contrasts this with the anonymous Vindex: 'hid in impenetrable darkness, like a coward and base imp, he vainly levels his envenomed shafts at me'. The same issue also contained two other letters. The first, by 'A Constant Reader', was a satirical one, asking for the names of the seven devils. The second, by 'Anti-Fanatic' of Bristol, dated 9 July, was addressed to W.R.W. of Wrington, expressing the writer's astonishment that the author was a 'Wake', since 'your publishing the narrative ... is a disgrace to your understanding and ... has had a tendency to dishonour the community of which you are a teacher and ought to be a defender' (i.e. the Church of England), since, 'if the Almighty does not willingly afflict, nor chastise the children of men, it is certainly a dishonor to

any church for its ministers to countenance an idea, that he permits pretended witches or daemons to torment them at their pleasure.... You have (like the reverend gentleman in the celebrated farce of the Cock-lane ghost) acted as midwife to what may now be called the Temple Church Devils.' This letter first states publicly that the seven ministers involved on 13 June were not seven clergymen, but 'a clergyman educated in a Methodist seminary [Easterbrook] and six other persons in connection with J. Westley', and sees the affair as a Methodist one: 'these are the people whom in this pious fraud you countenance and support'.<sup>19</sup>

*Bonner and Middleton's Bristol Journal* of 12 July contained another letter arguing that 'nothing has yet proved that the unhappy man was an impostor' but urging suspension of judgement, as time will discover the truth. Whatever Lukins' disorder, the letter claimed, an 'effectual remedy' had been provided and a 'wonderful change' had occurred, and 'neither the sneers of irreligion nor their satirical prints will deter the honest man from his duty'. The final reference to satirical prints echoes a remark in the diary of John Valton, another of the lay-preachers involved on 13 June, who noted on 10 July that his mind was 'much pained on seeing a caricature ridiculing the late affair in Temple church vestry', whose author showed that 'the devil has not gone out of himself'. There is no known surviving satirical print of the episode, but a caricature is described in *Notes and Queries* which portrayed Lukins, a clerical magistrate and the devil in one scale of the balance, outweighing the seven divines in the other; in a corner the latter are drawn doing penance to the bishop. This must be the print advertised as forthcoming in *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal* on 9 August entitled *The Father of Lies in the Balance or Three Knaves heavier than seven F—ls. A caricature Print, in which will be given a view of the introduction and conclusion of the T—ple Church exhibition* (sold by Johnson, Corn Street, Mr Lloyd, Wine St and the rest of the booksellers), but if so, it is hard to see how it can have been on display to offend Valton a month earlier, so perhaps there was more than one caricature.<sup>20</sup>

The *Bristol Gazette* of 17 July contained a further letter from 'Justitiae Vindex' (also printed in *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal*), responding to 'the hurlothrumbo declamation of the magnanimous S.N.', consisting largely of sarcastic remarks such as 'His page, like Mr Gibbon's, is so luminous that – pardon the comparison – he is dark with excess of light'.<sup>21</sup> Such writing perhaps explains the response offered by 'W.H.R.' in his next letter in *Bonner and Middleton's Bristol Journal* on 19 July, attacking 'the learned, the grammatical, the classical' 'Justitiae Vindex'

and ironically admitting '[that] I am (as he pronounces me) illiterate, and that he is the literary colossus of the age' but urging him 'to cease shuffling and bring proof of what he asserts,' adding, 'but he dares not'. This provoked a response from 'Justitiae Vindex' dated 21 July in the next *Bristol Gazette*, which once again largely traded insults about the learning and writing skills of the two, leading the editor to add a note at the end: 'if the above writers have nothing of more consequence to put before the public than their own criticisms, the printer hopes in future they will settle that in private'.

Much more significant material had appeared in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*. On 19 July the paper noted: 'it having been asserted in several of the papers that seven clergymen attended a meeting in Temple church vestry on 13 June last when George Lukins is said to have been delivered from his disease, we are authorised to assure our readers that no other clergyman of the established church attended on that occasion than the gentleman who has given his name in the public prints.' The newspaper had also written to St George's Hospital, to clarify the circumstances of Lukins' stay there in 1775, and the hospital secretary's reply, dated 18 July, which supported Norman's account of events, was printed on 26 July (and on 31 July in *Bristol Gazette*, which noted that, 'public curiosity having been very much excited by the different accounts given' of Lukins' disease, they would 'leave the reader to draw their own conclusion from its contents').

Three other pieces on the affair were also published in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* on 19 July. One was a spoof letter, by 'Tantony Pig' from 'Pandaemonium', one of the devils supposedly cast out on 13 June, claiming that there were only three of them ('little Cocknodlin, Flibbertigibbet and myself') and they had left because of 'the dreadful effluvia that seemed to us to proceed from the nether coverings of our antagonists'. They had not taken Lukins with them back to hell because 'taylors are of no use in a country where the inhabitants go naked', and although initially blamed 'by Lucifer and Beelzebub for not bringing a corner of Temple church with us' they were pardoned 'when we humbly represented to his Highness, that the damage must have been repaired by the parishioners, who are no enemies to us, and at the same time very poor'. The second piece was an article in a regular series called 'The Crier'. The author notes, 'It was my intention to have passed over the ridiculous story of George Lukins, as I did not conceive it possible that persons could be found weak enough to continue in the belief of such an absurdity, after having had time for reflection. But there seems to be a predisposition in some minds to receive and propagate marvellous

stories; not from any malignity of intention, but from a real defect in the understanding or the weakness of a distempered body.' Lukins was either an impostor or a maniac, and should be cured appropriately, with a severe whipping from a magistrate the best cure if it was a counterfeit, as he suspected, while those who believed him were guilty of credulity which had to be challenged because of 'the mischievous consequences of such an imposition to the religion and morals of the lower orders of the people'. More than half the long essay is taken up with two past cases, one reported from John Selden (in which the man with 'devils in his head' was mentally ill) and the other the trial of Richard Hathaway (a fraud) before Lord Chief Justice Holt in 1704: 'which of them bears the greatest resemblance to that of Geo. Lukins' his readers can determine.

The third piece was a letter from 'Amicus' dated Redland 13 July, written in response to the attack on Wake by 'Anti-Fanatic'. 'Amicus' is 'authorised to declare' that W.R.W. had no 'knowledge or even suspicion' of Lukins' removal from Yatton, 'much less that the Methodists intended to perform their exorcisms upon him'. W.R.W. 'foresaw none of the consequences that followed the insertion; but proposed it to the public at large as a case apparently curious and remarkable', and the author was 'totally unconcerned with all the performers and their proceedings'. He still maintains that 'from the most recent and authentic information ... Lukins's case altogether precluded the suspicion of imposture'. But 'as to the consequences that have ensued from the affair, all parties, I think, must be sorry for them, the recovery excepted; though it must be remarked, that whether the narrative had appeared or not, the proceedings at Temple Church would have taken place, and been trumpeted forth by those concerned with the same fanatical exultation.' This provoked a response from 'Anti-Fanatic' in *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal* on 26 July, accusing Wake of being both 'Amicus' and 'in all probability the writer of those vile and abusive letters sign'd Justitiae Vindex; letters so generally and justly execrated, that they only want the addition of the author's name to render him eternally infamous'. His 'authority' for this claim is 'a declaration of the leader of the exorcists', presumably Easterbrook. He also questions the claim by 'Amicus' that Wake had no connection with the proceedings in Bristol or their performers, given 'his having a few days after Lukins was exorcised, openly defended him in the company of a gentleman, a professor in the University of Oxford, and some other gentlemen in this city, at Mr Easterbrook's house' and also 'shamelessly receives and returns visits even from the exorcists themselves'. In his reply in *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal* on 2 August 'Amicus' admits that Wake 'defended Lukins in the presence of the

Professor from the charge of imposture' but holds 'that he receives and returns visits from the exorcists themselves is an absolute falsehood'. He defies 'Anti-Fanatic' to 'produce any authority' that 'he is the writer of the letters signed Justitiae Vindex (though I think if he were he need not be ashamed of them)' and 'as for the vulgar tittle-tattle of S.N. it is too contemptible for notice and disgraced your very respectable paper'.<sup>22</sup>

At this point it is necessary to step back from the Bristol newspaper debate and note some other developments in the case. Turning first to Yatton, there was clearly an extensive campaign going on between supporters of the two sides to marshal support for their account among the parishioners. Early in July, 'being credibly informed that many persons in the neighbourhood of Yatton were willing to stand forth and deliver their suffrages to the real calamities which George Lukins had sustained', Easterbrook 'wrote a certificate comprehending these sentiments' and sent Mr Westcote and Mr Hunt to Yatton to 'ask the parishioners there, from house to house, if they were disposed to sign it'. Easterbrook claims a local gentleman told them it was not necessary to establish Lukins' good character, so 'that design was laid aside'; Norman claims they dropped it because nobody would sign.<sup>23</sup> Lukins himself left Bristol to visit Yatton on 12 July and stayed about a week, seeing Wake at Wrington on 18 July and then visiting Easterbrook on his way back to his Bedminster lodgings on 20 July.<sup>24</sup>

On 21 July Norman wrote to Wake privately, demanding, 'unless a handsome apology be made me this week, in all the Bristol newspapers, for the illiberal calumnies which the writer of Justitiae Vindex has published concerning me, I shall be obliged, though reluctantly, to publish such accumulated evidence of his conduct in Lukins's affair as will not fail to be very disagreeable'. The same day, Wake replied refusing 'any sort of apology' and threatening, 'if you dare to make use of my name, directly or indirectly in any of the public prints, I will so severely retort upon your conduct, as shall make you seriously repent of your indiscretion'.<sup>25</sup> The following day Norman wrote another letter to the papers (published in *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal* on 26 July), offering further evidence both that 'Justitiae Vindex' was Wake and that Hunt and Westcote had been at Wake's house in Wrington, as had James Rodford, a servant whose evidence 'Justitiae Vindex' had quoted against Norman, and that Yatton people had heard Wake state 'he would vindicate what he had written' and 'could write as bitter as any man. These were the meek, the judicious declarations of the pious vicar of Backwell.' This provoked a reply from 'Justitiae Vindex' in the next week's *Bristol Gazette* (29 July, reprinted in *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal*

2 August) dated 29 July, but with no substantive content beyond congratulating the vicar of Backwell 'on having encountered your indignation... a certain sign to all who know you [Norman] that he has done something or other compatible with common sense or humanity'.<sup>26</sup>

As already noted, news of the affair had also spread nationally: one measure of this is that on 7, 14 and 21 July 1788 the London Society for Free Debate considered, 'Is the Rev. Mr Wesley censurable for publicly maintaining the existence of witches, the doctrine of apparitions and demoniac possession', the advertisement noting, 'The report of a man possessed by seven devils at Bristol caused this enquiry.' It is unclear how far the Bristol case was considered in detail during the debates, but interestingly the debate 'terminated in Mr Wesley's favour'.<sup>27</sup> By contrast, or perhaps in response, the *Morning Chronicle* of 30 July 1788 carried a letter by 'Ezekiah Maw-Worm', pretending to be one of the 'eight serious persons' that attended at the 13 June meeting, and offering, in mock evangelical language, a ludicrous account of what occurred, including 'the chaunting out that sweet hymn which Lord G. Gordon composed, in company with Sir R—— H—— and which is as follows – "Salmon begat Boaz, Boaz begat Obed, Obed begat Jesse, so as, Jesse begat David"'. This hymn caused the devil to bolt but only into a parson's throat, where (as it was 'the demon of concupiscence', named 'Sligo') he 'began singing the Black Joke, and used fifty such filthy words as the profligate and wicked defile walls and inn windows with, and at last he urged the minister on to make a furious attack on a female saint'. Sligo 'was remarkably communicative and told us that he had formerly occupied the famous Fanny in Cock-Lane, since which he had possessed the Ladies L. and W.' Spurning 'many invidious questions' as to why, if the 'cure was affected at last in so easy and obvious a manner', it was not achieved earlier, he replies, 'to these malicious sneers we are totally indifferent, as likewise to the mobs calling us the devil's midwives, black ferrets etc. etc. as we are determined to persevere; and if we cannot hunt down the devil, we flatter ourselves we shall be able at least to drive that dangerous and sinful quality, vain human reason, out of the nation'.

By contrast, the *Gentleman's Magazine* for July carried a much more irenic review of *A Narrative* (later reprinted in the *Weekly Entertainer* for August, *Bath Chronicle* on 7 August and *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal* 9 August). This suggested that 'this extraordinary case... originated in a complication of epilepsy and St Vitus's dance afflicting a person of a weak mind, early impressed with an idea that the disease was an effect of a power which the devil had obtained over him'. Given 'the wonderful

influence which the mind and the body reciprocally have upon each other' it was not surprising that 'the poor suffering wretch... should at last firmly believe that nothing less than seven clergymen could be a match for and obtain a complete victory over them', hence the cure 'is naturally accounted for'. 'We have been thus serious in our remarks on this singular case, because, though we think it argues very ridiculous credulity on the part of the reverend gentlemen concerned, yet their testimony must be allowed to be too respectable, and indeed the whole account carries with it too strongly the marks of truth and fidelity, for us to entertain the smallest idea of intentional imposition on the part of the afflicted patient. Every reader, however, will exercise his own judgement.'<sup>28</sup>

The tone of this review seems to have chimed with a growing impatience in the Bristol area with the length and bitterness of the controversy. The *Bath Chronicle* for 24 July, which had received a letter of 'J.H.' of Freshford on the case, chose to publish only one paragraph (about ventriloquism) because 'the publick begin to be heartily tired of the numerous publications respecting this man [Lukins]'. In *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* of 26 July, 'T.H.' wrote, 'it is now time to sum up the evidence and if possible to bring the matter to an issue; that the public may be no longer amused with these scholastic gentry who it seems are squabbling more about words than facts, leaving their readers almost as uninformed as when they first set out', when 'the thing wanted is simple facts, such as may prevent doubts that may hereafter arise in the minds of any under similar circumstances'. He makes clear his own preference for Norman's 'judicious and accurate observations... generally received as such by the most sober and respectable part of mankind', but he concludes 'by seriously asking those grave divines "whether they really believe that Lukins was possessed by devils in the way he pretended to be, and that they were really cast out by them in the way he pretended they were; or whether they have not some doubts in their minds that the whole was a deception" and according to their answer be the verdict given.' The following week the paper carried a letter by 'Amicus Veritatis' again seeking a middle ground by proposing that it was 'an absolute moral impossibility' that Lukins was an impostor, and only 'a physical impossibility' that seven devils had entered him, from which he reached the rather confusing conclusion that Lukins had really been delivered. *Bonner and Middleton's Bristol Journal* of 2 August carried a letter of 'J.M. of Tetbury' dated 25 July, wishing for a proper investigation, given that 'the affair of Lukins has made so great a noise' and been the 'topic of so much conversation in the city of Bristol as well as elsewhere'.

This again seeks to weigh up the evidence and opinions on each side, noting that '[we] cannot disbelieve or believe everything', although the writer makes clear his own belief in the existence of supernatural agents and the effect of spirits on the human mind, so that despite the 'contempt of anti-fanatics, T'Antony pig pratlings and materialists...all truths can be ridiculed and still true'.

After this, comments on the subject in the Bristol press practically cease, though *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal* carried a poem praising those involved in the cure of Lukins on 2 August and a poem praising Easterbrook by 'A Constant Reader' on 23 August. The only letter is that by 'Lascoon' of King Street, dated 5 August, which appears in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* on 16 August. This letter recognised that 'Amicus Veritatis' 'has, after the example of T.H. in a former paper, benevolently interposed as an impartial arbitrator', but then ridicules both his claims to impartiality and his arguments, restating in the strongest terms the imposture of Lukins and questioning 'the innocence of his seven faithful ministers'. 'I believe I have sufficient reason to pronounce both him and the whole septumvirate deceivers; nor will even the plea of a rectitude of intention avail, unless we are willing to admit the grossest absurdities under the mask of a preceding hypocritically pious design...From the pertinacious conduct of the credulous party, we might be led to conclude, that either their minds are involved in the most stupid kind of infatuation, or that they are resolutely bent in spite of all reason and experience, on supporting by all possible means, whether open or occult, lawful or unlawful, an absurdity engendered in their own wild imagination.' 'Lascoon' notes, 'I am credibly informed S.N. is not as yet exhausted, but has many more facts in store', though 'enough has been said already to confirm those who disbelieve the possession, and...if ten thousand times as much were to be added, it could not shake pertinacious incredulity'.

Norman was indeed preparing a further contribution, his *Authentic Anecdotes of George Lukins, The Yatton Demoniac; with a View of the Controversy, and a Full Refutation of the Imposture*, printed by Routh in Bristol for Sam Johnson (the publisher of the satirical print *Father of Lies*). Although this was not published (price one shilling) until 6 September, it seems likely that it was begun in early August, as it consists largely of a reprint of many of the newspaper items published until the end of July, together with a final letter by 'Philopatris' (i.e. Norman) to W.R.W. of Wrington dated Yatton 6 August.<sup>29</sup> In this final letter and in the ten-page 'conclusion' to the pamphlet, Norman develops further his case against Wake and his conduct, while also reinforcing his argument that



Lukins was an impostor, not (as the *Gentleman's Magazine* had tried to suggest) a sufferer from epilepsy or madness but a man of sound health who consciously and deliberately organized his fits to his own advantage and ensured carefully that he was never hurt during them. As regards Wake, Norman provides further evidence of his inconsistency in relation to the exorcism. He notes, 'in some few days after Lukins was said to be exorcised, a reputable person of this parish met with W.R.W. at Cleve and talked with him on that subject. Our consistent divine wished he had been previously acquainted with that business and declared he would have been present.' (In *Great Apostle* Norman reports Mr Short, another surgeon, telling him that Wake had said the same at the meeting on 18 June.) This, like Norman's narrative, suggested 'Wake really believed Lukins was possessed by Devils; and that they were absolutely ejected out of him. But upon different occasions and in diverse companies he has declared that he never believed Lukins was possessed', and through 'Amicus' he had 'virtually condemned the exorcism'. Norman speculates on Wake's possible reasons: 'Was it to get another petition for Lukins and share with him in the profit? Or was it to force himself into notice at the expense of decency, truth and religion?'<sup>30</sup>

In this text Norman's entire attention is focussed on Lukins and Wake. While it is clear that he despises the 'awful and marvellous undertaking' on 13 June, he is silent on the motives of those involved in the 'pious exorcism'.<sup>31</sup> One reason for this may be that, at this stage, Norman was still on friendly terms with Easterbrook himself. Indeed, at some time in the month after 6 August, Easterbrook visited Norman at Yatton, to try to dissuade him from publication, and Norman read him a 'rough draft of what I had further to publish' (i.e. the conclusion). Easterbrook does not report this visit, but he does confirm that 'after the debates in the newspapers were ended, and prejudices appeared to be left upon the minds of many people to the disadvantage of this poor man, I was solicited by himself and many people of Bristol to go to Yatton and collect the evidence of his relations and particular acquaintance there who had known him from his infancy'. Norman, meanwhile, was being urged to undertake the opposite journey, since, a short time before *Authentic Anecdotes* was published, friends 'advised me to insert an offer to meet the friends and abettors of George Lukins at the Council House in Bristol on any day they would appoint, in order most publicly to prove the truth of the narratives I had inserted in the newspapers; and they voluntarily offered to go thither with me, attended by the principal people of this parish and neighbourhood. Similar advice was given and offers made me by great numbers of people.' He declined the generous

offer, as he was already sure, 'settled as I am at Yatton, in the midst of Lukins's friends and relations, and knowing the extent of my business must depend upon the propriety and integrity of my conduct', the public would know that he would not lie, 'to the loss of my business... the ruin of my family'.<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly, the publication of *Authentic Anecdotes* did nothing to reactivate a press debate in Bristol (either no one wrote to the papers, or they decided not to publish any more on the case). Nor did two further publications, namely (on 11 October, but dated at the end Bristol 29 September, price 6d) Joseph Easterbrook's *An Appeal to the Public respecting George Lukins (called the Yatton Demoniac) containing an Account of his Affliction and Deliverance; together with a Variety of Circumstances which tend to exculpate him from the Charge of Imposture* and then (on 15 November, dated at the end Yatton 8 November, also priced 6d) *The Great Apostle Unmasked or a Reply to the Rev. Mr Easterbrook's Appeal in Defence of his Daemoniac, George Lukins* by 'Samuel Norman a member of the Corporation of Surgeons in London and Surgeon at Yatton'. Easterbrook's pamphlet was published by Thomas Mills, a leading pietist, while Norman's was again published by Sam Johnson. John Wesley (who had confirmed his own belief in Lukins' possession to a surprised William Jay) had a copy of *An Appeal* in his London library at his death, and possibly the work was itself a response to his own criticism of how his followers had handled the case, in a letter on 8 August to Walter Churchey: 'if any had asked my advice they would not have thrust the account of George Lukins into the world so prematurely. It should have been fully authenticated first.' Presumably he was satisfied that *An Appeal* met his requirements, as almost the whole text, with only some minor editing by him, was reproduced in the *Arminian Magazine*, Wesley's own journal, during 1789, starting with the March issue.<sup>33</sup>

Norman claims, in his *Great Apostle Unmasked*, 'you [Easterbrook] are said to have justified the publication of your appeal, by the express command of your Diocesan "to give a good account of your conduct in the Temple Church business"', but Easterbrook states only that, on his return from Yatton, 'I intended to have given over all thoughts of publishing any appeal in [Lukins'] favor' since he had 'apparently so many friends who were so confident of his innocence'. But 'since Mr Norman's pamphlet hath been published, some sarcastical reflections have fallen, not only upon the poor man himself, but upon a religious community of people', so it now seemed his duty to 'shew my opinion'. Just as Norman had collected 'such evidences as, in his estimation, prove the charge of imposture', Easterbrook states he will 'compile

such evidences as, in my apprehension, will acquit him from that foul imputation'. He then presents 12 sets of witnesses as 'a most respectable body of evidence' so that 'the far greater part of the readers of this pamphlet will have the clearest conviction of his innocence', including 'I hope my old friend Mr Norman'. He concludes: 'Nothing would afford me greater pleasure than to contribute to uniting all contending parties, and to bring into the bands of lasting friendship those Goliaths in battle, S.N., Justitiae Vindex, W.H.R., Amicus, Anti-Fanatic and all the other combatants which have appeared on this occasion.'<sup>34</sup>

If that was Easterbrook's hope, Norman's response in his *Great Apostle Unmasked* must have been a bitter blow. This takes the form of a letter to Easterbrook and is entirely focused on demonstrating that the vicar had 'by gross misrepresentations sought to impose a belief of his own piety, importance and infallibility upon the public, at the expense of decency and truth, and to the ridicule of true and undissembled religion'. This required unmasking, 'lest, the performance of our learned author remaining unanswered, many honest credulous people should now and hereafter continue in the belief of the truth of his legendary tale'. He challenges almost every claim in *An Appeal*, particularly attacking Easterbrook for citing testimony from those (like the Yatton curate, Wylde, and the Bristol surgeon, Short), whom Norman says Easterbrook knew full well did not believe in Lukins' possession, and ignoring the statements of many others when he visited Yatton that Lukins was 'a very great impostor'. Those who really believed in Lukins are identified, wherever possible, as people with suspect religious opinions, such as Behmenists or 'that true son of infallibility and mystical piety' the Wrington surgeon Mr James.<sup>35</sup>

Above all, Easterbrook had ignored all the evidence which Norman had presented him with, when Easterbrook had gone to Yatton to persuade him not to publish his first pamphlet, even though the surgeon had 'told you who were the authors of all the facts I had stated and Mr Brown confirmed the truth of a great variety of them'; he gives the example of what had occurred at St George's, where 'I showed you in confidence a letter from a gentleman of the faculty, belonging to His Majesty's household, who has known Lukins many years, which with a candid mind was abundantly sufficient to demolish honest Mr Cole's tale [which Easterbrook had published as proof that Lukins had suffered fits while in hospital]; but which I am not at liberty to publish'. At their meeting, 'I observed to you that I had very actively and peremptorily, among my friends, stood between you and them, to prevent abundance of severe censure and ridicule being inserted against you, in the public

prints. I earnestly intreated with you not to meddle with the controversy, and not to be made a catspaw of, but to leave the farther defence of your artful favourite to the enthusiastic tribe who wished to push you forward in that ridiculous business, to support their importance, and screen themselves from that censure, which their hypocritical stupidity justly entitled them to. And I moreover declared that if, notwithstanding what I had said, you would disgrace yourself, by making yourself the tool of that party, that confining myself within the limits of truth, I should most certainly and unreservedly endeavour to turn the argument upon you. You replied that, as you found the inhabitants of the parish so much prejudiced against poor George, you thought you should give up all thoughts of a further vindication of his conduct.’<sup>36</sup> It was his ‘instability and duplicity’ in reversing this decision that led Norman to attack Easterbrook now, with the accusation that, far from being the dupe of the Methodists, Easterbrook was setting himself up as their ‘great apostle’, determined to vindicate Wake and Lukins because ‘from the little walk, the obscure station of Vicar of Temple, they have introduced you to the world and proved you to be the only great miracle worker, the only true and great Apostle since the days of Saint John’, as ‘the Kingdom of Righteousness and Peace is established by the wise, the good, the potent, Joseph Easterbrook, Vicar of Temple!’<sup>37</sup>

Despite these three pamphlets, however, there are no further letters in the Bristol press on the affair until *Bonner and Middleton's Bristol Journal* on 22 November noted that it had refused an item from an occasional correspondent on ‘the Devil and his imps’ as they wished ‘to hear as little to do with either theme as possible’ and the letter’s contents were ‘of too personal a nature’. Finally on 6 December, *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* published a witty letter from ‘a Bye-Stander’ dated Bristol 4 December. This letter offered to solve the mystery of whether the devils had left Lukins and, if so, where they had gone. It noted that W.R.W.’s original letter ‘did much credit to the writer’s head and heart’ and that ‘S.N.’ had also initially published ‘a temperate and very judicious narrative of this marvellous man’, but then both men had clearly become possessed by the devils out of Lukins, as ‘the controversy has been managed on both sides in a manner and with spirits so different, that the cloven foot is discernible in almost every line’ both of ‘Justitiae Vindex’ and if one compared S.N.’s ‘first calm narrative’ with his ‘subsequent fiery publications’. One suspects that many Bristolians must have shared the same feelings.

However, just as the case dropped from local attention in August, it began to become more prominent regionally and nationally. The issue

for June of Benjamin Collins' *The County Magazine for 1788* (Salisbury, 1788) had reprinted the pro-Lukins material (W.R.W.'s letter, 'A Short Account' and Easterbrook's authenticating letter of 24 June) from the 19 and 26 July issues of the *Bristol Gazette* (as had the *Weekly Entertainer* in its July issue, though it also reprinted S.N.'s first letter). In contrast, the *County Magazine* for August offered 'An historical account of the case of George Lukins, the pretended demoniac, interspersed with remarks and moral reflections'. The advertisement for this in Collins' newspaper, the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, of 8 September noted, 'The editors have in this number fulfilled their engagement with the public by presenting them with such an account of that celebrated arch-impostor and pretended demoniac, George Lukins of Yatton, as they presume to hope will be satisfactory to every class of their readers and tend to remove all possibility of doubt that may yet exist in the mind of the credulous and superstitious respecting that infamous transaction and all concomitant circumstances.' The article brought together material from many of the Bristol letters, especially those in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, arguing that 'the account given by the surgeon of the village where he resided... has the best claim to impartiality, notwithstanding all which has been advanced against it. The objections which have been made appear rather to be the dying struggles of a person wishing to retreat with a degree of reputation than a solid confutation. Even the Methodists begin to be ashamed of the imposture, as their palliating letters evidently shew.' The author speculates that Lukins' original fit might have been the result of epilepsy following intoxication, and that ideas from the mummers' play, or some romantic tale, might have then influenced his imagination while in a weakened state, but 'whatever the occasion of his first fit might be... his subsequent conduct must have been founded in design and entirely a work of deceit and imposture. In this view it seems now to be generally understood: and the fanatic pretended exorcists, if they are capable of blushing, must hide their heads for shame at their credulity.'<sup>38</sup>

A series of letters on the affair were published in the *St James Chronicle* during the autumn, starting with a letter from 'Belphegor' of Bath dated 16 October and published on 21 October, provoking a reply from 'Philo' of Bristol on 27 October, which led to two replies from Belphegor published in 10 and 15 November and then a final letter by a clergyman published on 13 December. Belphegor's letter, probably provoked by the publication of Easterbrook's *An Appeal* five days earlier, is highly critical of Easterbrook (although he repeatedly calls him Eastcote or Eastbrooke) and defends Norman, ending, 'I cannot help laughing at this modern

piece of devilship'; Philo rebukes his levity as 'there are many persons of solid sense who look upon that affair in a more serious light, and from the known situation of the patient and the circumstances that occurred, they suppose his disorder to be one of the most singular cases of phrensy or insanity that have been known in the present century'. Since he does not believe Lukins 'equal to so arduous a task' as maintaining an imposture for 18 years, 'I have little doubt myself, but that this unhappy fellow's mind had been strongly heated at times, with enthusiastick ideas, excited most probably by his hearing and reading stories of witches, demons etc.... and the impression, from repeated impulses, growing still deeper in the mind of Lukins, he at length believed himself to be actually possessed by demons. The extravagances of his conduct and behaviour, after this, and the effect it had upon his body, in producing those strange distortions, gestures and horrid speeches, was no other than what might necessarily arise from an imagination so strongly perverted. In time they became involuntary, and from frequent repetition, little more than mere mechanical impulses.' Furthermore, he rebukes Belphegor for taking 'liberties with persons of credit'. Since the 'welfare of most people greatly depends on the character they support in life' this was 'a piece of wanton cruelty which every person of common decency would wish to avoid'. Easterbrook 'I know to be a gentleman of unquestionable veracity, who has ever maintained an amiable character, and in his Appeal, I am confident has asserted nothing as facts but such as came under his own immediate observation'. The others, '[though] not clergymen as insinuated, I believe to be worthy and good men' whose conduct 'by no means merited the censure and abuse that has been so illiberally thrown on them'.

This seems to have had an impact on Belphegor, whose next letter commences with an apology to Easterbrook, as he 'knew nothing of the respectable character Mr Easterbrook bears, and thought him to be one of that class of people with whom ships stand still in the ocean, as they did with George Whitfield. It would hurt him to give pain to an honest man'. However, the following week he retracted this, having now learned that Easterbrook had originally insinuated that seven clergymen had been involved and that 'the clergymen of Bristol called him to an account for publishing such an assertion and compelled him to acknowledge he was the only clergyman present... the other six being Methodist preachers and laymen. I think the clergy of Bristol required him to this acknowledgement in the Bath and Bristol papers, with the lay preachers' names inserted. Now I would ask this Rev. Divine whether he was not bred a rigid Anabaptist – his father who was the bellman of

Bristol was – and why he deceived the Devil, George Lukins and the publick by saying seven clergymen dispossessed the Devil? For he could not procure one single clergyman (if I am informed right) to attend on that simple Methodistical business'. 'If such extraordinary events tended to do good, they might pass unnoticed; but as I am convinced they have a contrary effect, and disturb the minds, and tend to overthrow the Established-Church of this kingdom, I think it is right not to let such wonder-working business pass unnoticed. The days of such sort of wonders, thank God, are past.' The clergyman agreed with Philo regarding the powers of a deluded imagination, noting that Luther himself 'was subject at times to religious melancholy, which produced a temporary insanity', though he defended the 'reality of the possessions in our Saviour's time', which cannot be reduced to 'a mere figure of speech'. But, while many of his own parishioners 'are possessed of seven demons, that is the seven deadly sins', which he was often employed in casting out, 'as to the other sort of devils which poor Lukins has turned out, I have never yet met with any of them, and the worthy vicar of Temple seems to have betrayed a degree of credulity in the affair.'

The pamphlets on the case also got noticed in the London reviews. The *Monthly Review* for September 1788, reviewing *A Narrative and Authentic Anecdotes*, noted, 'this controversy has been conducted, like most other controversies, with much personal abuse on both sides, but without throwing a satisfactory light on the dark subject'. Hence 'we have not yet heard that this impudent imposture (as it appears to us) hath been detected, to the satisfaction of the public. Perhaps, like the Cock-Lane Ghost, it may remain undisclosed, to amuse the scoffer and edify the fanatic'. It summarises Norman as representing Wake 'as a methodist preacher in some degree of connection with Mr Wesley' and also mocks 'the power of seven methodist preachers, who by their pious adjurations soon did the business, but we question whether the reverend exorcists will find it so easy a matter to subdue the incredulity and spirited animadversions of Mr Norman'. 'W' (John Watkins) on 15 January 1789, reviewing the first three pamphlets in *The European Magazine and London Review*, also takes the side of 'Mr Norman, who appears to be a man of good sense and respectable character' and 'tells a plain and honest tale', by contrast to 'the long exploded and horrible notion of infernal inspiration' found in the other pamphlets. 'Had this most ridiculous imposture been performed about a century ago, it would have been well timed, and found a place in that delectable magazine of superstition, cruelty and deceit, Glanvill's *Saducismus Triumphatus*, but we live in a very unbelieving age, wherein stories of witches and

demoniacs find no credit, except among those whose credit is nothing. Mr John Wesley, by whose subalterns this marvellous discomfiture of satan and his regiment was performed, is himself a great advocate for the demonological doctrine, and undoubtedly for him and his followers, the chosen veterans, and the emancipated brother, will be precious'. The *Critical Review*, reviewing *Authentic Anecdotes*, patronisingly declared, 'the seven exorcists challenge our pity for their weakness; but minds, not strengthened by education and judgments not matured by reflection, easily catch the flame of enthusiasm. One indeed appears to be an exception to the uneducated number; we are sorry to find that he was not an exception with regard to the general credulity'. But while accepting Norman's account the reviewer was 'sorry to remark a little too much virulence and personal invective': 'if he had adhered a little to the "suaviter in modo" as well as "fortiter in re" we should have been better pleased with his share in the contest'. This review was then paraphrased in the *English Review*.<sup>39</sup>

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What conclusions can be drawn from this detailed account of the controversy? Firstly, it is notable that, despite the polarised positions taken in the pamphlets, the press coverage was always much more cautious and mixed. For example, while the publishers of the pro-Lukins pamphlets, Bulgin and then Mills, were members of the pietist community (Bulgin and Rosser were both Methodist class members, and Bulgin was married to Henry Durbin's daughter, while Mills was a prominent Behmenist, initially working for the Countess of Huntingdon and later loosely associated with the Quakers), the newspapers in which the reports and letters appeared do not fit any neat pattern. William Pine, editor of the *Bristol Gazette*, was another Methodist leader and leading Wesleyan publisher, and its opening reports on the case seem to favour the reality of the dispossession, but both sides published in his newspaper, and generally his paper, like the others, seems studiously neutral in its determination to leave its readers to decide.<sup>40</sup> Like their readers, the editors seem to have felt an increasing unease and distaste for the personal disputes between the parties; the Bristol papers were beginning to downplay the debate by late July and largely dropped it thereafter, just as the national press was beginning to cover the case.

Secondly, we find a constant refrain, no less powerful for being so truisitic, that what the public requires to judge the case properly, and draw the correct conclusions from it, is 'facts' and that these require careful



investigation by disinterested parties. While this might seem a self-evident requirement, it suggests that, whereas to some it was a priori impossible for Lukins' story to be true, for many it was seen as a matter of empirical verification. Admittedly, this may have been a rhetorical position convenient to both sides: the sceptics like Norman wished to present themselves as the rigorous presenters of facts, however inconvenient, while Lukins' supporters wished to leave open the possibility that the episode might be real in the face of what was clearly a very strong current of incredulity about such an affair, which found its clearest expression in those comical items which mocked the entire affair as self-evidently ridiculous. Once again, however, such ridicule prompted unease in many minds, since it potentially involved undermining both Christianity and the good credit in the community of those mocked: in practice these two concerns were very closely intertwined and became personified, as we shall see, in the figure of Easterbrook.

Furthermore, there was considerable reluctance to have to choose between two extreme positions. The first was that Lukins was a conscious impostor, none of whose behaviour was in the slightest degree preternatural, and (not necessarily following from the first) that those who had 'dispossessed him' were also conscious frauds, using the case for their own advantage, just as he was. The second was that Lukins was genuinely possessed by devils and that his dispossession was a work of God, modelled on the gospel accounts and achieved by the power of prayer. Many people clearly sought alternatives to these stark choices. One such alternative was that Lukins was an impostor but his deliverers honestly believed both in him and in the effectiveness of their response. One could deny that possession could ever occur, or one could argue that, while such events might still occur, this was not such a case, perhaps because Lukins had not displayed the signs normally taken as evidence of possession. They could present Lukins as ill or mad, either initially (but subsequently becoming a conscious impostor) or throughout the process, and see his recovery as either a psychosomatic response to his belief that seven clergymen's prayers could heal him or perhaps as the more or less conscious seizing of an opportunity to cast off the persona which had taken over his life and prevented him living normally. Even if he was seen as genuinely ill or manic, this could be seen as a purely physical condition, or the result of a psychological disorder (the powers of a deluded imagination), or as the consequences of attacks by the devil or spirits, even if he was not fully 'possessed' and hence not properly 'dispossessed'. Alternatively, many people may have thought that the case was inexplicable or not capable of being fully

understood or decided upon and that it should remain on the record either as merely 'extraordinary' or perhaps as general evidence of the reality of preternatural events beyond human understanding.

In debating these possibilities, those involved also invoked a number of other assumptions, which were in considerable tension with each other. There was the widespread view that they now lived in a more 'enlightened' age, so that one could contrast past superstitions with current understanding, for example over witchcraft. Linked with this was the presumption that such enlightenment was strongest among the educated and prosperous and that credulity and superstition was rife 'among the lower orders' and could be dangerous if it was given credence by public acceptance of the powers of devils and spirits. Both these views were combined in condemnation of such beliefs as relics of the 'Romish church', itself credulous but also manipulating the credulity of its people. Sceptics could appeal to past history for evidence of the debunking of previous episodes while also pointing to ventriloquists, magicians and other illusionists in their own time as proof of how easily the human senses could be deceived by purely natural processes. Yet there was also a widespread unease that the modern age was one of infidelity and materialism which had lost belief or respect for many of the truths required for communal well-being or spiritual salvation. If there was a danger of believing too much, there was an equal danger of believing too little, and scepticism about devils concealed, or encouraged, scepticism about the truths of Christianity. Furthermore, while it was fine to mock the credulity of the poor, it was unacceptable to question the credit of the respectable, when they presented themselves as witnesses.

For some in Bristol, and most of the writers on the case outside Bristol, all these tensions were most easily resolved if one dismissed the case as one of Methodist enthusiasm, and it was largely in this light that it has passed into memory. Even as early as July 1790, advertising a debate in London on 'witches, apparitions and infernal agencies', the organisers claimed, 'we have been likewise promised a relation of the extraordinary case of George Lukins the Bristol Daemoniack, out of whom the Rev. Mr J. Wesley is said to have cast seven devils'.<sup>41</sup>

Norman and his supporters consistently used both overt terms like 'Methodistical' and words that were taken to be part of Methodists' vocabulary about themselves (such as saints, brothers and sisters, elect, godly, pious) or applied to them by others (Puritans, enthusiasts, mystics, fanatics, hypocrites) to mark off supporters of Lukins as outside the mainstream of the community and the church (whom they supposedly

despised as ungodly reprobates destined for hell), and to associate them with the credulity and ignorance of the uneducated people, from whom they were thought to draw their main following. For example, 'Anti-Fanatic' accused Wake of offering 'countenance and support' to 'the people for whom silly women and weak-minded and uninformed men leave the Church, and now run after as apostles. These are the people who, to use the expression of one of their followers, have now performed the first miracle since the time of our Saviour.'<sup>42</sup>

There was, of course, a great deal of truth in the assertion that Methodists played a central part in the affair. Leaving Easterbrook's own position aside for the moment, the lay-preachers involved in the proceedings comprised Wesley's local ministerial team. One, Thomas McGeary, was the headmaster of the Kingswood School run by the Wesleyans, while John Broadbent (1751–94), Benjamin Rhodes (1743–1816), Jeremiah Brettell (1753–1828) and John Valton (1740–94) were all serving on the Bristol circuit at the time.<sup>43</sup>

Both Brettell and Valton have left memoirs of their involvement in the case. Brettell tells us, 'Much has been said about poor George Lukins. I had seen him repeatedly, with several ministers and medical men, who made their own remarks upon things that were far beyond the power of art.' He also confirms that at Lukins' exorcism the fits 'ceased in a moment' as stated in Easterbrook's account, and 'the man was restored and was deeply grateful to God and to the instruments of his recovery...and he was never again affected by it.' Yet Brettell also reports his doubts, initially telling Easterbrook when asked to help, "It seems strange to me that he should judge himself possessed of seven devils; and that he should be able to devise the method of being restored." Mr Easterbrook replied "That is the objection which my brethren, the clergy, make for declining it." "Well", said I "we know it is right to make prayer to God on occasions of distress, and I will attend." I did, and such a sense of the divine presence I never before felt; nor did I ever see such bodily extortions, attended by such horrible blasphemies, on the part of the distressed man.<sup>44</sup>

If one distrusts Brettell's much later memoir, as edited for publication, then in Valton's case we have his original journal, as well as his memoir edited in Jackson's *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*. His journal reports visiting Lukins on the morning of 12 June 'a man possessed by 7 devils according to his account and to appearances'. In the memoir he states, 'some time ago I had a letter requesting me to make one of the seven ministers to pray over George Lukins. I cried out before God, "Lord I am not fit for such a work, I have not faith to encounter

a demoniac." It was powerfully applied "God in this thy might". The day before we were to meet I went to see Lukins and found such faith that I could then encounter the seven devils which he said tormented him. I did not doubt deliverance would come. Suffice to say when we met the Lord heard prayer and delivered this poor man.' Valton's editor, Joseph Sutcliffe, added his own editorial note to this: 'I personally knew [Lukins], a youth of about 18, short in stature and meagre in aspect' (the detail of his age is of course completely wrong, as he was 25 even when his fits commenced and 44 in 1788, unless Sutcliffe had known him earlier). Of the seven ministers, Sutcliffe reports, 'they were gentlemen of superior education and able ministers. Suffice to say after the prayers of that morning, Lukins had no more of those horrid distractions but was employed by Mr R Edwards and others as a bill-sticker.' Sutcliffe, who reported that a 'physician of Bath' (presumably meaning Norman) had argued against Easterbrook that Lukins was an impostor, also reports that McGeary was 'as he himself told me, very much of the physician's mind, but knowing Lukins to be altogether illiterate, he asked him a question in Latin and Lukins at once replied in Latin. This caused conviction in the minds of all the gentlemen that the contortions of the young man were effectuated by an evil influence and by consequence that Lukins was a demoniac.'<sup>45</sup>

This is an interesting report, not least because one of the main arguments of the sceptics was that Lukins had displayed none of the standard signs of a possessed man, one of which was ability in unknown languages.<sup>46</sup> Norman confirmed that McGeary asked such a question but claimed, 'being adjured in Greek and Latin by Mr McGeary, the pretended devils were so unclassical as not to be able to reply'. One of the satirical letters also referred to this episode, 'T'Antony Pig' writing, 'we were much incommoded by one of the champions, a pert little ill-looking fellow, who was very verbose in a language neither of us understood; but concluded from its being pronounced in the Scottish dialect, that it might be Erse; we are since informed it was intended for Latin, but we did not comprehend a word he said, any more than Marcus Tullius Cicero (who was a pretty Latinist in his day) would have done had he been there'. Quite apart from the factual question about Lukins' abilities, there is also at play here a struggle over the claim of the Methodist ministers, notably the schoolteacher McGeary (an MA), to be classically educated, whereas their opponents wanted to portray them as uneducated or at least of inferior education.<sup>47</sup>

Returning to Valton's journal, it also contains a very important later entry. On 30 June a poor widow came to him, reporting that her

daughter was suffering from fits that were endangering her life, and although she had been brought from Wales to the Bristol Infirmary, she could get no relief. 'She added she believed if 2 or 3 or 4 preachers would spend some time in prayer together for her she would be cured. We agreed to intercede for her on Friday morning at our general intercession. Accordingly 3 of us did. This Monday morning the poor mother came with tears in her eyes to return thanks and to inform us that her daughter had not had a fit since. May her deliverance be lasting and her soul healed! Glory be to God!' Interestingly, Valton referred to the girl as 'epileptic', not possessed, but was still willing to pray over her. Norman also challenged Easterbrook that 'in a day or two after your marvellous cure of Lukins, many talked of carrying their troublesome friends to Temple church, for your all powerful assistance. Among that number Mr Perrington at the White Lyon said he would humbly request you to deliver a wicked rascal he kept, from the influence of the Devil, for he was so very wicked that the women could not tell what to do with him.' It is hard to know how seriously to take this final remark, but it seems possible that the case reported by Valton was not the only demand for healing prayers.<sup>48</sup>

Valton also refers to the Friday morning 'general intercession' as if this was a regular event, which leads one to wonder whether the choice of Friday morning for the Temple Church meeting was coincidental. It may take on even greater significance if these meetings were the ones established by Wesley himself in March 1788. In his journal he tells us, 'On Tuesday I gave notice of my design to preach on Thursday evening [6 March] on (what is now the general topic) 'slavery'. The New Room was 'full with high and low, rich and poor'. In the middle of the sermon 'a vehement noise arose, none could tell why, and shot like lightning through the whole congregation. The terror and confusion were inexpressible. You might have imagined it was a city taken by storm. The people rushed upon each other with the utmost violence, the benches were broken in pieces and nine-tenths of the congregation appeared to be struck with the same panic. In about six minutes the storm ceased almost as suddenly as it rose. And all being calm I went on without the least interruption. It was the strangest incident of the kind I ever remember and believe none can account for it without supposing some preternatural influence. Satan fought lest his kingdom should be delivered up. We set Friday apart for a day of fasting and prayer that God would remember those poor outcasts of men and (what seems impossible with men, considering the wealth and power of their oppressors) make a way for them to escape and break their chains in sunder.' Fasting

and prayer were of course the gospel methods to cast out devils, and given the parallels drawn in the gospel between healing and casting out evil spirits and loosing the bonds of slavery, it is tempting to suggest that, for the Methodist preachers at least, the release of Lukins was part of their ongoing weekly use of prayer against all forms of slavery – physical, spiritual and economic.<sup>49</sup>

The early years of the Methodist ministry in Bristol (in the late 1730s) had certainly been marked by a very strong overlap between spiritual conversion and physical torment leading to release, which bore many of the hallmarks of dispossession, as both the Methodists and their opponents recognised. Such episodes had become much less prominent in subsequent decades, but memories were clearly long, as 'T.H.' of Bristol, in his letter attacking the Lukins affair, referred to what had happened at Kingswood 'a few years since' (actually late October 1739, 49 years since!) 'where were three women that pretended to be possessed of devils, appearing to have the same bodily sufferings, and the same powers as Lukins', namely 'the famous Roberts of Kingswood and her two associates Jones and Summers, at what time they had called together Mr J. Westley and some other pious men to untenant their devils'. He adds, 'I am informed one of the Kingswood women above mentioned, when upon her deathbed, sent for Mr Westley, or some person in his connection, and declared how she had deceived all who had believed her pretences' and there might be some person about Kingswood 'who is a living witness of it'.<sup>50</sup>

T.H. compares these cases with those in the gospel, in which such miracles certainly occurred, 'however the working of miracles appears to have ceased with the ministry of the apostles, yea before their decease' because Christianity 'stood in no further need of such singular evidence as attended them at the first promulgation of the gospel...I have never in my reading met with any accounts of devils being cast out by any man or men, since the Apostles days, but deceptions there have been many.' He qualifies this by stating, 'I will not deny men are now possessed of the devil' – who rules in the hearts of all the disobedient – and 'again I believe he is often permitted to plague and terrify some lunatics, especially in the first stage of that dreadful malady' and is permitted to tempt even the redeemed, but he insists that men can no longer cast the devil out: 'even witchcraft seems to be exploded in these latter days, the best and latest authority we have for giving credit to their power and existence is to be met with in judge Hale's trials'.<sup>51</sup>

By contrast, the preface to *A Narrative* asserts, 'If any person, after reading this account, ascribes it to enthusiasm, delusion or a juggling

trick, we refer them to part of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> chapters of St Matthew and to the 1st, 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> verses of the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of St Mark, and then ask them, if it not equally possible for such things to be permitted now as then, seeing the hand of the Lord is not shortened nor his power diminished! If they will not believe that such events are now permitted, neither will they acknowledge the facts in the days of our Saviour.' 'Clericus' took exception to this view, disputing that 'those who disbelieve the pretended exorcism are equally infidels respecting the miracles of Jesus Christ'. He was 'sorry the superstitions of monkish days should be revived in this more enlightened age; though the exorcist is still ordained in the Romish church, yet in these times we hear of no attempts to cast out spirits. The opinions of the Church of England, even under a Prince who had himself written in defence of Demonology, may be seen in the 72<sup>nd</sup> canon', which he then reproduces. This canon forbade Anglican clergy to use exorcism except with their bishop's permission.<sup>52</sup>

There is no evidence that Easterbrook had sought his bishop's permission or that it would have been granted by Christopher Wilson (bishop from 1783 to his death in 1792), but it is worth noting that a previous bishop of Bristol, Thomas Newton (bishop from 1761 to his death in 1782), had taken a considerable interest in demonology (he had edited Milton's *Paradise Lost* in 1749) and in 1775 had published *A Dissertation on the Demoniacs in the Gospels*. Throughout this text Newton struggled to find a middle way between 'enthusiasm' and 'infidelity', rejecting the view, most recently restated by Hugh Farmer, that the possessions in the gospel were nothing more than natural diseases. The philosophy of his time ascribed too much to the material and too little to the spiritual. Matter was inert and required spiritual agents to set it in motion, and 'it is certain there are many more spiritual beings in the world than men commonly are aware of', and the many demons and spirits 'must by their natural abilities have the power of doing much hurt to the bodies of men unless restrained by the good providence of God'. To deny all the power and influence of angels, demons and spirits on the bodies and souls of men would 'contradict the general belief of mankind as well as the whole tenor of revelation'. Discussing the seven devils in Mary Magdalene, he noted, 'it is certain then that a man may be possessed by a number of demons'. The problem was that it is almost impossible to tell a genuine possession from a natural disease, excepting the express word of holy writ or the means by which it is cured. 'When an inveterate disease is cured instantly by a word's speaking, the cure must certainly be miraculous', and prayer and fasting are conditions 'without

which no miraculous powers were obtained'. But now, such powers have ceased, so, while possession is still possible, we can never know if a particular case is genuine. 'There have been many pretended demoniacs and many pretended exorcists, persons who have been instructed to counterfeit the most horrid gesticulations and distortions of body, as if they were seized and afflicted by devils and others who by use of holy water and the muttering of certain prayers have restored and set them at liberty. But counterfeits are generally framed upon truths.' Just as 'there may have been some real possessions in former times, there may be such at this present time, but we have not the faculty that I spoke of, discerning of spirits. We cannot cast them out, and consequently we cannot pronounce with certainty what are demoniacal possessions and what are not.'<sup>53</sup>

Such an equivocal verdict from Bristol's former bishop (who was strongly anti-Methodist, it may be noted) must surely have made many Anglicans, especially those concerned with materialism and scepticism, open to the possibility of a possession by seven devils in their midst. In addition to the Methodists, Bristol was home, as I have shown elsewhere, to a range of religious groups, including both evangelical and High Church Anglicans (if these terms can be properly distinguished at this period) and many dissenters, especially Quakers and Baptists, for whom defence of the scriptures and of the Trinity, and of the experience of the 'spirit', and perhaps spirits, in both the human and the natural worlds, was a major unifying factor, although they were divided by other denominational pressures. Furthermore, for many of these people, the movement we now call Methodism was not seen as a distinct denomination outside the established church and competing with the other dissenting churches, but as a vehicle for ecumenism and evangelism, both in the cultivation of the individual piety of the better-off, and in the conversion and reformation of the ordinary people. This tendency in Methodism was particularly associated with Charles Wesley (who had lived for 20 years in Bristol and still visited it regularly before his death in 1788), with John Fletcher (also now dead) and, in Bristol, with Joseph Easterbrook.<sup>54</sup>

Joseph Easterbrook (1750–91) was indeed the son of the Bristol bellman, from a fairly extensive Bristol family, mostly weavers, tobacco-nists and other artisans. He went to Wesley's Kingswood School, and when only 17, in January 1768, was recommended by the Countess of Huntingdon to John Fletcher as resident tutor at the opening of Trevecca College, staying until early 1769: Fletcher described him as having 'good parts, a most happy memory and a zeal that would gladden your



ladyship's heart. He has preached no less than four times today.' He was ordained deacon and priest in June 1773 and became curate of Banwell and then Portishead (whose vicar was James Brown, another Bristol evangelical), then vicar of Temple in Bristol (a living in the gift of the city corporation) on 24 September 1779.<sup>55</sup>

Following the example of Brown and, in particular, of James Rouquet, Easterbrook was active in many Bristol good causes, for example as the ordinary or chaplain of Newgate gaol, treasurer of the Bristol Society for the Relief and Discharge of Debtors in 1785 and a leader of the Strangers' Friend Society. He had worked with Brown and with the Baptist minister Caleb Evans to promote local Sunday schools, working with the Quaker William Fox in July 1786, for example.<sup>56</sup> His early death on 21 January 1791 was to produce an extraordinary outpouring of grief, with no less than three funeral sermons published, by his Anglican replacement (Powell Samuel Criche), the leading Methodist minister in Bristol Henry Moore (following instructions from John Wesley in London), and John Hay, minister of the independent Castle Green chapel, while the Rev. Edward Barry MD, a Bristolian evangelical who was vicar of Churchill in north Somerset, printed in London 'an epistle of sincere condolence' to Bristolians, and especially the parishioners of Temple, on their loss. As well as praising, as they all did, his indefatigability in his duties, charity, candor and liberality, Hay noted, 'he boldly asserted the grand fundamental truths of God – declaring the universal depravity of the human heart; the insufficiency of human merit in point of acceptance with Jehovah; and the indispensable necessity of regeneration and evangelic holiness in order to eternal life and happiness'. Furthermore, 'though a minister of the established church, yet he manifested a great degree of good will for those of his brethren in the ministry, who for motives of conscience, thought proper to dissent from him' – for example he had supported the establishment of new chapels to reach the poor, even in his own parish.<sup>57</sup>

If Easterbrook's outlook was ecumenical and evangelical, however, there is no doubt that he was particularly close to, and appreciated by, his Methodist brethren. Charles Atmore, producing a Methodist memorial in 1801, noted that Easterbrook increased the number of Methodist societies, as it was his invariable rule to send them all those who were awakened under his ministry and came to him for advice, and that he considered the Methodists not as a distinct sect but as auxiliaries to the church. Brettell (whose marriage he had conducted) called Easterbrook 'that venerable man of God' who 'had preached the gospel in every house in his parish' and 'his pulpit was honoured by those venerable men

of God, Messrs Wesley and Fletcher, whenever they came to Bristol. He told me that when he began his weekly lectures, his vestrymen opposed him, but he told them that the church was his freehold, none could put him out, and that he would use his pulpit whenever he thought it most proper to discharge his ministerial duties to his parish.<sup>58</sup>

John Wesley's journals and diary certainly confirm that he visited Easterbrook's house regularly and preached in Temple church at least 14 times during his incumbency.<sup>59</sup> On one occasion he noted, 'the congregation here is remarkable well-behaved; indeed so are the parishioners in general. And no wonder since they have had such a succession of rectors as few parishes in England have had. The present incumbent truly fears God, so did his predecessor Mr Catcott, who was indeed as eminent for piety as most clergymen in England. He succeeded his father, a man of the same spirit, who I suppose succeeded Mr Arthur Bedford a person greatly esteemed 50 or 60 years ago for piety as well as learning'.<sup>60</sup> The week after his sermon on slavery at the New Room noted above, he preached on it again at Temple: 'I had no thought of meddling with the controversy which has lately pestered this city, till I read these words in the 2<sup>nd</sup> lesson which made me fall upon it, Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power" I then thought it my duty to speak clearly and strongly upon that head'.<sup>61</sup> On 14 March 1789 he thought he might have preached there 'for the last time as good Mr E was suddenly taken ill the next day', but on 6 March 1790 he was again noting 'Mr E has been very ill but God has again lifted up his head to be a father to the poor a little longer'. Finally on 18 September 1790, he 'called on Mr E ill of a disorder which no physician understands and which it seems God alone can cure. He is a pattern to all Bristol and indeed to all England having (beside his other incessant labours which were never intermitted) preached in every house in his parish! It was while he was preaching in his own church that he was suddenly struck with a violent pain in his breast. This confounds all the physicians and none of their medicines alter it'. When he heard of Easterbrook's death, Wesley wrote on 6 February 1791, 'so good Mr Easterbrook has got the start of us. Let us follow him as he followed Christ'.<sup>62</sup>

Easterbrook's pivotal role in the Lukins affair has to be seen in this context. He represented the public face of a powerful evangelical alliance in Bristol, one which had earned much public respect by its good works and by its ecumenical stand for scriptural truths. As we have seen, this made it hard for many to question directly his testimony, which was seen as central to the whole affair. As Henry Moore, the

Wesleyan, asserted in his funeral sermon, 'when in a remarkable case that occurred nearly three years ago, his Divine Master had greatly honoured him, those on the contrary part were ashamed, having no evil thing to say of him. They could cry out "Fanatic! Enthusiast!" for this is easily done and supplies the want of argument. But even keen-eyed jealousy could fix no blot upon him, either as a Christian or in his ministerial character.'<sup>63</sup> And yet the case also brought to the fore his links with the Wesleyans and offered his opponents the opportunity to associate him with what were seen as their excesses and the threat they posed to the established church. Hence the sensitivity of the question of whether others, beyond the Wesleyans, had supported him in Lukins' case.

Easterbrook notes of Wake that it is a mistake to believe 'that he is connected with me and with my friends the Methodists...I have never seen him, to the best of my recollection, but once in my life [on 18 June] when many gentlemen who are at as great a distance in sentiment from what is called enthusiasm in religion, as I am persuaded this gentleman is, called to enquire about George Lukins's deliverance, as well as himself'. *A Narrative* also claims that 'many religious persons of different denominations, reading of the account in the papers, were induced to visit him for several days prior to his deliverance', mentioning a young clergyman and then five ministers (who sang Charles Wesley's 1739 hymn, 'O for a thousand tongues to sing My dear redeemer's name').<sup>64</sup> Easterbrook later names those who saw Lukins between 7 and 12 June as including Rev. Dr Robins and Rev. Mr William Wait, while those who saw him after 13 June included the Rev. Symes, Edward Fisher esq. of Compton Greenfield and Rev. Mr Beale rector of Bengworth. He was accompanied on his trip to Yatton by the Rev. Mr Brown (presumably James Brown of Portishead, his former mentor). He tells us that, before he turned to the Methodists to help him with Lukins, 'I applied to such of the clergy of the established church (among those comprehended within the circle of my acquaintance) as I conceived to be the most cordial in the belief of supernatural influences, namely to the Rev. Mr Symes Rector of St Werburgh's; the Rev. Dr Robins Precentor of the Cathedral and the Rev. Mr Brown, Rector of Portishead' for 'a meeting for prayer in behalf of this object of commiseration', 'but though they acknowledged it as their opinion, that his was a supernatural affliction, I could not prevail upon them to join with me, in this attempt to relieve him.' Only because he had 'no rational ground of hope for more success, with those of my brethren, who were less disposed to admit the doctrine of the influence of good and evil spirits' had he turned to 'certain persons in connection with the Rev. Mr Wesley'.<sup>65</sup>

Yet his opponents were determined to present what Easterbrook had done as a victory for the Methodists and a questioning of the authority of the church. 'Anti-Fanatic' reported that a Methodist, 'on a friend of mine asking why seven clergymen were not employed in the business, made answer, that seven faithful ministers was the expression the diseased man had made, and that he scarcely thought there was one (Mr E—— excepted) and much less six more faithful clergymen to be found in Bristol and that, tho' the other six persons were not ordained by a bishop, yet they were ordained of God, and had many witnesses or proofs of it in Bristol'. Norman also picked on this same passage from Easterbrook, commenting, 'Cruel wicked ministers, fye on them! What, admit the necessity and yet withhold the only means of cure! These too the only wise, the only good ministers within your circle of acquaintance! Pusillanimous cowards! Slothful shepherds! What an unaccountable spirit of delusion must have overwhelmed them! Surely, if these were the only knowing ministers of the establishment, in and near Bristol, you could have no rational ground of hope for more success with the remaining ignorant, sensual clergy!' Summarising his vision of Easterbrook's campaign to boost his own importance by establishing his power over the devil, Norman, in a further hail of exclamations, climaxes: 'Hail, victory hail! Hail, Bristol, thou highly favoured honoured city, hail! Methodism triumphant! The Devil and Hell subdued! All Hail!'<sup>66</sup>

The extremity of this rhetoric may be partly the result of personal bitterness (discussed below) and partly the need to try so hard to discredit a man of such powerful reputation as Easterbrook. But it also reflects the fact that for Bristolians in general the Wesleyans, long mocked, were becoming not only a part of the mainstream, but even one of the city's special traditions. This ambivalence is clear in the *Life of Wesley* by the poet laureate Robert Southey, who grew up in the Bristol of the 1780s and recalled seeing the white-haired old man striding the streets of the city. Wesley's prominent part in the slavery controversy, while no doubt outraging many Bristolians, brought him into alliance with many others. It was directly after his sermons on the subject that on Sunday 16 March 1788 'I was invited by the mayor Mr Edgar to preach in his chapel [the civic chapel, St Marks, on the Cathedral Green] and afterwards to dine with him at the mansion-house. Most of the aldermen were at church, and a multitude of high and low', so Wesley had penetrated the heart of the city establishment.<sup>67</sup>

At the same time, Bristol was about to become once again, as it had been during the dramatic conversions of 1739, the scene of a battle for

the heart of Methodism. As Brettell (who married a Bristol merchant's daughter in 1786) noted (no doubt with hindsight), when he arrived in 1785 the Bristol society 'was, at that time, I suppose the most opulent in the kingdom. Mr Charles Wesley, being of high-church principles, did not conceive how the good work, begun in his day, could be carried on without the guidance of pious clergymen. When he met the society, he used to exhort them to abide in the Church [of England]; and ventured to say that on his death and that of his brother, the Methodist preachers would divide; some would go into the Church and others settle as dissenting ministers; but the people must abide in the Church and they would get safe to land'. As a lay-preacher, Brettell disagreed and was pleased that a separate Methodist church had emerged instead, but he admitted that Charles Wesley's remarks 'no doubt laid a foundation, in some degree, for that partial separation which took place in Bristol a few years after', namely in 1794, when the Trustees of the New Room (who saw the Methodists, as Charles Wesley did, as a movement, not a denomination) sought to stop the efforts of many of the lay-preachers to establish themselves as the 'ministers' of a separate church. It is hard to imagine that these issues were not in the minds of the lay-preachers and class leaders who participated in the Lukins affair. As he was dead, we do not know how Easterbrook would have viewed the events of 1794, and some of those involved, like Henry Durbin, were of the New Room party, but others like Brettell took the opposite side: surely their sense of their own ministry and ordination by God can only have been heightened by their belief that they had delivered Lukins from the devil?<sup>68</sup>

If we are now perhaps clearer about what this all meant for Easterbrook, and for Bristol's religious scene, what about Wake and Norman? If, as Easterbrook claims, Wake was no Methodist, why was he involved, and why did Norman impute to him the following ambition: 'He hoped no doubt, upon the departure of honest John, the present incumbent, to succeed to the episcopacy of the chapel, the infallibility of the British Pope. In the mean time, a few trifling douceurs for his becoming zeal from the elect, would feel very comfortable and give great importance to our parsons pocket.'<sup>69</sup> In other words (Norman claimed) Wake wanted to replace the aged John Wesley as leader of the Methodists, who are simultaneously portrayed as both papists and Puritans, as well as money-seeking hypocrites. What was Norman's own religious position? Was he, as is normally assumed, simply a secular-minded medical practitioner outraged by Lukins' imposture?

If he was, we have to explain the final pages of his *Authentic Anecdotes*. Here Norman ceases his detailed narrative of events in Yatton and

instead declares, 'When it is considered what length of time has elapsed since the Reformation; since the treasures of wisdom and truth have been published in our mother tongue; since the glorious light of the everlasting gospel has been openly shining upon every inquisitive mind; – how disgraceful it is to human nature to reflect upon the gross folly which still abounds, and stimulates the enthusiasts to acts of chicanery and pious fraud; as if such practices were necessary to support the interest of religion! In few years it is hoped it will be a matter of astonishment, that there was a person to be found, silly enough to be duped by so ridiculous an impostor as George Lukins, in the year, 1788 ... If we for a moment consider the rapid, the daily improvements that have lately been made in the Arts and Sciences; how must we wonder at that darkness and superstition, which prevail at this time!'<sup>70</sup>

This may seem like standard Enlightenment rhetoric, and it echoes many themes in his earlier letters to the papers, of the kind that probably earned him *Justitiae Vindex*'s sarcastic comparison of his writing to Edward Gibbon's.<sup>71</sup> But Gibbon would not have continued, 'To what cause is this disgraceful ignorance to be attributed? Is it to the rewards annexed to a slavish compliance with forms and systems which are at best useless, if they are not unreasonable and contradictory. If to the latter, – remove O ye great ones the stumbling block! Let the religion of the holy Jesus have its free course! Abolish all Antichristian subscriptions! Pull down the hierarchy, suffer the heavenly doctrines of the gospel, as a burning and shining light, to illumine the inhabitants of this isle! ... A christian's duty is a reasonable service, a perfect law of liberty. Freedom of enquiry will powerfully tend and will ultimately remove all uncertainties, difficulties and disputes. The doctrines of the gospel are perfect; and, strip men of their early prejudices, are more easily to be understood than the laws of our country'. He continues in this vein, attacking 'rewards for a slavish subscription to articles, canons and forms' and 'how dreadful is it to require of the clergy, a subscription to such abominable absurdities!'. 'Whilst sophistry or infidelity remain with our public teachers, as the natural and necessary consequence of their servile acquiescence and submission; the external pomp and grimaces of your pious pretences notwithstanding, – what beneficial effects can be expected from your formal preaching? ... In vain will false alarms and visionary terrors be held forth to the world, to enforce compliance with the externals of such a system of religion. Let collusion and fraud and priestcraft and juggling then be for ever forgotten ... The cause of virtue and religion need no other recommendation or support, than that of honest dispassionate argument and rational enquiry.

The beauty of holiness must ever produce the most amiable, the most captivating effects and pleasing sensations. Its refulgent splendour dissipates gloomy apprehensions, like as the sun, suddenly emerging from opaque clouds into a clear sky, in an instant emits its brilliant rays over our hemisphere.<sup>172</sup>

All this suggests that Norman's enlightenment was not that of Edward Gibbon but rather that of Joseph Priestley, with a millenarian faith in the redemptive powers of a primitive gospel fully compatible with human reason, associated with Unitarian and Socinian doctrines. How can we explain the relevance of all this, in Norman's mind, to the case of Lukins and the behaviour of Wake and Easterbrook? In particular, how does it fit with the statements by both men (confirmed by Norman) that they had formerly been friends with him?<sup>73</sup>

To do so, we need to consider their biographies.

William Robert Wake (1756–1830) was the son of Basil Wake (1720–1800), a leading Bath apothecary, whose father had been Robert Wake (c. 1676–1757), rector of Chilfrome and Wraxall in Dorset and prebendary of Yatton in Wells Cathedral from 1734. His uncle Matthew (c.1715–83) had been at Pembroke College Oxford and then was curate of various Somerset livings before becoming vicar of Yatton in 1755, where he remained until he died in May 1783. W.R. Wake himself went to St Paul's School in London, then on a scholarship to Trinity College Oxford, where he was briefly a fellow, was ordained a deacon in 1786, and became vicar of Backwell in May 1787. As we have seen, he appears to have been living a few miles south of Backwell at Wrington in 1788, and he may have been the unnamed person with whom John Wesley twice dined at Wrington (on 11 March 1786 and 29 September 1787) after preaching at Churchill for Dr Edward Barry (Easterbrook's friend). However, Wake maintained a strong connection with Bath, where his father was a prominent citizen and philanthropist (his sister Frances married Sir Edward Harington of Bath in 1804); his father's second wife (the two wedded in 1779) was Lady Camilla Fleming (née Bennet), daughter of the Earl of Tankerville, though she died in 1785. His father's obituary in 1800 stressed his knowledge of the scriptures and love of religious conversation and duties.<sup>74</sup>

In January 1791 Wake also became perpetual curate of St Michael's Bath, and he was one of the trustees of Laura Chapel in Bath, which opened in 1796 as a proprietary chapel (with seating for a thousand) belonging to Rev. Francis Randolph (1752–1831), a popular preacher who had made his reputation at the Octagon chapel in Bath. One

regular (female) Bath visitor thought this 'soul saver' was 'pompous and declamatory', ascribing the funding of Laura Chapel to 'his numerous admirers amongst the ladies'. Randolph, the son of Bristol physician George Randolph (who was a High Church Trinitarian attracted to the theories of John Hutchinson), was strongly anti-Socinian, publishing against Priestley in 1792–3. If 'Justitiae Vindex' was not Wake himself, it may have been Randolph writing on his behalf.<sup>75</sup>

In 1793 Wake published his only two books. The first consists of two sermons he had preached at St Michael's, one for the fast-day and the other to encourage collections for the émigré French clergy. It offers a standard providentialist justification of God's right to use chastisements on his sinful creatures to get them to correct their sins, one of which is the scandalous profanation of the Sabbath day. The commandments are all sacred, says Wake, and the gospel provides a code of laws, 'however rigid and absolute we may now think it, by which we shall be tried at the last day', as he hopes all will agree 'who are not so refined as to deny the agency of a particular providence'. The problems in France flowed from 'philosophy co-called supplanting faith in the gospel' and the same problem was occurring in Britain as the doctrines of revelation were attacked, even the divinity of our saviour and the mystery of the Trinity, evidence of how one 'instance of disbelief led insensibly' to another and thence to 'secret or avowed infidelity'.<sup>76</sup>

The second work was his *Liberal Version of the Psalms into Modern Language according to the Liturgy Translation*, in two volumes, 'calculated to render the book of Psalms intelligible to every capacity'. His avowed aim was 'to enable the generality of Christians, whilst they pray with the spirit, to pray with the understanding also'. He stresses his closeness to the liturgy and that there is nothing contrary to the doctrines of the Church of England, while also noting that he has used various texts and 'never relinquished the right of private judgement, the great blessing which we enjoy from our Protestant Reformation'. A 1798 critic noted that it was 'a performance which does him little credit in the point of judgment or learning', but its subscribers included many aristocrats and clergy, and both Hannah More and Mrs Farley of Bristol.<sup>77</sup>

Samuel Norman was, like Wake, from a North Somerset clerical family, being the second son of the Rev. Henry Norman, who was rector of Bleadon (just south of Weston-super-Mare, and about seven miles from Yatton) from October 1745 until his death, aged 69, in November 1780. Samuel's older brother, also Henry, was ordained deacon in 1765 and priest in 1767, when he became rector of Morestead in Hampshire, a living he held until his death in June 1799. Henry was a minor canon



of Winchester Cathedral until 1773, when he was excluded for his part in the Petitionary movement of Anglican clergy with Unitarian or Socinian beliefs, who wished not to have to subscribe to all the 39 Articles of the Church. His younger brother William was at Wadham College Oxford and ordained deacon in 1780, when he replaced his dead father as rector of Bleadon until his own death on 27 September 1788. Another brother, George, served his apprenticeship with Samuel before becoming a pupil at St George's Hospital in London in 1775; by 1786 he was a surgeon at Langport in Somerset (he probably then moved to Bath, as a leading Bath surgeon of the early nineteenth century, also called George Norman (c. 1781–1861), is described as the son of a surgeon who had a good practice in Bath c.1800). Samuel himself was a member of the Corporation of Surgeons of London and had been practising in Somerset since at least 1770, when he had come to Yatton. In the *Medical Directories* of 1779, 1780 and 1783 he is listed as a surgeon at Langport. He was living at Yatton when he married Francis, daughter of William Yeo. Samuel died in February 1805 at his son's house at Portbury (near the Severn, due west of Bristol) from an apoplectic fit. He is described as 'formerly a surgeon at Yatton, a man of sound judgement and of inflexible integrity'.<sup>78</sup> So, like the Wakes, the Normans were a North Somerset professional family following careers in both the church and medicine; it is hardly surprising they knew each other.

Henry Norman's only publication was *Two Letters on the Subject of Subscription to the Liturgy and Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (Winchester, 1773) 'by H—y Norman late an unsuspended minor canon of Winchester Cathedral'. The British Library copy has a manuscript note: 'The author of these letters became some years afterwards deranged in his intellects and killed his brother the rector of Bledon in Somersetshire with whom he resided by stabbing him with a knife'. This is confirmed by *Bonner and Middleton's Bristol Journal* of 11 October 1788, which reports that the Rev. Henry Norman, vicar of 'Morsted near Winchester', stabbed to death with a knife his brother the Rev. William Norman rector of Bleadon. It noted that he had been mad and moved to his brother's for security and that the 'unhappy maniac' had since been 'confined in a private madhouse'. The following week a letter was published by 'L. N.' dated 13 October, objecting to the 'unbecomingness' of this report, given the 'shocking horrible' disease of 'unhappy Henry', suspecting that the report was designed to justify an appeal to the judge at the next assizes to have Henry confined perpetually. The Bristol diarist William Dyer on 30 September noted this murder by one of Samuel Norman's brothers of another and wondered how Samuel

could continue 'boldly affirming there was no such thing as a possession, but what kind of spirit activated Norman's unhappy brother when he committed the above-mentioned awful deed?' One can only imagine how this murder, coming in between his September and November publications in the controversy, affected Samuel.<sup>79</sup>

Henry's publication (which is written in a style bordering on the manic) consists of a 'dedication' to the bishop of Winchester (whom he attacks roundly), followed by two letters to Dr Benjamin Dawson (a leading Petitioner), apparently based on letters he had published in the *London Chronicle*. He reports that he has already lost half his income (by being suspended from his minor canonry) and is likely to lose the rest, because he has refused to follow parts of the liturgical worship in the Cathedral which he regards as unscriptural, and because he is publishing this book in support of those petitioning for reform of the liturgy and articles of the church. He stresses the need for reform when 'false doctrine is daily repeated in all cathedral churches and weekly in all parish churches' and hopes to aid the 'reformation of our tyrannical yet servile established church'. He hopes that everyone will soon 'be convinced how grievously they have been imposed upon by listening to the suggestions of a deluded imagination, instead of obeying the oracles of God', comparing the false doctrines to an 'enchantment', 'a mere illusion of Devils or of Beelzebub the Prince of Devils'. Praising Joseph Priestley, who 'though often mistaken' is a 'far better divine than the Bishop of Llandaff', he describes the gospel of Jesus Christ as a 'revelation from heaven, designed for the good of all mankind by promoting in various ways the improvement of our rational powers by freeing us from all sorts of superstition, by increasing our faith and hope and greatly enlarging the general sphere of our benevolence'. He is particularly bitter about the 'self-dubbed orthodox brethren' among his fellow clergy, attacking men such as Romaine and Toplady. He opens his book by stating that the reader is 'not to be foolishly and unnecessarily detained by canting Methodistical pretences of sorrow for my past failings' and concluding that 'methodistical enthusiasms and nonsense on the one hand, and prophaneness, licentiousness and infidelity on the other, seem to have driven true religion almost out of the nation'.<sup>80</sup>

There is clearly a very strong similarity between Henry Norman's views expressed here – for which he lost both his clerical preferment and, perhaps, his reason – and the bitter complaints of Samuel Norman about the church establishment. Even before his brother's madness led to the murder of his other brother, it must have been a torment to

Norman to contrast his brother's genuine insanity with what he saw as Lukins' impostures. To see these taken seriously by other clergymen, especially those like Wake and Easterbrook who defended the Trinity and particular providences, and to see them succeed with the rich in cities like Bristol and Bath, while he laboured in the villages of North Somerset, would have been highly galling. The issue of madness, real or feigned, must have been particularly problematic to a man so devoted to the Enlightenment as an age of reason and to religion as an expression of reason that brought man freedom from the slavery of custom and superstition. The deliverance of a false madman from false devils by a false religion, conducted or defended by former friends who were now profiting from a falsehood: no wonder Samuel Norman could not rest, even amidst family tragedy, but had to have the last word.

Finally, what can we say about George Lukins and how he might have experienced and understood the events we have been analysing? George Lukins was born in 1744, son of William (a taylor) and Sarah. His father died circa 1763; in 1764 the widow Sarah was living with her sons including 19-year-old George. His much older brother Joseph (1731–85) married Ann Culliford in 1761, and they had a son, also Joseph (1768–86). When Joseph senior, who was the parish clerk, died suddenly on 22 June 1785, his burial record states he was a 'man who to the purity of life and a simplicity of manners added an implicit faith in the Gospel which he exemplified in an informed resignation to the inflictions of the Almighty and regular attendance on his ordinances'. It is reported that George also attended church and the sacraments and 'had been brought up in the study of music and practice of singing'. Norman noted that even when afflicted he made sure he attended the annual commemoration of the Congresbury Club in church, because he loved music. George, a small, thin man, initially followed his father's trade as a taylor, but he never married or established a household: he lived his adult life either with his brother's family or lodging in other houses.<sup>81</sup>

At Christmas 1769–70, when 24 or 25 years old, he began to have his fits after the incident when he was out 'mumming'. Whether he became intoxicated during this or not, it seems likely to have been an activity of which his saintly brother did not approve, and one might see Lukins' fits and demonic voices, and especially his 'inverted te Deums' and other blasphemous songs, as at least an inversion of, if not a protest against, the Christian respectability of his family, on which he remained dependent. Yet his fits, paradoxically, only made him more dependent, both on them and on the parish. His initial fits

continued for a 'long time' until he had collected a considerable sum of money through a petition for his relief, after which he recovered for a period but then relapsed. During 1774–5 the overseers paid him 10s a month 'from principles of generosity to his brother, who had for some time maintained him in his fits', and Norman quotes the vicar as saying, 'his brother is a very worthy man, and is greatly injured by him; and we cannot without hurting the brother, shew him resentment'. When he 'became burdensome to the parish as before...the principal people of the parish, who were tired of the expense and his pretences, in vestry agreed, to send him to the [Flat] Holmes, to be dipped in the sea, in his fits', though Lukins and his family objected. 'Lukins, soon after he found he must submit to this agreement of the parish, put off his fits, pretending only now and then to be speechless – he got a petition; – collected a considerable sum of money; and as long as that lasted, he was supposed to be recovered'.<sup>82</sup>

After this recovery (perhaps around 1776) he appears to have shifted trade and kept a little shop in Yatton (he hired a room from a gardener) while acting as a carrier to Bristol, walking and returning with pitchers of balm; he was apparently a great walker and could manage 20–30 miles in seven or eight hours; maybe this gave him the freedom from Yatton life he sought? But he probably still relied on help from his brother's family (at some point he had a broken leg), and after the deaths in 1785–6 of first his brother and then his nephew, his sister-in-law found him too burdensome to support. His fits began again in 1787, and he applied to the parish for constant pay but was refused. The parish tried to get two surgeons to cure him, though his family prevented them treating him as they wished. In spring 1788 the parish again threatened to send him to the Flat Holmes and refused him assistance. He now appears to have developed his plan to go to Bristol to be cured by seven clergymen, and he asked the parish for 2 guineas to cover the costs; he was awarded 10s 6d in 1788. Once again, one might see him as seeking relief away from Yatton, perhaps hoping to cast off his burdensome identity once more in a way which established him as a good Christian all along (or at least as another Mary Magdalene, losing seven devils to follow Christ).<sup>83</sup>

As with most of these details of Lukins' life, we are largely dependent on the hostile witness of Norman for evidence on how Lukins and his family saw his affliction (or at least presented it, if he was a conscious fraud). Norman tells us that after the fits started in 1770 'in some few weeks he pretended he was bewitched' and that 'to prove himself bewitched he gave me and many others many relations of the power of

witches, their iniquitous practices and punishments for them'. Others held the same view: 'all these oddities were ascribed to the power of witchcraft or the influences of an evil spirit'. Norman reports that, when Lukins' fits returned in the mid-1770s, 'many schemes to rescue him from the hands of the witches were devised and employed, even pretended conjurers were sought out and applied to, but their directions and exorcisms were practised in vain. But shameful to think of, several very indigent and infirm old people were again cruelly censured for bewitching him.' When there was a plan to dip Lukins in the sea after his return from hospital in 1775, 'his friends represented he was under the influence of witches or evil spirits'. Mrs Paddon, Norman claims, 'repeatedly endeavoured to convince me that Lukins laboured under the influence of witches or visitation of God'. When his fits returned in 1787, 'after pretending to wound a poor inoffensive old woman because she had bewitched him, he has now fully and generally attributed all his absurdities and abominable performances to the invisible influence of Satan only'. When she first reported Lukins' case to Easterbrook, Sarah Baber told him that 'many of the people about Yatton then conceived him to be bewitched, but latterly he had himself declared that he was possessed of seven devils'.<sup>84</sup>

It seems clear that Lukins' family generally accepted that he was possessed. Easterbrook cites the evidence of William Lukins and of Mrs Lukins his brother's widow. Norman himself quotes another parishioner saying 'that disputing with Mrs Lukins upon the credibility of George's pretences, Mrs Lukins declared that if anybody disputed the truth of either of the voices of the evil spirits which spoke in George, then that very spirit would surely hurt the unbeliever'. Others did not believe him. Norman notes that the vicar of Yatton, Rev. Michael Wake, always treated the idea that Lukins was 'influenced by witches or devils with anger and thought a horsewhip would do him most good'. He presents the curate as similarly sceptical in 1788. Visiting Lukins in his fits, 'when personating the Devil, having made the most horrid declarations, he said; – But seven clergymen if thou can'st get them to pray with thee in faith can cure thee; – to which Mr Wylde replied – why Mr Devil, indeed you are very polite, thus to discover how you may be driven out of this man. This is the first instance I have heard of your being a fool. If you Mr Devil be divided against yourself, how can your kingdom stand' (the same objection raised by Brettell and the Bristol clergy).<sup>85</sup>

Norman also suggests that, only 'three or four weeks before Lukins went to Bristol to be exorcised', very different methods were still being

tried to release him from his possession. Apparently Mr John Young of Yatton (whose servant man, many years before, had briefly thought himself bewitched after seeing Lukins' fits but had been deterred by being given emetic medicines by Norman!) 'applied to Mrs Biggs, a pretended conjuror or cunning woman at Bedminster for him [i.e. Lukins]. She sent him several packets to be burned in the fire during his fits, and dared Mr Young to open them. These packets Mr Young supposed to have been composed of brown paper rolled up, with pins stuck thick into it. By this wonderful contrivance she promised to cure him of his frolicsome fits, by driving the witches or devils out of him. No sooner were these packets thrown into the fire, than Lukins with horrid execrations swore, he would kick them down into the profundity of the infernal regions – that he would pull them out of the fiercely burning fire, and throw them into the most dreadful, the deepest pit of Hell. Mr Young blew the fire to give every assistance to the curative operation; and Lukins's relations held him at a distance. Lukins repeatedly declared that he was the great Devil; and Mr Young quitted the bellows and insisted upon holding him himself. He then encouraged Lukins to put his hand into the fire and take out the paper; or to kick the fire out; and assured him, if he was the Devil, the fire could not burn him. Lukins stood close to the chimney-piece, and with the most abominable expressions, swore he would do so; but he was careful not to touch the fire with his foot, tho he pretended furiously to endeavour to kick it out; and he was equally careful not to burn his hands. I have had accounts very similar, except as to the old witch's conjuring papers, from different people of credit and veracity; particularly from Mr Taylor our churchwarden.' Norman says that this experience was one factor which made Mr Young lose his faith in Lukins.<sup>86</sup>

After his cure, we largely lose sight of Lukins. He seems to have returned initially to his carrier's job, as Norman reports that he lodged in Bedminster and 'worked in Bristol at his business' and 'some few weeks' after 13 June 'he walked many miles several times in every week through the adjacent parishes, or to Bristol, for large quantities of barm etc, or with baskets of cakes and little fruit pies for sale'. On 20 October 1788 he applied for work as a taylor in Yatton; however on 20 July 1793 the pietist William Dyer signed a subscription at the evangelical bookseller Thomas Mills' to give 'poor Geo Lukins' 3 pence a week. On 17 May 1798 an 'R.M' stated on his copy of *Narrative* that six months ago Lukins had been 'living in Bristol, perfectly clear of any returns of his extraordinary affliction, and a well-disposed, sensible, moral, good Christian and member of society'. The biographer

of Valton, as we have seen, claimed that Lukins 'had no more of these horrid distractions but was employed by Mr R. Edwards and others as a bill-sticker'. John Evans, writing in the 1820s, recollected living in 1804–5 on the road used by Lukins as a common carrier between Bristol and Yatton, describing him as a little old man, cleanly dressed and with a polite touch of the hat, walking with a stick and a basket on his arm, 'with a good-tempered simplicity rather than archness of expression, that sufficiently accounted for the readiness with which so many became the dupes of his innocuously diabolical vocation'. But in May 1801 George attended a Yatton vestry meeting at which he was given 2s and promised 9s in future 'provided he goes to Mr Say and attends him in any kind of work he can do, but George Lukins has refused to do it, saying he shall go to Bristol and not come back till he is forced and that shall not be till Bedminster parish bring him home with an order'.<sup>87</sup>

When he died on Sunday 3 February 1805 the *Bristol Mirror* reported that 'George Lukins of Seven-Devil Memory, late of Yatton .... had for a great length of time been an out-patient at the Bristol Infirmary for a bad leg and hypochondriachal affections; he was reduced to beggary and picked up a scanty subsistence by the sale of little books, and the contributions of those who remembered his marvellous history'.<sup>88</sup> This report was repeated in the *Bristol Gazette* of 13 February and *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* of 16 February. However, the *Bristol Mirror* version carried on: 'He lived latterly with the famous fortune-telling woman of Bedminster, now deceased, into whose money-getting trade he appears to have been initiated. It would no doubt be a matter of surprise if such a man could die in such a house, surrounded by spells and incantations, without something preternatural attending his departure. The good people who saw him growl (not breathe) his last, assert that he barked like a dog, most vehemently, and that the howlings and lamentations (we presume exultations) of the seven demons who were exorcised in the vestry room of Temple parish some years since and laid in the Red Sea, were so terrible that the people could scarcely bear the noise. All the candles burned blue and nothing but a plentiful supply of gin and Scotch snuff could possibly have overcome the sulphurous exhalations which pervaded the chamber and have preserved the delicate nerves of the ladies assembled on the terrible occasion'.<sup>89</sup>

This provoked an item in the next issue, supposedly written by 'Sarah B' of 'Bedmister': 'To the printer of the Mirer, Sir I have a reeded yore akount of pore deir Gorge Lukins deth and begs you will counterdic in yore next paper that we drinkt lickers or snuff because thos we be pore

we have a karicter too loose also that their was blew kandels witch is not true as they burnd like other peoples. You might have a said that he his sixtie one ears hold and that heave a sufferd much persecushen from wicked people who skoft at the deliverance heave a had, but the whole world his now a turnd hinfidel, that their was abominashir smill of bromstun in the roome all the naybors noes those you thinks proper to laff at it, also that their was grate noyses and he did barkt like a dog and that we expicted evry minit to see the henemy of mankind come to fitch him away, bur he wasn't suffured to have power over him for the devils was a laid but he his happy amongst angles'. However, the same day, *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* noted, 'A respectable correspondent has requested us to insert the following particulars respecting the death of George Lukins, which he says has been greatly misrepresented: 'We the undersigned are ready to make oath that the said George Lukins died in our house in a calm, peaceable manner signed John Braine, Susannah Braine, witness Wm. Thomas.' If Samuel Norman read these accounts of Lukins' death in the Bristol newspapers, perhaps we can guess the cause of the apoplectic fit which killed him that same week!

\* \* \*

In death, as in life, George Lukins attracted stories, between which we cannot easily adjudicate. For us, it matters less whether he was an impostor or not and more what we can learn from the reactions to his case about how people in 1788 regarded the possibility of possession and exorcism, and what considerations affected their judgements. As we have seen, while there were polarities between different parties and different worldviews on this, there was also a lot of confusion and many attempts to find middle grounds which could incorporate some belief in the reality of devils and spirits without requiring acceptance of any particular instance, the Lukins case included.

One notable example of a reaction more complex than it might seem is that of Hannah More, brought up in Bristol and living in a house at Cowslip Green, two miles from Wake's house at Wrington. More, whose correspondents included both earnest evangelicals and London literati, wrote to one of the latter, Horace Walpole, in September 1788. Walpole had written to her on 17 August deploring 'what an abominable mummery has been acting there [Bristol] by the Methodists with their exorcism', comparing Bristol's tendency to 'fanaticism' with that of Toulon. More replied (in the published version of her letter provided by her editor, Roberts, which is probably only an extract), 'I give you leave to



be as severe as you please on the demoniacal mummerly which has been acting in this country; it was as is usual with prodigies, the operation of fraud upon folly. In vain do we boast of the enlightened eighteenth century and confidently talk as if human reason had not a manacle left about her, but that philosophy had broken down all the strongholds of prejudice, ignorance and superstition, yet at this very time Mesmer has got an hundred thousand pounds by animal magnetism in Paris and Mainaduc is getting as much in London. There is a fortuneteller in Westminster who is making little less. Lavater's physiognomy books sell at 15 guineas a set. The divining rod is still considered oracular in many places. Devils are cast out by seven ministers and to complete the disgraceful catalogue, slavery is vindicated in print and defended in the house of Peers! Poor human reason when wilt thou come to years of discretion?' At first reading, nothing seems clearer than her denunciation of the whole affair. Yet one notes that the Bristolian More has also managed to point out forcefully that such superstition is as rampant amongst the elites of Paris and London, and moreover that (as a fervent abolitionist) she has presented slavery as just as serious a challenge to reason as exorcism.<sup>90</sup>

In his reply to More on 22 September, Walpole congratulates her on 'the temperature of your piety and that you would not see the enthusiastic exorcist' (which Walpole's editor presumes to mean Easterbrook, though there is no mention of this in the Roberts version of her letter). However, the next year, when she was establishing her own schools in the same North Somerset region, More turned for help not only to evangelical Anglicans, but also to Methodists and in particular to the Easterbrook family. For her first school at Cheddar in 1789, she proposed to employ as 'the mistress of the Sunday school and the religious part' 'Mrs Easterbrook [Joseph's mother?] of whose judgement I have a good opinion. I hope Miss W[ilberforce] will not be frightened but I am afraid she must be called a Methodist.' In the end she did not employ her but instead chose none other than Sarah Baber, the woman who had brought Lukins' case to Easterbrook's attention and whom Easterbrook now recommended to More. When More's schools were again attacked in 1801 as associated with Methodism and dissent, one of her allies, who suggested that nine local Anglican clergy should testify in her favour, was Francis Randolph, Wake's friend, whose proprietary chapel in Bath More used to attend when staying there each year. But one of the nine clergy who testified on behalf of her schools was the sceptical Rev. Samuel Wylde, still curate of Yatton, although he was generally anti-Methodist. Moreover, one reason why More had

got into trouble with some in the Church was that, when in Bath, she also used to attend (out of church hours) the Congregational chapel of William Jay, who had been so shocked to hear John Wesley defend the reality of Lukins' possession. In short, when it came to practice, alternative priorities and personal connections made a mockery of the simple certainties of 'demoniacal mummery'.<sup>91</sup>

# 8

## Conclusion

What have these six case studies contributed to our understanding of the changing place of witchcraft, demonology and spirits in south-west England (and more generally in English and European culture), in the period between the English and French revolutions? In this conclusion I will seek to bring out some of the methodological and substantive lessons, while noting that one of the most important conclusions is the need to treat each case as a unique conjuncture of circumstances, interests and ideas, which deserve to be re-created in their full complexity, not simply reduced to a series of common features and factors.

Indeed, my methodological and substantive conclusions reinforce the sense that any witchcraft or related case is likely, by its very nature, to be subject to many different forces, to be interpreted in many different ways, and to be capable of many different resolutions. We can generalise about what the range of issues and possibilities are for any particular case, and we can generalise about the inherent tensions, even contradictions, within the early modern understanding of witchcraft and demonology which would be played out within particular cases, and also about the broader cultural, religious and epistemological tensions within early modern society which also shaped how these cases would be understood and presented, both privately and publicly. But these very generalisations require that we pay close attention, in every specific case, to the micro history of that particular episode and also maintain a humble caution about our ability to understand it fully. Not only do we not have the evidence to re-create 'what really happened', but the very notion that there could be such a single account is questionable. Yet this does not mean that we are reduced to simple relativism, abandoning all claims to telling truths or reasons for choosing between rival stories of the past – rather it means exercising the greatest

scholarly scrupulosity in establishing the nature and evidence for those rival stories, recognising that many (perhaps all) of them were stories in the minds of the participants of those episodes as well as of subsequent historians and that we can learn a great deal about the past (and the present) from a critical reconstruction of the dynamics which shaped the creation and transmission of those stories, then and since.

In choosing the six cases explored here, and in approaching each of them, I have sought to unpeel their layers of meaning and establish the rival truths being offered, rather than offering a single or definitive account, whether we are dealing with a trial for witchcraft, a suspected possession or poltergeist case debated publicly, or the published writings of an author dealing with the world of witches and spirits. I have attempted to highlight the ways in which subsequent historians, as well as contemporaries, sought to simplify the cases and the people involved, by fitting them into neat categories (people as sceptics, witch-hunters, impostors, mad, innocent victims, and so on, and cases as 'about' issues of gender, politics, religion, science, secularisation, or whatever), and then I have attempted to question whether we have the evidence to support such categorisation and whether such categories capture what we can establish as the truths (in the plural) in these cases. Where such categories have tended to impose polarities, understanding people and events as fitting one or the other of two strongly opposed categories, I have sought to uncover the full spectrum of possibilities and often have stressed the efforts of those concerned to find middle grounds or to establish the interdependence between apparent opposites.

This approach requires the historian to access, wherever possible, alternative sources of evidence for the same case, in order to be able to capture the full range of motives and understandings of the participants and the varied ways in which these could be presented. In many cases, this can involve contrasting particular public accounts of an episode with alternative public accounts, but also with private materials (letters, diaries, or biographical evidence more generally). This alerts us not simply to the complexity of the case and of rival views of it held by different people, but also (especially when we have private material) to the complexity of the views of each individual involved. Faced with the extraordinary, mysterious and unsettling events which by definition are involved in the cases considered here, people did not immediately adopt a single understanding of what was occurring or know exactly how they should think or behave. Even the published material shows them exploring different meanings and courses of action – indeed it was a convention of the public literature that people should consider

different explanations and actions, moving perhaps from initial scepticism to firm conviction that supernatural forces were at work. Yet these public accounts tend to be linear and relatively simple. Private records often show much less clear trajectories, with participants swaying back and forth in their understanding, or pursuing several courses of action, and reacting to the similar changes in the actions of others or developments in the circumstances. Nobody knew how these cases would end, and nobody was fully in control of the processes by which they were resolved or the ways in which they were publicly reported and understood.

I have suggested, for example, in the Bideford case, that rather than seeing people as manipulating processes which they controlled and looking for a single group that managed and benefited from the case, we should rather see different individuals or groups of people trying to manage and take advantage of circumstances beyond any specific control. Even the notion of 'taking advantage' may be too positive – perhaps we are dealing in many cases with efforts to minimise the dangers posed to all parties. A characteristic of witchcraft trials may be that they require a number of groups to have an interest in them succeeding for them to get under way in the first place, but they are always likely to prove a test and a danger to some or all of those groups once they are public, meaning that they have an inherent tendency to end unsatisfactorily for most people and make it less, not more, likely that those involved will wish to repeat the experience. The same might be said of the public debates over supernatural episodes found in the eighteenth century – it is far from clear that any side 'wins' these debates, and it is apparent that, while the public initially consider them of great interest, they find the subsequent arguments increasingly sterile and, if anything, tending to undermine public faith in all the arguments put forward, rather than reinforcing a particular perspective. Neither the 'facts' of the case, nor how to interpret them, appear to be clarified by the debate, while the controversy itself risks undermining community stability, indeed can even seem itself to unleash demonically destructive forces in the participants. The same might be said of individuals who publish their views, such as John Beaumont, who can win attention for themselves and their views, but at the expense of gaining a reputation for eccentricity among those who do not believe them, while potentially displeasing those who share their views by dragging into public attention matters best left to private study: Beaumont himself admits both these risks.

In terms of 'public' accounts of what was occurring, the two most commonly discussed here are, firstly, the legal records of trials and,

secondly, published accounts, whether in newspapers, in pamphlets (or other occasional literature) or in books. In fact these two categories largely overlap, since we have very poor legal archives, so that our evidence for what was argued in the legal process (including any information we have about what occurred at the trial itself) is almost totally dependent on what was published in the press and, so, subject to a double process of selection. First of all, we have to consider how far the requirements of the legal process led to the selective presentation of those aspects of the case which would be legally relevant and further the case being made (which in all cases in this period is the prosecution case, of course), and then we have to ask how much of this would then be captured in the press versions (and how accurately). And for the press, we need to apply all the normal caveats for any publication of this period – where did the information come from (in the complete absence of any ‘journalists’), who were the authors, who were the publishers, and whom did they see as their audience? Within what genres was the work published, and what conventions did these establish regarding the nature of the material covered and how it was presented? How seriously did these genres regard the provision of a factually accurate account – was there in fact a well-established distinction between fact and fiction in relation to stories such as these? How far was the publication motivated by purely financial considerations, and how far by the ideological, even partisan, interests of the authors and publishers? These considerations apply not simply to the initial publication of an account, but also to how that account was then appropriated in later publications. It is clear that, once published, stories of this kind were regularly reprinted, in revised form and in a different setting and meaning, often over hundreds of years, taking on a life of their own as part of a canon of supernatural stories, which are still being recycled today, often now on the Internet (while the digital availability of past publications is giving a new lease of life to all their earlier manifestations).

This consideration takes on a specific meaning because many of the early episodes discussed here were published as part of a specific genre, pioneered in England by Henry More in his 1653 *Antidote to Atheism*, which combined a general philosophical defence of the reality of the spirit world (seen, as the title implies, as a necessary defence against materialistic atheism), with the careful exposition of particular stories which were presented as being sufficiently detailed in content and clearly attested by well-reputed witnesses to meet the standards of experimental knowledge being set by bodies such as the Royal Society, following the Baconian programme for the generation of reliable knowledge.

The classic text in this tradition is the *Saducismus Triumphatus* of Glanvill and More, but other works such as those of Bovet and Beaumont are often seen as part of the same tradition, and indeed associate themselves with it, and the genre continued to grow during the eighteenth century. However, it is not clear that all the works published under this banner actually shared the motivations or standards of its originators. As I argue for Bovet and Beaumont, neither really fitted the More-Glanvill mould – though it suited them (and their publishers) to suggest that they did – and the form in which they presented their stories, though superficially perhaps the same, did not really follow the Royal Society model. Indeed, in Bovet's case, it appears that one of the two editions of his work adopted the anti-Sadducean priority of More/Glanvill on its title page, while the other highlighted the anti-popery theme which, I argue, was Bovet's personal agenda, within which the collection of stories was a minor element, and which generated a very different philosophical first part to the book, which involved an attack on the idolatry and sensualism of the establishment in church and state, rather than seeking to defend that establishment, as More and Glanvill wished to do. Beaumont's contribution to the genre represents, I argue, yet another variant, in which the intended audience for the supernatural cases reported is less a sceptical public who need to be persuaded of the reality of spirits by a rigorously attested report, and more those who wish to understand and develop their own personal experience of the world of spirits, within a broadly hermetic context.

During the eighteenth century, while the Glanvill/More paradigm remained a strong one, the context developed further. On the one hand, there was an ever-growing market for the recycling of these stories in a genre which, while it still paid lip-service to the attack on atheism, was increasingly journalistic and or novelistic in character, as personified, and to some extent initiated, by Daniel Defoe, whose books (while probably genuinely animated by his own opposition to atheism) played with the potential of these stories as narratives and blurred the boundaries of fact and fiction, as he did in all of his publications. The subsequent vogues for Gothic and romantic fiction gave further currency to these stories. The rise of the newspaper press also brought to respectable audiences lengthy coverage (and associated letters debating the issues) of cases which might previously have been reported only in ballads and cheap pamphlets (genres which continued to flourish, of course). Meanwhile, for those more interested in the religious implications of the stories, one may detect a variant of the distinction made above between their use by Glanvill and by Beaumont, in the difference between what

one might call the 'evangelical' and the 'pietist' use of such stories. The evangelical tradition, as perhaps personified by John Wesley, was, like Glanvill, primarily interested in such stories as proofs of the truths of the Bible which would force a negligent world to take their salvation seriously and measured the success of such stories by their ability to do this effectively, which included proper verification that could meet the opposition of sceptics (including many non-evangelical Christians). The pietist tradition, like Beaumont, prioritised how such stories might bolster the spiritual development of those who were already believers and how it might demonstrate the specific claims of Trinitarian Christianity and of one of the many forms of anti-materialist philosophy current in the period. Both the evangelicals and the pietists, meanwhile, disliked and distrusted the exploitation of the supernatural by the commercial market for sensationalist purposes.

In all of these publishing genres, furthermore, there was an inbuilt tension regarding the place of witchcraft stories. On the one hand, these stories seemed particularly powerful demonstrations of the anti-atheistic message being conveyed, guaranteed then, as now, to attract public interest. Furthermore, during the period of legal action against witches, these stories came not only with the weight of legal proof that the stories were properly attested (so that their sceptics faced the awkward task of claiming that the state had unjustly executed numerous people), but also with the weight of biblical, historical and contemporary jurisprudence on their side: to deny that such events were possible was to overturn all these authorities. During the eighteenth century, once legal cases for witchcraft ceased, the former advantage disappeared, but the latter remained powerful: no other aspect of the world of spirits was apparently so well authorised by past evidence as the action of the devil and witches. Yet the fundamental purpose of most of these texts was not to defend the reality of witchcraft, or even of the devil, *per se*, but to defend the reality of spirits and of God. Even in the seventeenth century, and increasingly thereafter, witchcraft cases raised specific problems for those defending and describing the world of spirits, which, I would argue, made them increasingly unattractive as stories, compared to other forms of spirit activity, such as apparitions (including ghosts) or poltergeists, and made even cases involving possession by evil spirits involve, in many cases, no direct reference to the power of witches. Indeed, it became a focus of the counter-literature, of those attacking such publications, to highlight their association with accusations of witchcraft and imply that accepting these stories was encouraging the persecution of innocent old women as witches. Many



of those defending spirits, meanwhile, especially those in the hermetic or pietistic traditions, had their own doubts about whether witches actually played much, if any, part in the work of spirits – it did not fit with their own priority of spiritual self-development. So, while witches still sold books, then as now, they ceased to be a priority of those writing on the subject – to the extent that they ever had been (and one might argue that no English writer after Bernard, except Hopkins and Stearne, who proved unattractive role models, wrote on this subject in order to legitimate the prosecution of witches, as such, and even Bernard and his predecessors wrote as much to control and limit the legal process as to justify, let alone encourage, it).

One of the implications of these general conclusions, as well as of the detailed evidence given in the various case studies, is that it is wrong to adopt the commonsense view that we can trace the changing level of private belief in witchcraft and demonology by tracing the changing character of the public coverage and debate of the subject. Just as there is no direct correlation between levels of belief in the possibility and incidence of witchcraft and levels of witchcraft prosecution, given the range of other factors involved in translating beliefs about witches into legal actions against them; there are so many factors involved in the published accounts of the subject that to regard them as reflecting private beliefs is highly problematic. Indeed, there may be a better case for arguing the opposite, namely that private beliefs were gradually modified by the changing character of the public coverage of such cases and, in particular, the declining significance of witchcraft cases in that coverage: witchcraft may have come to seem a less and less likely occurrence.

More subtly, I would suggest that the nature of those private beliefs was altered by the character of the public debate around the world of spirits that arose. This, as I shall discuss shortly, was dominated by a particularly extreme dichotomy between what I shall call the Scotian perspective (all these phenomena as impostures, probably manipulated for partisan purposes), on the one hand, and the Glanvillian model on the other, which held that to deny the possibility of such events was to fall into infidelity and materialism. Neither of these positions, I would suggest, did much to help those actually caught up in a specific episode to interpret or resolve the circumstances they were facing or to foster their own spiritual development. This very absence of relationship between the public debate and private needs, I would argue, left people with both the space and the desire to develop their own personal understandings of the world of spirits. These, in turn, were nourished

by a range of available resources, which ranged from oral traditions and the advice of cunning folk, through the various forms of Christian teaching on the subject, to the growing number of anti-materialist philosophies such as neo-Platonism, Behmenism, Swedenborgianism and animal magnetism, which fed into the occult and spiritualist traditions of the nineteenth century and eventually into modern esotericism and 'New Age' philosophies.

At one level, this dichotomy between 'public infidelity' and 'private belief' brings into question simplistic models of 'modernisation' or the 'disenchantment of the world' which suppose that a secularised and enlightened public sphere both reflects and strengthens a secularised and enlightened private world, in which individuals, families and groups no longer have recourse to pre-enlightened forms of belief or behaviour: twenty years ago (perhaps even ten) it was necessary to challenge such assumptions.<sup>1</sup> Yet to stress this point, which is now becoming generally accepted by those historians from a variety of perspectives who have (rightly) questioned linear models of modernity, secularisation or disenchantment, risks missing the significance of the growing belief, in the minds of all those affected by these cases, that they were indeed living in an age of infidelity, in which the public sphere was increasingly unsympathetic to their needs or views. This sense of public infidelity made a considerable impact on all those involved. Even if they retained, or adopted, worldviews which recognised the activity of spirits, even witches, people likely experienced nagging doubts about whether such things were true and thus felt pressure to prove such supernatural activity to themselves as much as to anyone else, in particular to determine whether the experiences they themselves were going through could or should be understood and dealt with in those terms. They also had to deal with the fear that, if they reflected such beliefs publicly, they would be subject to ridicule and abuse by a sceptical public.

In some respects, of course, this had always been true – even at the height of the 'witch craze' and/or the 'age of belief' (whenever one might date such slippery concepts), neither the authorities nor those involved in a particular episode had ever accepted easily or wholeheartedly that what was being experienced could be understood only as the work of witches or demons, and participants were similarly unsure. Even in a society where belief in their powers was very widespread and authorised, it did not follow that any specific case was to be explained or treated on this basis, and there were many reasons for people to be sceptical. It is worth remembering that, in England at least, there was never a time

when the majority of witches taken to trial (who must surely have been those against whom there was the most plausible public evidence of their guilt, whatever the reality) were not acquitted – indeed acquittal rates of 70–80% were the norm. In that respect, one might ask whether the further decline in prosecution rates and executions in the late seventeenth century, and the removal of legal sanctions in the eighteenth century, really made much difference to the public mood: as Owen Davies has demonstrated, it may have had little effect on traditions of popular action against witches, which were largely independent of the formal law or church structures.<sup>2</sup>

Yet among the educated classes there must surely have been a greater effect, and a growing tendency to internalise the struggle against infidelity, as a personal effort to interpret the workings of the spirit world in one's own life, drawing, as I have suggested, on the religious and philosophical traditions which could make sense of such phenomena and even, in many cases, make a virtue of their very privacy and personal quality, by presenting them as experiences which of their nature would happen and be meaningful only to a minority of receptive people, and not fit to be shared in the public realm. In its own way, this reaction might perhaps be seen as the successor of the 'Job-like' attitude recommended by early Protestants to the godly in the face of such tribulations: to regard them as opportunities for personal growth, not public action. Whereas Keith Thomas famously suggested that this attitude was too demanding for most people who preferred to identify (and act against) witches as responsible for their misfortunes, I would suggest that the balance of psychological advantage was always more even, given the many problems that arose if one acted publicly against a witch, and that over time this balance, for the educated in particular, grew ever more clearly weighted in favour of internal responses, not public action. To want to make the matter public, one usually had to have other motives for publicising the case, such as evangelical or partisan interests, or the desire to make money from the public's continued fascination in such cases, even if that same public did not really believe in them (or was not sure if it believed in them or not). Often it was those on the sidelines, not the families directly affected, who put the cases into the public sphere, or it was sceptics who first publicised them.<sup>3</sup>

As already suggested, the main challenge facing those who presented these cases publicly was seen as what I have called the Scotian perspective – that is, the line of argument which drew on Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* of 1584. Central to this approach was the assumption that all such cases were likely to be the results of imposture

working on credulity and ignorance, deploying a model based on the Protestant attack on popish superstition as the product of priestcraft preying on popular credulity, with mercenary and partisan motives. The chief weapons of Scotians in challenging this threat were four. The first was to deny the biblical authority for the modern classification of witchcraft, reinterpreting the Bible texts as attacks on false pretenders to magical powers, or impostors. The second was to present accusers of witches as the cruel persecutors of stereotyped victims, above all poor, old, miserable and often deluded women, who were so weak and foolish as to be willing to confess to the delusive powers of which they were accused. The third was to suggest that any unusual phenomena reported could always be shown to be either natural or, perhaps more often, illusionary, based on the ability of conjurors, jugglers, ventriloquists or other fraudsters to trick ordinary people into believing something supernatural had occurred. Finally, the preferred weapon for discovering these frauds was mockery and laughter, rather than philosophical argument or detailed experimental investigation: past experience proved all such cases would be found to be fraudulent, so those who believed in them should be ridiculed and the fraudsters, if possible, punished.<sup>4</sup>

As James Sharpe and Michael Hunter have already noted, almost all the critiques of witchcraft and demonology after 1640 deployed these four tools, often relying directly on Scot himself for their evidence, and the cases considered here strongly support this interpretation. They also support Hunter's contention that this technique was remarkably effective, not least because it did not require elaborate justification and could base itself on the traditions of humour and scepticism built into English public life at all levels, from the 'wit' of the Restoration theatre and coffeehouse to the mocking rhymes and critical gossip and slander of ordinary people.<sup>5</sup> It gained extra strength, however, both from its 'humanitarian' claim to be using humour to defend the weak and from its self-image as the 'commonsense' position of a modern Englishman, freed from past superstition and constantly wary against attempts to fool the public once again. This not only tied into the continuing strain of anti-popery throughout our period, but also fitted neatly into the evolving rhetoric against other groups seen as trying to fool the people for their own ends, namely sectarian religious groups (fanatics or enthusiasts) and political partisans, and hence into a more general Enlightenment stance against ignorance and superstition and, for some at least, against priestcraft in every form. As in all these other areas of life, the language of debate within this Scotian paradigm was

determined by the notions of imposture and credulity, unmasked by sceptics who discovered the real facts of the case and the base motives of those seeking to deceive the public.

Although Scot's book is often seen as a radical challenge to early modern orthodoxy about witchcraft, recent work has suggested that, despite high-profile denunciations of Scot (notably King James's *Demonology*), for most of the time the leaders of church and state in England (including James himself as King of England) operated, more or less openly, on a Scotian model, particularly in the legal system (ecclesiastical as well as secular), with many judges and bishops (such as Francis North) predisposed to see imposture and factionalism behind witchcraft accusations. Apart perhaps from some places and periods during 1642–60, only a minority of judges, magistrates or court officials appear to have accepted the alternative vision, within which witches became serious threats to the order of church and state who should be eradicated, and even then the majority of them, like Hunt, probably merely saw witches as one among many types of felon threatening the moral and social order, not as a unique threat. After the Restoration, and particularly after the upheavals of the 1680s, when civil war again threatened (and occurred in the south-west, with Monmouth's rebellion), the inclination to bracket witchcraft accusations with sedition grew. The final official endorsement of the Scotian paradigm came with the Act of 1736, which redefined witchcraft precisely as Scot would have seen it, as the false pretence of powers which only fraudsters would claim, from which the credulous (as well as the innocent witches) required protection.<sup>6</sup>

As Sharpe and Hunter have again noted, although this tradition could, and sometimes did, appeal to natural philosophy and medicine as evidence for the powers of nature, there is no real evidence that this approach benefited from, or appealed to, new scientific or medical discoveries. Its empiricism or naturalism were arguably those of Aristotelian philosophy as developed by medieval theologians and natural philosophers, drawing on the notion that particular experiences could not validate themselves as 'facts' and had to be explained away as 'illusions' (within a major strand of demonology, of course, these were illusions manipulated by the devil or demons). Far from strengthening this Scotian assumption, the 'experimentalism' of the new science, certainly in its English form, operated on the opposite principle: that singular 'facts', if properly attested, had to be accepted and made sense of, either as natural or as the works of God beyond nature. As many recent works have shown, many of the scientists of the Royal Society shared this view, which underpinned the More-Glanvill enterprise. Their scientific

work, certainly in its early phase, was as likely to be mocked by the wits and commonsense plebeians as were beliefs in witches, and even the growing prestige of Newtonian science in the eighteenth century did not prevent many with scientific interests (like Newton himself, of course) from holding and exploring many notions about the nature and influence of 'spirits' within nature (as well as particular providences and miracles beyond it) which Scotians would still mock.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps partly for this reason, when medical and scientific explanations are deployed in these cases, they are more likely to be deployed either by those we might term the anti-Scotians or, perhaps more often, by those seeking a middle ground. In particular, as we can see in the Lukins case, they appealed to those who wished to find a way of 'explaining away' the mysterious phenomena involved in each case without adopting the harsh Scotian language of imposture and credulity. If one could show that genuine illness or a rare and little-understood natural phenomenon might account for the unusual events, then it was possible to be sceptical about the case without having to accuse those involved in it of being fools, impostors or both. Moreover, it was also possible to argue that, in this particular case, there was a natural explanation, without committing oneself a priori to the notion that *all* cases would turn out to be explained naturally, so reserving the possibility, in principle, that such a case might happen. Famously, of course, this was how Addison resolved the issue of witchcraft in the *Spectator* – refusing to deny its possibility in general but unwilling to accept any particular case. For a true Scotian, however, this was unacceptable – hence Norman's determination to prove that Lukins was an impostor, not an epileptic or a man suffering from a deluded imagination.

We can see, in this search for the middle ground, that there were two aspects of the Scotian approach which made it vulnerable. The very stridency of its insistence on the imposture and credulity of the other side, and that there could be no true facts behind the episode, only illusions, made it highly problematic to members of a community, some of whom felt themselves afflicted by witchcraft or other supernatural events. If the rest adopted the Scotian approach, they had to decide that their friends or neighbours were fools or impostors and publicly endorse such an accusation. Furthermore, the mocking style and accusations of base motives associated with the Scotian approach seemed like a further threat to community values. They were fine if applied to an alien group whom everyone could regard as an 'other' and a threat to the community, but highly problematic if those involved were otherwise valued and respected members of the community. In an age when

credit, and credibility, was the essential attribute of economic and social interactions, then to deny the credibility of others was not merely to damage them irreparably, but also to weaken the fabric of the whole community. Indeed, in many people's eyes, it was the mocking scepticism of the Scotians that appeared the greatest threat to social cohesion, in itself perhaps a form of demonic challenge to its well-being. It was not hard for the opponents of the Scotians to argue that it was they who were undermining society by their corrosive mockery and their materialistic values, portraying them as anti-religious and hence perhaps, given the danger of God's judgement, as bringing danger to the whole community, which might be punished for their infidelity.

In particular, the Scotian model was profoundly at odds with that providentialism which (following Thomas) Walsham and others have identified as lying at the heart of Protestant England, and which remained powerful (as Clark argues) as long as the state and nationhood were identified with religion. Protestant biblicism built its culture on encouraging all English people to identify the particular providences in their lives, whether individually, in families, in communities or at national level, using Bible models of this process. Central to this was the view of an interventionist and judgemental God and, in most (though not all) versions of this account, the devil and spirits (good and evil) were God's agents in this drama. This perspective (which its opponents sometimes labelled as 'puritan') took very deep root in English religion and public life, proving very hard to dislodge, and while it remained powerful it was hard for witchcraft and demonology to be entirely eradicated. Arguably, this occurred only when a very different view of God, the Bible and the state developed, largely in the form of liberal, often Unitarian, theology with a progressivist view of human history and a reinterpretation of the Reformation as having unleashed liberty of conscience and the separation of church and state, a view within which devils and witches had no place.<sup>8</sup> I have suggested that Norman's stance in the Lukins' case is as much explained by this religious attitude, held as a family creed, as by his professional distrust of the medical evidence for possession: medical men with different religious views (some of the surgeons Norman attacks, and perhaps the medical men in the Wake and Randolph families, took a different view of the same evidence).

To fully understand the playing out of these factors, we need to set them in the broader context of England's 'long reformation', and especially the form that this took in the period between the English and French revolutions. As I have argued elsewhere, this established, in local communities across the land as well as at national level, a 'triple threat'

to the establishment of church, state and local community, in relation to which all the social and cultural changes of the period were shaped. The triple threats were popery (and tyranny), sectarianism (enthusiasm and populist factionalism) and atheism (and materialism, decadence, loss of traditional values). All three could be personified in 'others' outside, or at least alien to, the community as a whole – but all three could also be used as labels to demonise other members of the community, when engaged in contests for power (such as warfare or party politics), and to rally support from the middle ground. This middle ground (often personified as the Church of England, or more broadly as Protestant England, but also as the 'better sort' of each community) could be frightened of all three threats but had to be persuaded at particular conjunctures that one or two of these threats were more frightful (even demonic) than the other/s.<sup>9</sup> Like every other aspect of life, witchcraft and demonology became shaped by this three-way contest. To some it was clear that to fear witches and believe in spirits was to fall prey to popery and/or enthusiasm, whose adherents would exploit them to achieve their own ends – the Scotian approach. To others, such as the Methodists, it was clear that the greatest threat was atheism (and perhaps the popery of a negligent church establishment that left the ordinary people in ignorance and damnation, denying them the gospel truths that would free them: Bovet might be placed here as well). Others, such as Glanvill and More, and perhaps Hunt, believed that they could establish a middle ground which would defend them against all three opponents at once, establishing the reality of the world of spirits, but only when attested and controlled by men such as themselves, who would prevent its exploitation by papists and enthusiasts.

It is in this context, rather than the standard contrast between elite (or polite) and popular (or vulgar) culture, that I would suggest we locate the view expressed in all these debates that fears of witches and spirits were characteristically the property of the common people and that there was a constant danger of stirring up popular emotions. While there was no doubt some empirical basis to this, it was also the continuation of a Protestant trope, expressing the fears of a godly minority who have both a duty to try to convert and moralise the ungodly majority and also an interest to do so, since their own lives would be imperilled if they allowed their nation to displease God: hence the ongoing need for a reformation of manners and souls. Some thought that they could use popular fears of witches and demons to convince the people of the need for their personal and communal reformation; others were convinced that such beliefs were obstacles to that same process. Equally, there was



the concern of others that those conducting such reformations were themselves trying to win the people to challenge the status quo: hence the North family's detestation of those who used the clamour against witches to build themselves factional support.

None of these approaches allowed for the possibility that in fact ordinary people might actually be less interested in, or convinced by, witches and demons than the educated. Just as later folklorists assumed that magical beliefs would be held by country folk through oral tradition (and so took all their stories from the countryside, neglecting the widespread newspaper and other evidence for the thriving interest in such beliefs in the towns and in the popular press), so early modern writers of all types accepted stereotypes of popular credulity. In particular they already postulated that these were characteristically rural beliefs, as seen in Bristolians' projection of the supernatural and those who acted against it into the rural hinterland of the city, even when episodes broke out in the city centre and cunning folk plied their trade in city inns. They also saw them as defined by age and gender, in particular as the stories (about all kinds of supernatural creatures, including fairies, ghosts and goblins as much as demons) which female nurses and servants would pass on to the children of the better-off and from which the latter needed protection. No doubt there is some truth in this statement (though such children also eagerly imbibed such stories from the press), but again it surely reflects an anxiety of educated males about how far they were, as they wanted to see themselves, men of reason.

In modern historiography, the theme of 'popular credulity' has tended to take a particular form, influenced both by anthropology and by the influential writings of Protestant pastors such as George Gifford, which is to see popular beliefs as essentially functional, revolving around fears of maleficia and ways to deal with such threats. This is then contrasted with the theological perspective of the educated classes, whose concern lies with the demonic element underlying witchcraft and with a proper religious response to such. Associated with this approach is a methodological assumption, when dealing with evidence about popular beliefs which can be re-created only through sources left by the educated, namely that all maleficial aspects in this evidence are genuine reflections of popular concerns, while all evidence of the demonic is the result of educated intervention, in the form either of leading questioning or of interpreting the evidence given to fit demonic stereotypes.<sup>10</sup> In recent years this model has been vigorously challenged, and historians have sought to sift the evidence more closely for fragments of 'popular supernaturalism', although there has been profound disagreement

among those attempting this about how it should be done and what form of understandings might be uncovered. Some have sought to piece such fragments together to recreate a popular 'shamanism'; others have argued that ordinary people had absorbed at least some of the orthodox theology of demonism and its images of witchcraft as inverted worship, while others have seen ordinary individuals as constructing an image of evil incarnate which reflected their own personal life stories and psychological needs. All these efforts have in turn been subject to the criticism that they cannot convincingly distinguish between established beliefs and practices which may have shaped people's lives, and the stories which they told about witchcraft when placed under questioning in particular episodes: one does not have to assume that the latter are purely the product of leading questions to think that the answers given might be ones improvised for the occasion, rather than long-held beliefs.<sup>11</sup>

It has to be said that the cases studied here cannot throw a great deal of light on these matters, given the nature of the evidence, though I have sought to sift as carefully as possible the various sources to enable such questions to be asked. In the Hunt cases, I have suggested that we can indeed identify traces not only of leading questions (possibly modelled on Bernard's guidelines for identifying the demonic roots of maleficial action), but also of popular images of underground meetings or inverted worship which might go some way to explaining the witches' confessions of 'sabbath'-style events, but it is impossible to judge how far those accused might have had such images in their heads in advance of being accused. There is no similar evidence in the Bideford cases, but both cases contain reports of meetings, and some sort of covenant, with the devil, normally in the shape of a black man, and associated dealings with familiars and/or the devil in animal shapes. It would be perfectly possible to argue that these stories are again generated by the process of accusation, in particular the procedure of searching the witch for marks and looking out for her feeding of familiars, which seem to have become a normal first stage in action against a witch by this period and perhaps a stage which ordinary people adopted even before ordered by the authorities (like swimming the witch, a similar procedure which shifted from legal ordeal to popular test, although no examples occur in the cases considered here). Once marks are found, they invite questions about the devil and familiars and generate stories which include covenants and (sometimes, but in a very perfunctory fashion) reports of sex with the devil; in the Hunt cases they also lead to accounts of witches' meetings, but once again without any sex, nor any but the simplest

inversion of Christian worship (a clerical figure and a baptismal rite). But given the popularity of accounts of such encounters with the devil in a range of cheap literature, and no doubt the circulation of stories of familiars in earlier witch trials, it is reasonable to suppose that everyone in seventeenth-century England was well acquainted with such ideas and may well have had their own fantasies about such encounters.

As one might expect, the initial accusations against the witches seem to arise entirely from maleficia and in many cases from the classic model of a confrontation between accuser and accused, after which harm to the accuser is blamed on the witch. In some cases this follows the 'charity refused' stereotype, but a range of other interpersonal conflicts are also mentioned, and there is good evidence to support the view that it is tension about the boundaries of the domestic sphere that are key here: women who arrive uninvited or press gifts on others can be suspected as much as those who come begging. The range of harms identified are also the expected ones: illness of adults, children and animals, other family misfortunes (including the problems of the Giles' carrying business in Bristol) and possibly accidents to shipping (although this is mentioned only in the Bideford cases in the post-trial reports, which may reflect press sensationalisation of the case rather than any specific accusations by witnesses).

There is an interesting focus in these cases on certain sorts of illness, which can then be seen as tied in with certain ideas about how the maleficia might be caused by the witch. These are harms to the body caused either directly by the hands of the witches or indirectly by their use of pins, thorns or other sharp objects, either on the actual bodies of the victim or into an image of that person, causing them hurt at a distance. In the Hunt cases the purpose of the witches' meetings is for the devil and the witches to join in causing such harm, which is portrayed as an inversion of baptism (naming and harming the victim), and in the Bideford case the Eastchurch family seem to fear such image magic as well. Other Bideford victims, and the Lamb Inn reports, seem instead to envisage the witch (in spectral and/or invisible form) entering the house and attacking the victim with her hands – pinching, scratching, poking – and also sometimes with her teeth. If one was to generalise from the cases like these in which we have details of the illnesses afflicting the victims, it looks as if such neurological (as we might term them) symptoms, combined with those of possession (which may share some somatic characteristics of loss of bodily control, even if explained differently) may have become the type of cases in which people suspected witchcraft as the cause. Together with the poltergeist cases

(which shared the characteristic of the invasion of domestic space and the maleficent operation of invisible hands – throwing, overturning and making loud noises to damage the body of the family), they seem to constitute a model in which families lost control of what they should have been able to control (their nerves, bodies, environment).<sup>12</sup> To what extent these symptoms were created by the more or less conscious action of members of that very family, perhaps as a protest against the demands of family order or as way of attracting attention, is in my view unknowable. Lukins' possession could also be read as the inversion of family values by a failed householder (a failed man, perhaps), who feels unable to control his environment. But thousands of other people must have shared such feelings without any similar results!

We can also discern, equally tentatively, certain common features in how families responded to these challenges, and the people who may have guided them in this. Interestingly, these responses seem to run across families of all classes and levels of education, even of religiosity – affecting the gentry Hunts as well as the Giles and Eastchurch families (both from the urban middling sort). These are to seek solutions eclectically from a broad range of people, including both orthodox and less orthodox medical practitioners, established and dissenting clergy, and a wide range of friends and neighbours. Of course the cases considered here are by definition not typical, given that they became matters of public debate, but it looks as if the families had to turn outwards to all sorts of others to try to resolve their problems. However, they may have done this only if simpler solutions did not succeed. Of these simpler solutions, the one that seems to emerge strongest is that of a confrontation with the suspected witch, often involving the scratching of the suspect. How exactly this was supposed to work, and to what extent it was a conscious inversion of the notion of the witch's hands penetrating the body of the victim, one cannot really uncover from the evidence, but it seems clear that the witch had to be brought into the home and confronted in order to bring relief. The willingness of the Hunt family to do this, and the apparent closure of the episode that this brought, is particularly telling, and one wonders how many episodes ended in this fashion and yet also left the suspected witch with an indelible reputation in the local community.

The other form of counter-magic that features strongly in the eighteenth-century cases, and is associated particularly with the remedies offered by the cunning folk consulted, is that of boiling the urine of the victim. This is supposed to cause pain to the witch, which might in turn bring the witch to the house, so further identifying the cause

and provoking a confrontation which might generate a resolution. The notion of sticking pins into an animal's heart or burning objects on the fire appears to be intended to have the same effect. It seems that the efficacy of these techniques could depend on a number of features, and perhaps precisely on their ambiguous combination. They are performed at the heart of the home – the domestic hearth that feeds and warms – and they bring the evildoer into the home; they cause harm to the evildoer to force him or her to reverse the evildoing and they also identify and make clear the guilt of the evildoer. In that respect, they are a form of counter-magic which cannot operate impersonally – they require the person of the witch to be made manifest in order to offer healing.<sup>13</sup> The same can be said of another remedy that is clear from some of the early cases – once the witch is identified and put in prison or on trial, then relief follows.

Theological orthodoxy, of course, condemned the use of all such means (except legal action), and the recourse to cunning folk who might suggest them, regarding them as no less demonic than the maleficia they sought to reverse, or at the very least as superstitious relics of popery or paganism. Yet it is far from clear that this orthodoxy was pastorally, or even ideologically, capable of application. As the focus of clerical concern shifted, clergymen like Glanvill and the evangelicals in Bristol found that the evidence of the efficacy of such counter-magic and the apparent occult knowledge of the cunning man, while deeply unsettling at one level, was at another level important proof that there was indeed a world of spirits and occult effects: they cannot resist reporting such evidence, yet at the same time have to distance themselves from it and its implications. Furthermore, it was unclear what alternative remedies they could offer to meet the needs of their suffering flock, in the face of such trials. They could urge the use of more orthodox medicines – even offer their own, as Dyer did – but they faced a situation in which some medical practitioners might pronounce such cases beyond their remedy or share the view that they were the result of spirits or witches.

Alternatively, they could offer the remedy of prayer and fasting from the Bible, especially in cases in which evil spirits needed to be cast out. Yet this was problematic, because they were not themselves sure if there really were 'evil spirits' involved and because of the church's own ambivalent position on the efficacy and legitimacy of such healing methods following the canons of 1604. This ambivalence was strengthened when many dissenting churches after the civil war seemed much more willing to adopt these methods, and although old dissent increasingly dropped

such views in the eighteenth century, the new evangelical movements revived them, notably Wesleyan Methodism. Caught between the triple threats noted above (popery, dissent, infidelity), many clergymen's response must have been as complex as that of Bishop Newton regarding demoniacs – incapable of denying that they might face genuine attacks from demons, yet unable to endorse their casting out and so, by this very refusal, removing the one test which might demonstrate whether, exceptionally, this was a genuine case of possession and not (as most clergy probably instinctively felt) likely to be caused by nature, chance or imposture.<sup>14</sup> As Easterbrook found, even those clergy most inclined by their pietism to believe in such 'supernatural influences' felt unable to take the step of public action. How far they found other ways to comfort and relieve the families involved, perhaps by praying or singing hymns with them within the home, but without the formal ceremony of an exorcism, we cannot recover.

We return, therefore, to my opening contention in this conclusion, namely the complexity of the factors involved in any of these cases, and the need to try to penetrate beyond the public images and stories we have concerning them, to try to capture their meaning to the individuals and families involved. Like most historians, I have found this very difficult and the conclusions highly tentative – unlike other historians, however, I have not sought to draw evidence from other disciplines or other cases to try to make sense of those personal or family dramas; I have simply tried to peel back the layers to suggest what evidence we might have from which to begin such a process. In the course of doing this peeling, however, I hope that I have cast considerable light on the aims and methods of those whose testimonies of these cases have reached us and what may have shaped those records. This in turn has thrown light on the public significance of witchcraft and demonology. Far from being marginal to the culture and history of the period, I hope that I have shown that these episodes were significant, not just for what they reveal to us about the society in which they took place, but because they involved some of the most fundamental issues facing that society.

# Notes

## 1 Introduction

1. Barry, 'Introduction'; Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia*; Barry and Davies (eds), *Palgrave Advances*; Owen Davies, 'Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736–1951: brief historiography' (2007) at [www.cunningfolk.com](http://www.cunningfolk.com); Gaskill, 'Pursuit'. For the wider historiography of spirits, miracles, the 'disenchantment of the world' etc. see Walker, 'Cessation'; Marshall and Walsham (eds), *Angels*; Saler, 'Modernity'; Walsham, 'Miracles'; Walsham, 'Reformation'; Walsham, 'Invisible Helpers'.
2. Briggs, 'Many Reasons'. The main surveys are (for Europe) Levack, *Witch Hunt*; Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*; Behringer, *Witches*; (for England) Sharpe, *Instruments*; Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*; Sharpe (gen. ed.), *English Witchcraft*.
3. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*; Thomas, *Religion*; Lerner, *Enemies*; Wilson, *Magical Universe*; Briggs, *Witches of Lorraine*; Hutton, 'Anthropological and Historical Approaches'; Bever, *Realities*.
4. See Hodgkin, 'Gender', and for key texts on women: Lerner, *Witchcraft*; Roper, *Oedipus*; Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*; Purkiss, 'Women's Stories'; Purkiss, *Witch*; Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*; Sharpe, 'Women'; Goodare, 'Women'; Roper, *Witch Craze*. For masculinity see Gaskill, 'Devil'; Kent, 'Masculinity'; Rowlands (ed.), *Witchcraft*.
5. See Levack, 'Crime' and for key texts: Unsworth, 'Witchcraft'; Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Yorkshire*; Sharpe, *Instruments*; Sharpe, 'Devil'; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft in Early Modern Kent'; Gaskill, *Crime*; Gaskill, 'Witches and Witchcraft Prosecutions'; Durston, *Witchcraft*; Gaskill, 'Witches and Witnesses'; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and Evidence'; Newton and Bath (eds), *Witchcraft*; Sharpe, 'Witchcraft in the Early Modern Isle of Man'.
6. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 570. For a historiographical perspective on Thomas's work see Barry, 'Introduction' and Macfarlane, 'Civility'. 'That most intractable of issues, the reasons belief in witchcraft declined' (Sharpe, *Instruments*, p. 33) is the subject of Bostridge, 'Witchcraft'; Bostridge, *Witchcraft*; Sharpe, *Instruments*, pp. 211–302; Levack, 'Decline and End of Witchcraft'; Hunter, 'Witchcraft Controversy'; Hunter, 'Witchcraft and Decline'; Davies, 'Decriminalising'; Sneddon, *Witchcraft*. There is a particularly sophisticated literature on post-1660 cases and decline in Scotland: see Lerner, 'Two Late Scottish Witchcraft Tracts'; Lerner, *Enemies*; Henderson, 'Survival'; Cowan and Henderson, 'Last'; Levack, 'Great Scottish Witch Hunt'; Levack, 'Decline and End of Scottish Witch-hunting'; Wasser, 'Mechanical World-View'; Levack, *Witch-Hunting*; Maxwell-Stuart, *Abundance*; Maxwell-Stuart, 'Witchcraft'; Kidd, 'Scottish Enlightenment'.
7. See, for example, Merkel and Debus (eds), *Hermeticism*; Vickers (ed.), *Occult and Scientific Mentalities*; Webster, *From Paracelsus*; Hulme and Jordanova (eds), *Enlightenment*; Rousseau (ed.), *Languages*; Jacob, *Living*; Porter (ed.),

- Medicine*; Burns, *Age*; Shaw, *Miracle*. Crucial contributions to this development in relation to witchcraft are: MacDonald, 'Religion'; Harley, 'Mental Illness'; Hunter, 'Witchcraft Controversy'; Porter, 'Witchcraft'; Midelfort, *Exorcism*.
8. De Blecourt, 'Witchdoctors'; de Blecourt, 'On Continuation'; Davies, 'Healing Charms'; Davies, 'Cunning Folk in England'; Davies, 'Methodism'; Davies, 'Newspapers'; Davies, *Witchcraft*; Davies, *People*; Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'Witch-Craft'; Davies, 'Cunning Folk in the Medical Marketplace'; Davies, *Cunning Folk*; Davies and de Blecourt (eds), *Beyond*; Davies and de Blecourt (eds), *Witchcraft*; Waters, 'Belief'.
  9. Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*; Sharpe, *Instruments*; Davies, *Cunning Folk*.
  10. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*; Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials*; Holmes, 'Popular Culture?'; Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*; Clark, *Thinking*; Elmer, 'Towards a Politics'; Wilby, *Cunning Folk*; Wilby, *Visions*. For these issues in English demonology see: Oldridge, 'Protestant Conceptions'; Oldridge, *Devil*; Johnstone, 'Protestant Devil'; Johnstone, *Devil*.
  11. Clark, *Thinking*; Behringer, *Witches*. See also, in related areas: Davies, *Haunted*; Davies, *Grimoires*; Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*.
  12. Ginzburg, *Night Battles*; Ginzburg, *Myths*; Levi, *Inheriting Power*; Le Roy Ladurie, *Jasmin's Witch*; Muir and Ruggiero (eds), *Microhistory*; Levi, 'On Microhistory'; Ruggiero, *Binding Passions*. English examples include: Gregory, 'Witchcraft'; MacDonald (ed.), *Witchcraft*; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and Power'; Gilbert and Bunn, *Trial*; Sharpe, *Bewitching*; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*; Marshall, *Mother Leakey*; Almond, *Witches*; Ryrie, *Sorcerer's Tale*. For the latest European example see Robisheaux, *Last Witch*.
  13. See Gibson, 'Thinking Witchcraft'. Key examples are: Anglo (ed.), *Damned Art*; Rosenthal, *Salem Story*; Purkiss, 'Desire'; Rowlands, 'Telling'; Gibson, *Reading*; Clark (ed.), *Languages*; Gibson, 'Thomas Potts's'; Gibson, *Possession*; Gibson, *Witchcraft*.
  14. Pearson, 'Writing Witchcraft'; Jenkins, 'Continuity'; Magliocco, *Witching Culture* and, for Hutton: Hutton, *Triumph*; Hutton, 'Paganism'; Hutton, *Witches*; Evans and Green (eds), *Ten Years*.
  15. Gent, *Trial*; Timmons, 'Witchcraft'; Marshall, *Mother Leakey*. For Cornwall see Semmens, 'Usage'; Semmens, *Witch*. For Devon: Semmens, 'I will not go to the Devil'. For Dorset: Udall, 'Witchcraft'. For Somerset: Davies, *People*. For Wiltshire: Hunter, 'New Light' and Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Politics, and Memory'.
  16. Barry, 'South West'.
  17. An exception to the south-eastern focus of county studies is Poole (ed.), *Lancashire*. The fundamental sources for trials remain Ewen, *Witch Hunting* and Ewen, *Witchcraft*, used by Sharpe, *Instruments* pp. 112–14, 146–7; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and Evidence' at nn. 42, 51, 67, 157.
  18. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, p. 439; Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*; Cockburn (ed.), *Western Circuit*.
  19. Inderwick, *Side-Lights*, pp. 165, 171–4, 190–4. He notes that these figures excluded Bristol (for which there was always a separate commission) but I have no seen no evidence of any Bristol cases during this period.
  20. Notestein, *History*, pp. 219, 224, 254.
  21. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 537.



22. Thompson, *Wives*, pp. 102, 115, 185 onwards.
23. Sharpe, *Instruments*, pp. 77, 150, 152, 164, 223; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and Evidence'; Valletta, *Witchcraft*, pp. 224–35. Valletta lists no witches from Devon or Dorset, and only one from Cornwall, while mistakes include: p. 227 (Perry actually 1662); p. 232 (Carrier actually 1690, Castle actually 1653, Christian not Christopher Green and Ridwood not Richwood); p. 235 (Orchard actually 1658 and Tilling actually 1672); p. 248 (*Wonder of Wonders* listed under 1650 though dated 1662). See next chapter for other errors in Valletta's account of particular cases.
24. Devon: Cotton, *Gleanings*; Harte, 'Ecclesiastical and Religious Affairs'; Hamilton, *Quarter Session*; Roberts, *Recovery*. Dorset: Mansell-Pleydell, 'On Sorcery'; Davies (ed.), *Touchyng*; Jenkinson, 'Witchcraft' (on Grimmerston). Somerset: Bates Harbin (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions I, II and III*; Dawes (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions*. Wiltshire: Gomme (ed.), *Popular Superstitions*, pp. 281–91; Cunnington, *Records*; Underdown, *Revel*.
25. Kittredge, 'Case', reprinted as first chapter of Kittredge, *Witchcraft*.
26. Gray and Draisey, 'Witchcraft'; Thomas, *Religion*; Stieg, *Laud's Laboratory*; Quaife, *Wanton Wives*; Ingram, *Church Courts*.
27. Bower, *Doctor Lamb*; *Doctor Lamb's Darling*; More, *Antidote*; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Politics, and Memory'. For 1662 see: *Power of Witchcraft*; *True and Perfect Account*; *Truth Brought to Light*. For Beckington see the next chapter, n. 141. For the trial pamphlets in general see Gibson, *Reading* and (for the later ones) Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft* vol. 5.
28. Cornwall: *Return of Prayer*; *True Account*; Blight, *True and Impartial Account*, all discussed in Corey, 'Propaganda'. Devon: Marshall, 'Piety'; Marshall, *Mother Leakey*; Brink (ed.), *Life* and see also Flavel, *Pneumatologia*. Two eighteenth-century personal accounts of struggles with the demonic are: Bowdler, *Devil's Cloven-Foot* and Walker, *Awful Memento*.
29. Pitt, *Account*; Corey, 'Propaganda'; Spooner, *John Tregagle*; Marshall, 'Ann Jeffries'.
30. *True Relation*; *Wonderful and Strange Miracle*; Miles, *Wonder*; *Faithful Narrative*; *Demon of Marleborough*; *Narrative of Demon*; *Great News from the West of England*; *Strange and Wonderful News*, *Strange and Wonderful (yet True) Relation*; *Somersetshire Daemon*; *Somersetshire Wonder*; *Drummer of Tedworth*; *Great Mercy*; Rollins, *Pack*; Green, 'On some Somerset Chapbooks'. Walsham, *Providence* discusses the genres and lists many such works. Undated eighteenth-century examples are: *Great and Wonderful News*; *Satan's Decoy*; *Heaven's Judgement*; *The Prodigal Daughter, or Disobedient Lady Reclaim'd*; *The Prodigal Daughter, or the Disobedient Lady Reclaimed*. A salutary example is the different locations specified in *Timely Warning to All* (Bridgewater) and *Timely Warning to Rash* (Stepney), two otherwise identical stories.
31. Raymond (ed.), *Making*; *Anna Trapnel's Report*. See Friedman, 'Battle'; Raymond, *Pamphlets*; Peacey, *Politicians*; Stoye, 'Road'.
32. See Elmer, 'Saints', and examples in Besse, *Collection*; Penney (ed.), *Journal*; Cadbury (ed.), *George Fox's Book*; [Smith], *Gagg* (discussed in next chapter).
33. Burns, *Age*; Calamy, *Nonconformists Memorial*; Matthews (ed.), *Calamy*.
34. More, *Antidote*; More, *Collection*; Glanvill, *Saducismus*; Blagrave, *Astrological Practice*; Mather, *Essay*; Bovet, *Pandaemonium*; Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World*; R.B., *Kingdom*; Baxter, *Certainty*; Hale, *Collection*; Burthogge, *Essay*; *Copy of a*

- Letter*; Beaumont, *Treatise*; Aubrey, *Natural History*; Aubrey, *Three Prose Works*. See Hunter, *John Aubrey*; Redwood, *Reason*; Schaffer, 'Godly Men'; Mendyk, *Speculum*; Hunter, *Occult Laboratory*; Bath and Newton, "'Sensible Proof'"; Hunter, 'New Light'; Handley, *Visions*.
35. Turner, *Compleat History*; *Athenian Mercury* (1691–5); Dunton, *Life*; Berry, *Gender*.
  36. Examples of the retelling, in large part, of earlier stories include Boulton, *Compleat History*; *Mr Campbell's Packet*; Defoe, *Essay*; Defoe, *System*; *History of Apparitions*; *Life after Death*; Jones, *Relation*; Simpson, *Discourse*; Sibly, *Complete Illustration*. There are also satirical stories, for example, from Bath in 1782, *A Serious Alarm*.
  37. Barry, 'Press'; Davies, 'Newspapers'.
  38. Gilbert, *History*; Ferriar, *Essay*; Taylor, *Apparitions*; Priest, *Wonders*; Welby, *Signs*; Linton, *Witch Stories*; Roberts, *Social History*; Wright, *Narratives*; Gomme (ed.), *Popular Superstitions*. For two early-nineteenth-century cases in Dorset and Cornwall see Hole (ed.), *Witchcraft* and Semmens, 'I will not go to the Devil', discussing Heaton, *Extraordinary Affliction* and Heaton, *Farther Observations*.
  39. Paynter, *Cornish Witch-Finder*; Semmens, *Witch*; Baring-Gould, *Cornish*; Baring-Gould, *Bideford*; Karkeek, 'Devonshire'; Gordon, *Witchcraft*; Udal, *Dorsetshire*; Tongue, *Somerset Folklore*. For modern collections see (in descending order of scholarship): Westwood and Simpson, *Lore*; Brown, *Fate*; Coxhead, *Devil*; Knott, *Witches of Wessex*; Knott, *Witches of Dorset*; Legg, *Mysterious Dorset*; Legg, *Witches*; Dacombe, *Dorset*; Radford and Radford, *West Country*. For discussions of folklorists see: Newall (ed.), *Witch*; Dorson, *British Folklorists*; Simpson, 'Witches'; Simpson, 'Seeking'.

## 2 Robert Hunt and the Somerset Witches

1. For the history of the numerous first (1681 and 1682), 'second' (1682) and 'third' (1688, 1689 and 1700) editions of *Saducismus*, which form Wing G822, G822A, G823, G824, G824A, G825, G826 and G826A, plus a 'fourth edition' in 1726, see Glanvill, *Saducismus* ed. Parsons. My quotations are from the first 1681 edition unless otherwise indicated; there are no significant changes to the sections discussed here in the later editions, although these (especially the 1726 edition) introduce some minor changes in the spelling of proper names and a few errors. For Glanvill and More on witchcraft see: Prior, 'Joseph Glanvil'; Cope, *Joseph Glanvill*; Steneck, 'Ballad'; Jobe, 'Devil'; Jacob, *Henry Stubbe*, pp. 79–108; Hall, *Henry More*; Coudert, 'Henry More'; Hunter, 'Witchcraft Controversy'; Hunter, 'New Light'; Crocker, *Henry More*, chapter 9; Broad, 'Margaret Cavendish'; Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, pp. 275–82.
2. Cope, *Joseph Glanvill*, p. 93; Notestein, *History*, pp. 260, 273, 280.
3. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 127; Hutchinson, *Historical Essay*, p. 40.
4. Scott, *Letters*, p. 215; Wright, *Narratives*, vol. 2, p. 273 ('Hunt was ambitious of becoming another witch-finder general'); Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, p. 274.
5. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 335, 341, 353, 479; Thomas, *Religion*, p. 547. On witch-hunters in general, and Hopkins in particular, see Sharpe, 'Devil'; Maxwell-Stuart, *Witch Hunters*; Gaskill, *Witchfinders*; Timbers, 'Witches' Sect'.

6. Scott, *Letters*, pp. 215–16; Murray, *Witch-Cult*; Tongue, *Somerset Folklore*, pp. 225–6; ‘People without a parish: Witchcraft, a Somerset thing’ at <http://bornofsilence.webs.com/>.
7. Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, pp. 274–5; Ewen, *Witchcraft*, p. 124; Quaife, *Wanton Wives*, p. 31.
8. Valletta, *Witchcraft*, quotations at pp. 176, 178–9. Errors include: claiming that Hunt ‘presided over’ their trial at Taunton, which he misdates by a year to early 1664 (155), assuming wrongly that they would have been tried at the quarter-sessions, for which records do not survive (176) (in fact it would have been an assize trial, though no records of those survive until 1670 either); misplacing the location of the searchers (175); misattributing a passage about the confessions being unforced, which comes not from the local rector’s testimony, but from the editor’s commentary (175–6); stating that several witches were ‘executed in this trial’ (176) – whereas we have no verdict in this case, merely the statement in *Saducismus* that Style was found guilty but died in gaol before execution.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 176, 180, 177, 183, 185–6, 187, 177.
10. Hunter, ‘Witchcraft’; Hunter, *Occult Laboratory*; Hunter, ‘New Light’.
11. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 128; TNA SP 29/115 fo. 29, 17 March 1665 (uncharacteristically, Ewen missed this reference). The printed summary (*CSPD 1664–5*, p. 257) omits the detail of the ‘pranck’. Two 1668 editions of Glanvill, *Blow* are recorded in Wing, G799–800.
12. W.L.W., ‘Witchcraft’, reproduced in Gomme (ed.), *Popular Superstitions*, pp. 274–6; SRO DD/DT/28, reproduced apparently in *Somerset Year Book for 1917–18* (I have not seen the latter); Barnes, ‘On the Maze’; Sotheby’s Sale Catalogue 03412 (20 November 2003), lot 343 (sold for £1320). I am grateful to the late Robert Lenkiewicz for his kindness in showing me this and other items in his collection and allowing Nancy Cooper to study this text before his death, and to Nancy Cooper for her help with this and other research on the Somerset background to the case.
13. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 126.
14. Glanvill, *Philosophical Endeavour*, 1–2; Glanvill, *Saducismus*, 3–4. The 1666–8 texts are Wing G817A, G818, G819, G832 and 832A.
15. Glanvill, *Philosophical Endeavour*, p. 30, and compare pp. 22, 25 and 28.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 22, 25, 20–1.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 15, 33.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17, 29.
19. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 156.
20. Glanvill, *Blow*, contents page and p. 146.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 154; Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 125: Barnes adds (after ‘before us’) ‘who were also present at the tryall’.
22. Glanvill, *Blow*, p. 155; Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 126.
23. Glanvill, *Blow*, p. 154. For the judge see ‘Glynne’ ODNB. Glynne was a leading Parliamentarian and then Cromwellian but survived the Restoration to be knighted in late 1660. The other judge at the assizes, held on 22 March, was Hugh Wyndham, from a local family known to the Hunts: Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*, p. 49. The Wyndham family owned the manor of Stoke Trister (see SRO DD/PH/41, pp. 93, 104 and Dunning (ed.), *VCH VII*, p. 204) during the lifetime of Sir Hugh Wyndham (d. 1684). In July

- 1666 the ministers, churchwardens and inhabitants of Stoke Trister petitioned the sessions regarding a grant by Hugh Wyndham, as lord of the manor, to give a cottage for life to Thomas Forwood, a 'poor aged man': Dawes (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions*, p. 16. For examples of Hunt working with various Wyndhams see *ibid.*, p. 127; *CSPD 1673–5*, p. 183 (TNA SP 29/360 fo. 39, 28 Feb. 1674); *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries*, XXIV (1943–6), p. 180.
24. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, pp. 118–25, quotations at pp. 119–20. Barnes has Coward asking, 'How do you do my honey?'
  25. *Ibid.*, pp. 120–5 and 4<sup>th</sup> edition (1726), p. 288.
  26. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, pp. 126–7.
  27. *Ibid.*, pp. 191–202, with quotation at p. 202 referring to Glanvill, *Blow*, pp. 149–50. 'Archer' ODNB shows that later that year Archer was made a judge of common pleas and knighted. See also n. 51. In 1669 Hunt was one of three men seeking to prosecute coiners and clippers in Somerset and Wiltshire who petitioned for a pardon for a Thomas Huntley of Shepton Mallet who could discover other offenders; the order to the local JPs to release Huntley in 1670 was 'on the report of Sir John Archer, justice of common pleas' (*CSPD 1668–9*, p. 657; *CSPD 1670*, p. 544).
  28. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 203. The confession to the other JP (*ibid.*, pp. 194–5) was 'That she had often been tempted by the Devil to be a witch, but never consented. That one evening she walkt out about a mile from her own house, and there came riding towards her three persons upon three broom-staves, born up about a yard and a half from the ground. Two of them she formerly knew, which was a witch and a wizzard that were hanged for witchcraft several years before. The third person she knew not. He came in the shape of a black man, and tempted her to give him her soul, or to that effect, and to express it by pricking her finger and giving her name in blood in token of it, and told her that she had revenge against several persons that had wronged her, but could not bring her purpose to pass without his help, and that upon the terms aforesaid he would assist her to be revenged against them. But she said she did not consent to it.'
  29. *Ibid.*, p. 128. Lambert's deposition is dated 26 January in *Saducismus* (30 January in Barnes), though it refers to events on 27 January.
  30. *Ibid.*, pp. 127–8, 134–6, 143.
  31. SRO DD/DT/28; W.L.W., 'Witchcraft'.
  32. W.L.W., 'Witchcraft'. Foarwood's examination is dated 7 February in both Barnes and *Saducismus* but 11 March in W.L.W. Ewen (*Witchcraft*, p. 344 n. 1) first noted that Foarwood was the correct spelling by referring to hearth tax entries and see n. 23 above. White is listed as tithingman in the 1664/5 hearth tax lists (*Dwelly's Hearth Tax*, pp. 94–5).
  33. Hunter, 'New Light', pp. 331–7.
  34. A brief biography of Hunt appears in Henning (ed.), *House*, vol. 2, pp. 619–20 and in Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*, pp. 57–8. For the family see Bysshe, *Visitation*, pp. 162–3, although he is said here to be aged 60 in 1672, but at his death in 1680 is said to be about 71! His will is TNA Prob 11/363, summarised in Brown, *Abstracts* 4th, p. 73. For his electoral activity before 1660 see *Journal of the House of Commons* 7 (1651–60), p. 615 and Dunning (ed.), *VCH VII*, p. 151.

35. See Henning (ed.), *House*, vol. 1, pp. 721 (Broderip), 734–5 (Browne), 746–7 (Bull), and vol. 2, pp. 618–19 (John Hunt), 704 (Lacy); Cruickshanks et al. (eds), *House*, vol. 3, p. 398 (Bull) and vol. 4, pp. 443–4 (Hunt).
36. The memorandum book is printed in Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*, pp. 57–80. The letters are in Bristol University Library, Bull family of Shapwick MSS DM 155 (hereafter BUL DM 155). For the Bull family see Nott and Hasler (eds), *Wells*, pp. 952–3; *Somerset Villages*, pp. 7–8 and 28–32; Dunning (ed.), *VCH VIII*, pp. 129, 168; Colby (ed.), *Visitation*, p. 17; Bysshe, *Visitation*, pp. 89–90. Barnes, *Somerset*, p. 135 notes that Bull was considered ‘unfit’ for sheriff in 1639. For the Lacys see Brown, *Abstracts 3<sup>rd</sup>*, p. 11n; Bysshe, *Visitation*, pp. 98–9.
37. See SRO DD/POT/162 and DD/BR/bn/37 for Hunt as deputy lieutenant in 1666 and 1667; Henning (ed.), *House*, vol. 1, pp. 375–6 and vol. 2, pp. 618–20.
38. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 746; *Journal of the House of Commons* vol. 3, p. 249 and vol. 5 (1646–8), p. 10; Underdown, *Somerset*, pp. 39, 47, 69, 124; Bullen, ‘Somerset’, pp. 19–20.
39. Underdown, *Somerset*, pp. 176, 179–80, 182, 186–9, 190–2; Bates Harbin (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions Records III*, p. xxi; Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*, pp. 69–73; Hunt ‘350 Years’; Firth and Rait (eds), *Acts*, vol. 2, pp. 1331–2 and 1442. *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 7 (1651–60), pp. 553–4 provides evidence for a case against John Browne of Ilchester for seditious words against Parliament, taken by Hunt and John Cary on 29 May 1657 at Castle Cary (SRO Q/SR/95/176) and the next day by Hunt at Compton Pauncefoot. SRO Q/SR/95 shows that the earliest Hunt acted as a JP was February 1657.
40. Henning (ed.), *House*, vol. 1, pp. 374–6, 747 and vol. 2, pp. 619, 704; Cruickshanks et al. (eds), *House*, vol. 3, p. 398 and vol. 4, pp. 443–4.
41. Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*, pp. 74–6.
42. BUL DM 155, nos 125, 128 and 94.
43. *Ibid.*, nos 136, 143, 154, 177.
44. For the Brownes see Squibb (ed.), *Visitation of Dorset*, p. 8; Brown, *Abstracts 3<sup>rd</sup>*, p. 65; Cliffe, *Puritan Gentry*, pp. 7, 26, 48, 91. The monuments in Compton Pauncefoot and Speckington are described in Collinson, *History*, vol. 1, p. 77 and vol. 3, p. 201 (p. 428 notes the Bull memorial at Shapwick).
45. Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*, pp. 61–2. For the Ewins see Colby (ed.), *Visitation*, p. 36; Bysshe, *Visitation*, p. 69 (showing that the Ewins were also related to the recusant Keynes family of Compton Pauncefoot) and pp. 162–3 for marriage of John Hunt (Robert’s father) to Katherine daughter of John Ewins of Wincanton; Dunning (ed.), *VCH VII*, p. 229; Green (ed.) *Calendar*, vol. 4, for 22 December 1653 John Ewins recusant refers to an estate of his bought in the names of John and Robert Hunt.
46. BUL DM 155, nos 125, 96.
47. SRO Q/Si/145/14 (1673 case). For the 1657 case see Bates Harbin (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions III*, pp. 339–40, and SRO Q/SR/95/178; Besse, *Collection*, vol. 1, pp. 578–82, based on SRO DD/SFR/8/1, fos. 20v and 21r. For the later cases see Whitehead, *Brief Account*, p. 72; W. Mead, *Particular Account*, p. 21; Besse, *Collection*, vol. 1, p. 613 (which also records Henry Bull and Thomas Mompesson (see n. 138) taking out actions against Quakers). In 1658, the Quaker John Anderdon of Bridgewater was accused by the parish clerk

Robert Holcomb of having been ‘among the witches’ and ‘the wife of one Andrews a zealous Presbyterian said that John Anderdon was turned from God to the Devil’ after saying which she ‘soon fell into a languishing condition, pined away and died’ (ibid., p. 584, and see also SRO DD/SFR/8/1/23r). In 1657–8 the Quakers disrupted the services of James Strong ‘priest of Ilminster’ (Besse, *Collection*, p. 583) which may explain the tone of Strong’s *Justice Justified* (1657), two assize sermons he preached in Somerset in March and August 1657, in which he calls ‘anabaptists and libertines’ ‘these satanized monsters that despise government and speak evil of dignities’ (p. 5) and attacks the ‘bedlam spirit’ of Anabaptists and Quakers ‘that have learned a religion to justify their rebellion’ (p. 19). No Quakers living in Stoke Trister or Brewham are mentioned in Morland (ed.), *Somerset*, but there are a couple at Wincanton and many at Shepton Mallet.

48. This is based on the many cases involving Hunt in SRO Q/SR/95-142; his last recorded case is Q/SR/142/30 heard at Compton Pauncefoot on 27 December 1679. Numerous examples of his administrative work can be found in Bates Harbin (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions III* and Dawes (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions. Dwelly’s Records of Somerset*, pp. 49, 135–6 and Stoate (ed.), *Dwelly’s Index* show Hunt and William Bull approving hearth tax exemptions for both Brewham and Stoke Trister (as well as much of the surrounding area) in 1670 and 1674.
49. For Cary see Stoate (ed.), *Somerset Protestation*, p. 206; Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*, pp. xvi, xxi, 33, 44, 59; Brown, *Abstracts 3<sup>rd</sup>*, p. 93 (John Cary will of 13 June 1668 proved 13 February 1669, possibly son of Thomas Cary of Castle Cary gent whose will is proved February 1650). Bates Harbin (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions III* shows Bovet and Cary as both sequestration commissioners in 1650 (p. xxvi) and Cary as a JP in October 1649 (p. 99) and in July 1654 Cary was one of the quorum (p. xxi), while for Cary acting with Bovet see pp. 237, 240, 243, 252, 267. SRO Q/SR/87/1 is Cary’s first deposition acting as a JP on 9 November 1653; his last is Q/SR/111/86 dated 9 January 1669. For militia see Firth and Rait (eds), *Acts*, vol. 2, pp. 1331–2, 1442. For examples of Hunt and Cary acting together after the Restoration see Dawes (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions*, pp. 36, 51, 56.
50. Chapple pardon is Q/SR/88/18 19/4/1653, reported in Bates Harbin (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions III*, pp. lv and 206. There are several other cases involving accusations of witchcraft or conjuring in the late 1650s, none of them apparently involving Hunt. One of those accused is Thomas Bartlett of Kingsdon. SRO/Q/SR/96/113 reports that Johan Hilborne, calling him a witch, threatened to set his house on fire and said that he had bewitched others and carried the devil on his back (22 July 1658). Hunt did not take this deposition, but a week later he did report a story about a suspicious fire at Bartlett’s home, during which Bartlett was seen laughing (Q/SR/96/111 and 112). Bartlett was also suspected of theft, both of a stock of bees found in his garden in 1655 (Q/SR/92/51) and of a sheet, which led to his imprisonment at Ilchester in late 1674 (Q/SR/121/31, 32 and 34).
51. BUL DM 155, no. 95; TNA SP 29/96, fo. 113 (the summary in *CSPD 1663–4*, p. 552, misreads the final phrase as ‘power to kill that way’); Ewen, *Witchcraft*, p. 457; *CSPD 1661–2*, p. 539 (1 November 1662), *CSPD 1663–4*, p. 296 (12 December 1663) and *CSPD 1664–5*, p. 44 (26 October 1664). Montacute was four miles from Ilchester, and Edward Phelips (as he is generally known,

- 1638–99) had defeated Hunt as MP for Ilchester in 1661; they stood together unsuccessfully for the seat in 1679 (Henning (ed.), *House*, vol. 3, pp. 236–7). Another possibility is that he is referring to the Julian Cox trial (see nn. 27–8 above), which More states was at Taunton ‘about summer assizes 1663’. However, the young maid afflicted in that case did not die and Cox was executed ‘without any confession of the fact’, although she did confess that she ‘had often been tempted by the Devil to be a witch, but never consented’ (Glanvill, *Saducismus*, pp. 191, 198, 194), so this seems unlikely.
52. BUL DM 155, no. 98. For such attitudes among magistrates and generally see Gaskill, ‘Displacement’; Gaskill, ‘Reporting’; Gaskill, *Crime*; Walsham, *Providence*. Hunt’s treatment of suspects is also revealed in TNA SP 29/101, fo. 64 (CSPD 1663–4, p. 666), writing 13 Aug. 1664 to Secretary Bennet about a group of men suspected of burglary at the exchequer at Taunton, in association with a potential rising (in which one of the witnesses was a Henry Witch of Taunton!). Hunt discusses how to obtain ‘further discovery of the plot’. Three men ‘have their heads in a halter’ but though ‘tis likely when the Assizes drawes nigh and they see noe hopes, they may confesse, they are yet stubborne. I shall lett slipp noe opportunity to bottom the designe.’ In particular ‘I have some hope to worke upon Kampe, when he last went from mee he wept, but when they return to their fellowes in the gaole, they harden them again and really I thinke if I had not removed the Martens from their fellowes I should never have gott anything from them.’
  53. For Brodrepps see Hutchins, *History*, vol. 2, p. 159; Squibb (ed.), *Visitation of Dorset*, p. 7; Brown, *Abstracts* 4<sup>th</sup>, pp. 116–18; Royal Commission, *Inventory*, p. 154. For their Somerset properties, including at Ditchat, see Dunning (ed.), *VCH* VI, p. 253 and SRO DD/L1 and DD/S/Wh/31; Hawkins (ed.), *Sales*, pp. 12–13.
  54. BUL DM 155, no. 103. A *knack* is a ‘toy, trinket or trifle’ (OED).
  55. Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, vol. 1, p. 71; Collinson, *History*, vol. 2, p. 77; Dunning (ed.), *VCH* III, pp. 170–2; TNA Prob 11/354, summarised in Brown, *Abstracts* 5<sup>th</sup>, p. 73.
  56. SRO Q/SR/143/1, dated 26 March and 21 April 1680; SRO DD/BR/vi/28, DD/FS/24/6/1, DD/GB/128; Bysshe, *Visitation*, p. 71 (aged 28 in 1672); *Journal of the House of Commons* vol. 9 1667–87, pp. 579–81.
  57. See above nn. 23, 27–8, 51; Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 442–6.
  58. Barnes (ed.), *Somerset Assize Orders*, p. 28, item 93; Stieg, *Laud’s Laboratory*, pp. 299–300. See above n. 11 for the possible reference to Style as ‘the old witch’ in 1665. Curiously, there had also been an earlier Elizabeth Stile accused of witchcraft, as one of the ‘witches of Windsor’ in 1580: see Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 152–4 for a summary of that case.
  59. Bates Harbin (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions I*, pp. 96–7, based on SRO Q/SR/16/96–7, no. 59 of the sessions rolls for 1612–13. In Bates Harbin (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions II*, p. 70 a Nicholas Hobbes ‘husbandman’ is named in 1628 from Mark, about five miles west of Henton.
  60. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 129.
  61. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
  62. Bysshe, *Visitation*, pp. 16–17; Sweetman, *Memorials*, pp. 8–9.
  63. BUL DM 155, no. 98. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, pp. 151–2 omits Swanton’s first name in reporting Duke’s case. In March 1649 Swanton was one of the two

judges at the Taunton Assizes when the court received evidence against Anne Meare, a widow of Minehead who was ‘suspected to be a witch’: they ordered ‘diverse other witnesses’ be examined and ‘yf they shall see cause to doe the same’ be brought to ‘testify against her concerning the matter’ at the next assizes (Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*, p. 30). For Swanton see: Henning (ed.), *House*, vol. 3, pp. 517–18; Bysshe, *Visitation*, pp. 15–16; Dunning (ed.), *VCH VII*, pp. 10 and 215–16; Barnes (ed.), *Somerset Assize Orders*, p. xxxiv; Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*, pp. xiv–xv; Bates Harbin (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions III*, p. xxi. In 1664–5 ‘Fran. Swanton gent’ is listed third in the hearth tax list for Wincanton, though with only four hearths (*Dwelly’s Hearth Tax*, p. 85). In SRO Q/SR/101/34 William Ivey is reported on 26 November 1661 as saying that Francis Swanton, constable of Wincanton, was ‘as very a knave as any in the counties of Wiltshire, Dorset or Somerset’; in 1664 Hunt certified that an Edward Ivey ‘late of Wincanton’ ‘had done good service’ in efforts ‘to discover malefactors’ and that his testimony at the next assizes was ‘very necessary’ for their conviction (*CSPD 1663–4*, p. 602).

64. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, pp. 137, 138, 40 gives Ligh as ‘High’ and Motcombe as ‘Matcomb’.
65. *Ibid.*, pp. 148, 150, giving Lye as ‘Lie’.
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 156–7.
67. *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 163, giving Knapp as ‘Knap’.
68. Barnes, *Somerset*, pp. 157–9; Sharp, *In Contempt*, pp. 243–5; Dunning (ed.), *VCH VII*, pp. 15–16, 18, 185–6, 201.
69. *CSPD 1629–31*, p. 526 (4 March 1631); Havinden, *Somerset*, pp. 234–7.
70. Hutchins, *History*, vol. 3, pp. 622, 632, 649; Sharp, *In Contempt*, pp. 87–9, 127–9, 224–42.
71. Hutchins, *History*, vol. 3, p. 630; Taylor, *Dorset*, pp. 155–6; Underdown, *Revel*, pp. 96–9, 160–2, 198; SRO Q/SR/93/100. A John Thicke is the ‘convicter’ of a series of conventicles in Frome Selwood in 1673 (Q/Si/145), but a John Thicke of Wincanton yeoman also participated in Monmouth’s rebellion, along with 3 Bollsters of Stoke Trister, 3 Vinings of Wincanton (and 15 other Wincanton men), a John White of Kilmington yeoman and 8 men from Shepton Mallet (Wigfield (ed.), *Monmouth Rebels*, pp. 16, 170, 178, 185).
72. Squibb (ed.), *Visitation of Dorset*, pp. 36–7, 94; Hutchins, *History*, vol. 3, p. 162 and vol. 4, pp. 305, 307, 312; Dunning (ed.), *VCH VII*, pp. 88, 111; *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries IV* (1895), pp. 355–7, 375; Bate, *Declaration*, p. lxxv.
73. Squibb (ed.), *Visitation of Dorset*, pp. 74–5; Hutchins, *History*, vol. 3, pp. 628–9; Sharp, *In Contempt*, pp. 98–9, 227, 230–1; Henning (ed.), *House*, vol. 3, pp. 704–5; Cornwall RO PB/1/539.
74. Howard (ed.), *Axminster Ecclesiastica*; [Smith], *Gagg*, ‘A Memorable Advertisment from Dorsetshire’ in ‘To the Reader’, p. 3 (summarised in Blome, *Fanatick History*, pp. 117–18); *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries I* (1890), p. 225; Matthews (ed.), *Calamy*, p. 26; Elmer, ‘Saints’, pp. 151–2.
75. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, pp. 137, 139, 149.
76. Matthews (ed.), *Calamy*, pp. 36–7; Dunning (ed.), *VCH VII*, p. 207; Bate, *Declaration*, p. lxxviii.
77. Matthews (ed.), *Calamy*, pp. 6, 47; Bate, *Declaration*, p. xlvi.



78. *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries* IV (1895), pp. 248–9 and see pp. 247–9, 297–9, 343–6 for more examples (many of them from the Shaftesbury area), taken from the *Annus Mirabilis* series discussed in Burns, *Age*; Dunning (ed.), *VCH* VII, p. 228; Matthews (ed.), *Calamy*, p. 422.
79. Mather, *Essay*, p. 185.
80. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, pp. 138–41, 149–50, 152.
81. Sharpe, *Instruments*, p. 77.
82. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, pp. 139, 148.
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 151.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 149.
85. *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 151 (in Barnes Style begins ‘a good boy’).
86. *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 151 (in Barnes Style’s phrase is written ‘rent’em torment’em’).
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 138–40, 151.
88. *Ibid.*, pp. 138, 139, 141.
89. *Ibid.*, pp. 148–9.
90. *Ibid.*, pp. 156–7, 162.
91. *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 163.
92. *Ibid.*, pp. 163, 164–5.
93. *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 152, 157.
94. *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 149, 157.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
96. *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 163–4.
97. Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, p. 274.
98. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 140 has minor differences from Barnes.
99. In *ibid.*, p. 141 ‘named’ becomes ‘mentioned’.
100. In *ibid.*, p. 140 the final passage is rendered ‘by these they can mischief cattle, and by cursing without touching; but neither without the Devil’s leave’.
101. *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 148.
102. *Ibid.*, pp. 137, 152.
103. In *ibid.*, pp. 156–7 the final phrase is rendered ‘with which she bought bread in Brewham’.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
106. In *ibid.*, p. 151 the cat is ‘of a dunnish colour, which is as smooth as a want’.
107. In *ibid.*, p. 141 ‘or the like’ is omitted.
108. *Ibid.*, pp. 136–7.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
110. *Ibid.*, pp. 144–5.
111. In *ibid.*, pp. 145–6, ‘nor did any blood issue out of the said place’ is omitted.
112. *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 128.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
114. In *ibid.*, pp. 147–8 ‘which was the Devill’ is omitted and the toad is ‘a great black toad’.
115. *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 142.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 134. For Court see Bysshe, *Visitation*, p. 107; Brown, *Abstracts* 3<sup>rd</sup>, p. 14.

117. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, pp. 130, 142.
118. *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 147.
119. *Ibid.*, pp. 156, 153–4, 159–60, 161–2, 162–5.
120. *Ibid.*, pp. 156–9.
121. Bernard's career is summarised in 'Bernard' ODNB and see also Dredge, *Writings and Stieg, Laud's Laboratory*, pp. 105–7, 202–3. For 1626 and his writings on witchcraft see Wright, *Narrative*, vol. 2, pp. 139–43 (citing B.L. Additional MSS 36674, fo. 189); Notestein, *History*, pp. 234–6; Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, pp. 273–4, 564 nn. 142, 146; Ewen, *Witchcraft*, p. 452; Thomas, *Religion*, p. 653; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and Evidence', pp. 43–5, 52.
122. Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*, pp. 74–6.
123. Matthews (ed.), *Calamy*, p. 6; 'Alleine' ODNB.
124. Sharpe, *Instruments*, pp. 94, 100–1. For the 1612 case see Gibson, 'Thomas Potts's'.
125. Bernard, *Guide*, p. 263.
126. *Ibid.*, pp. 253–7.
127. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 134.
128. *Ibid.*, pp. 219–24, 268–77 (More wrongly assumes the latter case is in Somerset).
129. Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Politics, and Memory'.
130. For More's later views on the case see *Collection*, 'Scholia on the Antidote against Atheism', pp. 165 (on the 'strange impudence' of a 'certain physician of Salisbury' who a few years after denied the truth of the narration) and 175 (on Bodenham and witches turning into hares). For Goddard: Henning (ed.), *House*, vol. 2, p. 402. For Bower: Bower, *Doctor Lamb*; Squibb (ed.), *Visitation of Dorset*, pp. 5–6.
131. W.L.W., 'Witchcraft', p. 256.
132. *Demon of Marleborough*; Rollins, *Pack*, pp. 172–8.
133. Henning (ed.), *House*, vol. 2, p. 401; Brown, *Abstracts* 5<sup>th</sup>, pp. 37–8; Williams and Thomson (eds), *Marlborough*, nos 184, 209, 222; Crawley (ed.), *VCH XII*, p. 144.
134. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, pp. 209–15. 'An Account of the Second Edition', included in all later editions, discusses further evidence in the Goddard case, dismissing claims that 'a waggish fellow' had impersonated Aven to play a trick on Goddard. The case is also summarised from Glanvill in Mather, *Essay*, pp. 235–9 and in Turner, *Compleat History*, pp. 36–7, with Turner's own comments on how, as an Oxford student, he heard the 'relation come forth to the Vice Chancellor' and was confirmed by a Merton fellow who visited the place and 'had this very story fully attested'.
135. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, pp. 216–19; *Drummer of Tedworth*, pp. 16, 38, 39–48.
136. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 105. This episode does not occur in the earlier version found in Glanvill, *Blow*, pp. 115–44: see Hunter, 'New Light' for the definitive account of this and other aspects of Glanvill's coverage of the case.
137. Baxter, *Certainty*, pp. 41–2, 40. For Baxter's dealings with Glanvill see their letters in Keeble and Nuttall (eds), *Calendar*, vol. 2.
138. Hunter, 'New Light'; Bysshe, *Visitation*, p. 47; Dunning (ed.), *VCH VII*, p. 9; *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries* IV (1895), pp. 355–7; SRO Q/SR/172/31-32 and 173/10-11; 'Mompesson' ODNB.

139. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, pp. 109–10. Glanvill, *Blow*, pp. 137–8 simply refers to a ‘very sober and intelligent’ ‘gentleman’.
140. Colby (ed.), *Visitation*, pp. 50–1 and Bysshe, *Visitation*, pp. 112–13, 115–16 cover several families of Hills.
141. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 376–7, 445; Hutchinson, *Historical Essay*, p. 42; Baxter, *Certainty*, pp. 74–80; *Great News from the West of England*; Turner, *Compleat History*, pp. 30–1.
142. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 109. The same story appears in Glanvill, *Blow*, pp. 137–8, but Hill and Compton are not named.
143. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 110. A briefer version in Glanvill, *Blow*, p. 137 simply says ‘the perfect appearance of his wife’.
144. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 110; Glanvill, *Blow*, p. 138.
145. SRO DD/HN/2/6/12; Colby (ed.), *Visitation*, p. 29; Brown, *Abstracts* 3<sup>rd</sup>, pp. 103–4 and 4<sup>th</sup>, p. 130; Hawkins (ed.), *Sales*, pp. 55, 83, 111, 122; Stoate (ed.), *Somerset Protestation*, pp. 147–8, 280.
146. Glanvill, *Saducismus*, p. 110.
147. *Ibid.*, p. 133. Barnes has a slight variation in which the neighbour ‘would say nothing and be gone’. In the 1664/5 hearth tax lists, Richard ‘Viminge’ has two hearths but is marked as ‘not rated to church nor poore by reason of [his] povertie’ (*Dwelly’s Hearth Tax*, p. 94). SRO DD/SE/49/4 contains five documents in a libel case between Roger White and Matthew Vyninge and his wife Edith from 1666–7. The Vyninges had supposedly called White a witch and accused him of keeping the company of witches. Matthew ‘Viminge’ of Wincanton had three hearths in 1664/5 (*Dwelly’s Hearth Tax*, p. 88). There were numerous Vinings in this area.
148. Hunter, ‘New Light’, pp. 320, 332 n. 70, 343, 345.
149. *Ibid.*, p. 345. If one thinks that the poltergeist phenomena might have been contrived by Drury and others, then Compton could even have been implicated, hoping to obtain a reward for ‘solving’ the case, though there is no evidence that this offer ever reached the Mompesson family.
150. Glanvill, *Philosophical Endeavour*, p. 14; W.L.W., ‘Witchcraft’, pp. 256–7.
151. Higginson, *Brief Relation*, pp. 11–12. See Elmer, ‘Saints’, p. 147 for Higginson’s attacks on George Fox.

### 3 The Trial of the Bideford Witches

1. Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, p. 43; Ewen, *Witchcraft*, p. 444. Hutchinson, *Historical Essay*, p. 41 notes the three ‘confess’d themselves witches, but died with good prayers in their mouths. I suppose these are the last three that have been hanged in England’.
2. *True and Impartial Relation*, ‘To the Reader’; Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, pp. 42–3, 98–111; Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 441–6; Sharpe, *Instruments*, pp. 108–13, 119–24; Gaskill, ‘Witchcraft and Evidence’.
3. Cooper, ‘Background’; Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft vol. 5*; Gent, *Trial*; Timmons, ‘Witchcraft’. I have not consulted either W.J. Bulman, ‘Mothers of Wickedness: Authority and the Management of Witchcraft in Devon 1558–1702’ (MA thesis, Washington University, St Louis, Missouri, 2002) or Kevin Stagg, ‘Port in a Storm: Witchcraft and Immunity in Restoration Bideford’ (MA thesis, Cardiff University, date unknown).

4. Mather, *Essay*, p. 186.
5. Boulton, *Compleat History*, vol. 1, pp. 216–54; Watkins, *Essay*, pp. 46–8, 233–68, quotations from pp. 47, 267–8; *Cobbett's Complete Collection*, vol. 8, cols 1017–39. For Boulton see Sharpe (ed.), *English Witchcraft* vol. 6; for Watkins, 'Watkins' ODNB. The pamphlet (and Deacon's) is also reprinted in Karkeek, 'Devonshire'.
6. *Black's Guide*, p. 149; Linton, *Witch Stories*, p. 298; Grenville, *History*, pp. 74–5; Baring-Gould, *Bideford*, pp. 22–5; Goaman, *Old Bideford*, p. 59; Christie, *North Devon*, pp. 1–2; Christie and Grant, *Book*, p. 96 and revised edition, pp. 103–4 (quotation p. 103); 'The Bideford witches' online at <http://www.devon.greatbritishlife.co.uk/article/the-bideford-witches-devon-history-heritage-5684> It also features in numerous popular books on witchcraft, for example Radford and Radford, *West Country*, pp. 52, 62, 87.
7. *Tedrake's Illustrated Guide*, pp. 62–70.
8. Gent, *Trial*, pp. 118–19; Fielder, *History*, pp. 90–5.
9. Bruce Seymour, 'The trial of Temperance Lloyd, Susanna Edwards and Mary Tremble for practising witchcraft at Bideford' (1938) in North Devon Athenaeum DM55/345/SEY; *Western Morning News* 27 November 1939, p. 8.
10. [http://community.livejournal.com/exeter\\_uni/8451.html#cutid1](http://community.livejournal.com/exeter_uni/8451.html#cutid1); [www.bbc.co.uk/devon/content/articles/2006/08/10/witches\\_of\\_bideford\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/devon/content/articles/2006/08/10/witches_of_bideford_feature.shtml); <http://www.thisisnorthdevon.co.uk/leisure/Hallowe-en-events-North-Devonarticle-432644-details/article/html>; <http://www.southmoltonmuseum.org/Contents/Text/Index.asp?SiteId=810&SiteExtra=20512866&TopNavId=814&NavSideId=11282>.
11. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bideford\\_witch\\_trial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bideford_witch_trial); <http://www.thorngent.eclipse.co.uk/bidefordwitches/index.html>; [http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/democracymunities/deliveringservices/directorates\\_and\\_departments/chief\\_executive\\_s/communication/news\\_service/press-releases/press\\_exeter\\_witchcraft\\_trials.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/democracymunities/deliveringservices/directorates_and_departments/chief_executive_s/communication/news_service/press-releases/press_exeter_witchcraft_trials.htm)
12. [http://www.travelchannel.com/TV\\_shows/Most\\_Haunted/ci.Exeter\\_old\\_Courts.show?vgnextfmt=show](http://www.travelchannel.com/TV_shows/Most_Haunted/ci.Exeter_old_Courts.show?vgnextfmt=show)
13. <http://www.pardonthewitches.com/>
14. Thompson, *Wives*, pp. 119–25. Other coverage includes: Notestein, *History*, pp. 270–2; Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, pp. 590–1; Summers, *Geography*, pp. 151–3; Ashton, *Devil*, pp. 268–72; Maple, *Dark World*, pp. 116–18; Fraser, *Weaker Vessel*, pp. 125–9; Burns, *Witch Hunts*, pp. 32–3; James Sharpe, 'Exeter Witches' in Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, pp. 336–7.
15. Valletta, *Witchcraft*, pp. 48, 186–8, 204, 215; Sharpe, *Instruments*, pp. 187–8, 226–7, 231–2, 252, 334; Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, pp. 75, 125–8.
16. Gaskill, *Crime*, pp. 90–3; Durston, pp. 367–9; Bostridge, *Witchcraft*, pp. 88–93; Elmer, 'Towards a Politics'; Newton and Bath (eds), *Witchcraft*.
17. Timmons, 'Witchcraft'.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 306, 320.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 327, 328, 307, 312, 328, 329–30. Timmons seems to rely heavily on Bostridge's view that 'witchcraft trials remained an important weapon in the Tory arsenal' (314) and on a misreading of the comparison by Thomas Long and other Devon Tories of witchcraft to the sin of rebellion, which does not involve them endorsing specific witchcraft trials, as he claims (323–4).

20. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, p. 442; Gent, *Trial*, pp. 82–3.
21. *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 16, 19.
22. NDRO 1064 Q/SO1, fo.141r, reproduced in Gent, *Trial*, p. 31; *True and Impartial Relation*, p. 17.
23. NDRO 1064 Q/SO1, fo. 171v, reproduced in Gent, *Trial*, p. 85, and summarised also in Duncan, 'Bideford', pp. 326–7.
24. Gent, *Trial*, p. 108. Timmons, 'Witchcraft', p. 302 says the magistrates 'released Mary Beare for lack of evidence', but there is no evidence she was ever arrested.
25. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, p. 444; Timmons, 'Witchcraft', p. 302 says, 'Gist and Davie dismissed the charge concerning Jane Dallyn for lack of evidence but bound Temperance over to the Exeter assizes once again for murdering Lydia Burman and bewitching Grace Thomas', but only this final point is clear from the evidence.
26. *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 19–22, 23–5, 38–9.
27. North, *Life*, p. 130. This edition is reproduced in Jessopp (ed.), *Lives*. The new editions are Chan (ed.), *Life*; Millard (ed.), *Notes*. See also 'North, Roger' ODNB.
28. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 372–3 and Sharpe, *Witchcraft*, p. 128; both reproduce the text from *CSPD 1672*, pp. 347–8, based on TNA S.P. 420/24. I am unclear where in this letter Timmons ('Witchcraft', p. 312) finds that North 'cited the odd collection of plaintiffs and magistrates from Bideford who had framed the original charges in an attempt to have higher authorities resolve social conflicts in the town'. See also the discussion in the next chapter.
29. 'North, Roger' ODNB; 'North, Francis' ODNB.
30. Timmons, 'Witchcraft', p. 303.
31. Millard (ed.), *Notes*, p. 192; Chan (ed.), *Life*, p. 63; North, *Life*, p. 130.
32. North, *Life*, p. 130; Millard (ed.), *Notes*, p. 192.
33. Chan (ed.), *Life*, p. 63; North, *Life*, p. 130; Millard (ed.), *Notes*, p. 192.
34. Millard (ed.), *Notes*, p. 192; North, *Life*, p. 130.
35. *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 18, 14.
36. North, *Life*, p. 129; Chan (ed.), *Life*, p. 64; Millard (ed.), *Notes*, pp. 192–3.
37. North, *Life*, pp. 130–1; Millard (ed.), *Notes*, pp. 193, 299 n. 343. For this case see Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 355–7 and 442–3.
38. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, p. 444.
39. 'North, Francis' ODNB Chan (ed.), *Life*, pp. 431–5.
40. North, *Life*, pp. 131–2; Chan (ed.), *Life*, pp. 64–5; Millard (ed.), *Notes*, pp. 192–3.
41. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 441–5 shows four possible cases, namely Anne Blake in 1670 (at Wells), Margery Stevens in 1672 (Bath), Elizabeth Langley in 1677 (Wells) and Anne Rawlins in 1679 (Wells). The first two cases both involved two victims, so seem unlikely to fit this case, while there are no details of Langley's case (but she was tried again in 1687 for another offence, and acquitted again). Rawlins was accused of bewitching Grace Atkins, spinster, 'by which she is much consumed, wasted, pined and lamed' so it seems to fit well with this story, but (as noted above), though acquitted, she was kept in gaol.
42. *Life and Conversation*, pp. 7–8. Timmons, 'Witchcraft', pp. 302–3 accepts this account without question. For Raymond, see 'Raymond' ODNB.

43. I have drawn this information from Gent, *Trial*, pp. 127–8 and Cooper, 'Background', pp. 11, 18, 20–1, 30, which uses J.I. Dredge's 1878 transcript of the Bideford parish registers (held in West Country Studies Library, Exeter), the privately held Andrew's Dole book and sessions records.
44. Cooper, 'Background', pp. 13, 21, 40, 70–5; Gent, *Trial*, pp. 127–8; Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft vol. 5*, pp. ix, 361, 364. For the close ties between Fremington's claypits and Bideford pottery see Grant, 'North Devon', pp. 32, 105. Eastchurch may have belonged to a minor gentry family from Chudleigh in Devon (who were related to Lord Clifford of Ugbrooke): see Jones, *History*, chapter 7. In 1680 'Mr Eastchurch' paid the relatively large sum of 10s 8d in church rates (Cooper, 'Background', p. 40 n. 20).
45. Timmons, 'Witchcraft', pp. 304–5.
46. *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 20, 40.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 35.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 34, 36.
49. I agree with Timmons, 'Witchcraft', p. 316 that 'there seems to have been no connection between the older woman [by which he means Lloyd, though we cannot be sure she was older] and the two younger ones during their lives in Bideford'.
50. *Tryal, Condemnation and Execution*, pp. 3–4, 6; *Life and Conversation*, pp. 7, 2; *True and Impartial Relation*, p. 40.
51. *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 11, 8 and below nn. 71, 77, 82–3.
52. *Life and Conversation*, pp. 3–4; *Tryal, Condemnation and Execution*, p. 4.
53. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 254–5, discussing *Full Tryals*; Timmons, 'Witchcraft', pp. 325–6 (but Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft vol. 5*, p. 1 assumes it is a mistake for 1682).
54. Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft vol. 5*, pp. xxii and 1–2 (where he also suggests Long may have written the preface); Evans, *Case*; Hascard, *Discourse*; Long, *No Protestant*; Long, *King David's Danger*; Long, *Vindication*; Long, *Unreasonableness*; *Ad general quarterial. Session*. Dunton, *Life*, p. 325 calls 'Deputy Collins' 'a moderate churchman and sincere friend'.
55. Yeo's first recorded publication is Elston, *Sermon*. Yeo's family came from Woolfardisworthy, ten miles west of Bideford (*Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries*, XI (1920–1), pp. 145–6, 156–8, 208), and a Hugh Yeo was a leading Bideford potter in the 1670s (Grant, 'North Devon', p. 47), so Yeo may have had direct knowledge of the case.
56. Dunton, *Life*, pp. 292, 284. Timmons, 'Witchcraft', pp. 317–21 focuses on Benskin and presents him as the likely author of the text, for reasons unclear to me, except for his discovery that Benskin had reported the case in his newspaper, *Domestick Intelligence*, on 11 September 1682, three days before he advertised his pamphlet in the issues of 14 September, although Timmons says the newspaper report 'largely repeated the content and structure of Deacon's text'. This implies that Deacon's text appeared within a few weeks of the execution, with Collins' following shortly after.
57. Timmons, 'Witchcraft', p. 325 admits J.W. 'cannot be identified with any certainty' but favours John Weld, because he printed a book on witchcraft (Brinley, *Discourse*) in 1686, but the first edition of this (Brinley, *Discovery*) was printed by another J.W., John Wright, in 1680. Wright was based in Little Britain, while John Weld printed his more substantial works from 'the

- Crown between the two Temple Gates in Fleet-street' between 1685 and 1692, which may suggest he published *Full Tryals* (see n. 53 above, as printed 'near Fleet Street') and so perhaps *Life and Conversation*, to which it seems akin, but both also seem similar to another preternatural account, *The Mournful Widow*, which was printed by 'J. W. near the Green Dragon Tavern in Fleet-Street, 1690', so the printer of this may be another candidate.
58. Eyre (ed.), *Transcription*, vol. 3, pp. 110–11. Timmons, 'Witchcraft', pp. 316–17 also sees Deacon as a 'moderate': 'publishing an account of executions for witchcraft filled out Deacon's dossier as way [sic] of subscribing guilt for turmoil in the land without indicting either set of political motivators of the crisis, the Whigs or the Tories'.
  59. Gent, *Trial*, p. 131.
  60. Reproduced in *ibid.*, pp. 121–4, with tune taken from Simpson, *British Broadside Ballad*, pp. 225–31 (and see p. 315 on the ballad itself); Timmons, 'Witchcraft', p. 315.
  61. *True and Impartial Relation*, title page.
  62. *Tryal, Condemnation and Execution*, title page and p. 6.
  63. *Ibid.*, p. 6; *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 39–40; *Life and Conversation*, p. 9.
  64. *True and Impartial Relation*, 'To the Reader'.
  65. *Ibid.*, 'To the Reader' and pp. 6, 25, 37.
  66. Guillim, *Display*, p. 135; Duncan, 'Bideford', pp. 328–9; Gent, *Trial*, pp. 29–30; Cooper, 'Background', pp. 32–3; Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft vol. 5*, p. 363.
  67. Duncan, 'Bideford', p. 329; Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft vol. 5*, pp. 362–3; Gent, *Trial*, pp. 23–6; Jackson, 'Nonconformity', pp. 138, 228.
  68. 'Bartlett' ODNB; Cooper, 'Background', pp. 20, 23, 29–30.
  69. *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 1–6.
  70. Timmons, 'Witchcraft', pp. 318–19 offers the explanation that the ordering was to give 'greater dramatic stability to the narrative' beginning and ending with 'the two horror stories about Susannah Edwards' with the Lloyd material in the middle, 'giving the appearance that the three separate incidents had erupted simultaneously'.
  71. *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 9, 11–12, 13, 10, 20–3, 17–20.
  72. Holmes, 'Women', p. 54. Timmons agrees ('Witchcraft', p. 302).
  73. *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 18, 10, 18–19.
  74. *Ibid.*, pp. 16–19; Gent, *Trial*, p. 127.
  75. *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 19, 23–5.
  76. *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 40.
  77. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–9.
  78. *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 32–3, 31, 34, 36–7.
  79. *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 34.
  80. *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 37.
  81. *Ibid.*, pp. 2–4; Gent, *Trial*, p. 91.
  82. *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 27–8, 2–3; Elmer, *English Witchcraft vol. 5*, p. 362.
  83. *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 27, 23.
  84. *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19, 38.
  85. *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 37.
  86. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15, 38–9.

87. Ibid., p. 11.
88. Ibid., p. 38.
89. Ibid., p. 15.
90. Ibid., pp. 34, 37.
91. Ibid., pp. 36, 31, 37.
92. Ibid., pp. 11, 13–15. Timmons, 'Witchcraft', p. 320 argues 'the most obvious distortion occurs in how the women's description of a man dressed in black becomes a black man in the plaintiff's evidence, and the devil himself in the magistrate's records'.
93. Ibid., pp. 13–14.
94. Ibid., pp. 16–17.
95. Ibid., pp. 15, 22.
96. Ibid., pp. 15, 22.
97. Ibid., p. 18.
98. Ibid., p. 24.
99. Ibid., p. 15.
100. Ibid., p. 22.
101. Ibid., pp. 14, 21, 18.
102. Ibid., pp. 11–12.
103. Ibid., pp. 36–7.
104. See above n. 66 and NDRO 799A/PR3 (Bideford register 1653–78) note by Ogilby.
105. *True and Impartial Relation*, p. 34.
106. Ibid., pp. 37–40; Timmons agrees: 'Witchcraft', p. 313.
107. *True and Impartial Relation*, pp. 38, 40, 37–9.
108. Ibid., pp. 39, 38–9.
109. *Life and Conversation*, p. 6.
110. *True and Impartial Relation*, p. 39.
111. Hoskins, *Devon*, pp. 346–7; Lyte, *History*, pp. 518–21. Elmer suggests Tranton Burroughs might be Braunton Burrows but fails to pick up the links with Saunton or the Luttrells (*English Witchcraft vol. 5*, pp. 365–6).
112. *True and Impartial Relation*, p. 39. Timmons, 'Witchcraft', p. 305 associates this with the 1680 smallpox epidemic in Bideford (see Gent, *Trial*, p. 21).
113. *Tryal, Condemnation and Execution*, p. 3.
114. Timmons, 'Witchcraft', p. 316 wonders if 'Deacon's anonymous author may have fabricated his entire account', though p. 325 considers J.W.'s pamphlet 'blended fact and fiction in a way that neither [of the other] pamphlets had done'.
115. Above, n. 60.
116. *Tryal, Condemnation and Execution*, pp. 1, 6.
117. Ibid., pp. 4, 3, 4, 2, 4–5.
118. Ibid., p. 4.
119. *True and Impartial Relation*, p. 38.
120. *Tryal, Condemnation and Execution*, p. 3.
121. *Life and Conversation*, pp. 4, 6, 4, 3, 4–7.
122. Ibid., p. 6, 7, 2–4.
123. On this genre see Sharpe, '"Last Dying Speeches"'; Marshall, 'Piety'. Timmons, 'Witchcraft', pp. 311–13, wrongly asserts that Hann was a dissenting minister, seeing Hann's role at the execution as 'a final farcical



twist' confirming North's 'fears of a dissenter activity'. This may be why, while identifying Hann's high profile in the pamphlets, he does not associate him with their content, because this would not fit his emphasis on their Tory or secular origins.

124. On Hann's career see: Oliver, *Ecclesiastical Antiquities*, p. 141; Murphy, *Oliver Cromwell's Church*, vol. 2, pp. 267, 277; SRO DD/POT/39 (1658 release of right re rectory of Buckland St Mary by Hann to Alexander Popham). On Cudmores see: Cudmore, *History*; Cudmore, *Euchodia*, 'Epistle Dedicatory'; *CSPD 1672*, p. 43; Roberts, *Recovery*, p. 149; Jackson, 'Nonconformity', pp. 56, 84, 103; Calamy, *Nonconformists Memorial*, p. 229. Lambeth Palace Arches A 15 is a 1680 case of Hann vs Shorland, Cudmore et al., not seen by this author: Houston (ed.), *Index*, p. 175.
125. Jackson, 'Nonconformity', pp. 28, 112; Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft vol. 5*, p. 365.
126. John Hann: Foster, *Alumni*, p. 645; *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries* (1899), p. 238. Francis Hann: see Lambeth Palace: Reg. Sheldon 2 fo. 231; VG 1/1/ fo. 220; VX 1A/10/26.
127. Duncan, 'Bideford', p. 329.
128. Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft vol. 5*, p. xxi. See also Timmons, 'Witchcraft' for a Tory emphasis, as discussed in n. 19. Cooper, 'Background' argues the case for a nonconformist basis for the trials.
129. Examples of the stress on pressure include Gent, *Trial*, p. 91; Sharpe, *Instruments*, pp. 187–8; Burns, *Witch Trials*, p. 33; Elmer (ed.), *English Witchcraft vol. 5*, p. ix. Alternatively, Thompson, *Wives*, pp. 121–2 suggests they may have found 'the celebrity of the witch trials exciting', while others stress their mental incapacity e.g. Notestein, *History*, p. 280 ('half-witted creatures of the type that had always been most voluble in confession') and Fraser, *Weaker Vessel*, p. 125 ('three crazed old women').
130. Timmons, 'Witchcraft' also plays down the magistrates' role. Initially he sees the Eastchurches taking the lead and Gist and Davie ('the only sympathetic alderman among four') making up the requisite petty session and conducting 'their inquisition with leading questions' but the Eastchurch family pushing it further (304). He thinks when Gist and Davie took depositions 'they had no indication that the results of their efforts would be other than what had occurred previously: the community would vent its anger against the women who would be sent for trial to Exeter, where they would be duly acquitted in the course of time and returned to Bideford' (307).
131. Contrary to Thompson, *Wives*, p. 124.

#### 4 The Politics of *Pandaemonium*

1. TNA SP 420/24, cited in Karkeek, 'Devonshire', p. 742 and summarised in *CSPD 1682*, pp. 347–8. The Bideford case, and the North family's account of it, is detailed in the previous chapter.
2. North, *Life*, pp. 129–32.
3. Bostridge, *Witchcraft*; Elmer, 'Towards a Politics'; Barry, 'Hell'. See also the introductions by Peter Elmer and James Sharpe to volumes 4–6 of Sharpe (gen. ed.), *English Witchcraft 1560–1736*.

4. For ease of reference I will use the modern edition, with introduction and notes by Montague Summers, published by Hand and Flower Press, Aldington, Kent in 1951. The original editions are discussed below.
5. Bostridge, *Witchcraft*, p. 90.
6. Robbins, *Encyclopedia*, p. 59. An early citation is Grose, *Provincial Glossary*, pp. 37–8 and 53 on Midsummer Eve customs.
7. Bath and Newton, 'Sensible Proof', pp. 4–5. Cf. Franklyn, *Death*, p. 183 ('another minor advocate of wholesale murder, Richard Bovet... a dilute solution of Glanvill tintured'); Bennett, 'Ghost', pp. 10–11; Sharpe, *Instruments*, p. 266; Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, p. 180.
8. Summers, *Witchcraft*, pp. 18, 35, 98, 103, 200–1, 203.
9. Introduction to Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, pp. xvii and xx.
10. See Hunter, 'New Light' and above, 'Robert Hunt and Somerset Witchcraft'.
11. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, p. xxiii.
12. *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 57–8, 103, 113, 124.
15. *Narrative of Demon*, pp. 1–2.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.
17. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, pp. xxiii and xxvii. Crocker, *Henry More* notes the dedication to More by Bovet, whom he mistakenly calls an 'obscure parson' (p. 127).
18. *Ibid.*, p. xxi reproduces the Walthoe edition title page. The Malthus title page is on p. vi.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. xxiv–v.
20. *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 99. Parsons, *Witchcraft*, p. 26 identifies Bovet as 'journalistic in approach, being sales- rather than soul-conscious'.
22. Bovet's borrowing is noted in Harrison (ed.), *Studies*, p. 251 in which he is characterised as 'an obscure witch-hunter' 'finding comfort for his fanaticism in *Paradise Lost*'. For the name see Smith, 'Sources' (which argues that Milton may have based his image on his memory of St Peter's in Rome) and Milton, *Poems*, p. 505, which notes a possible precursor in Henry More's use of 'Pandaemoniothon' in his writings.
23. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, p. 9.
24. For studies of Milton's early reception see King, 'Andrew Marvell'; Wittreich, 'Under the Seal'; Liewalski, '*Paradise Lost*' and especially von Maltzahn, 'First Reception' and 'Laureate' (which considers the responses of another Somerset man, the royalist natural philosopher John Beale). A recent study emphasising Milton's attack on idolatry is Guibbory, *Ceremony*, especially pp. 193–8.
25. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, pp. 121, 132. This case is reproduced in Ferriar, *Essay*, pp. 87–93 as a 'remarkable case of spectral impressions' and through this citation appears in many later volumes.
26. Masson, *Life*, pp. 763–4; Pincus, *Protestantism*, p. 52; Pepys, *Diary*, vol. V, p. 294 and vol. IX, pp. 150–1 (and notes); *HMC 78 Hastings* (1928–47), vol. II, pp. 150–1.
27. 'Pordage' ODNB; 'Phillips' ODNB.
28. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, p. xxv.

29. Ibid., pp. xvi–xviii; Robbins, *Encyclopedia*, p. 59.
30. Arber, *Term Catalogues*, vol. 2, p. 102.
31. Plomer, *Dictionary*, pp. 300–1; Dunton, *Life*, pp. 284–5.
32. Plomer, *Dictionary*, p. 196.
33. Dunton, *Life*, p. 297.
34. Arber, *Term Catalogues*, vol. 2, p. 33. In 1683 he also published, for example: *The Second Part of Pilgrims Progress*; *Catastrophe Mundi*; R.V., *Romish Mass-Book*. He also published less political titles, for example *Wonders of the Female World*.
35. Aubrey, *Three Prose Works*, pp. 90–4. Aubrey's version in his *Miscellanies* was quickly reproduced by Turner, *Compleat History*, pp. 32–3, which also reprints the story from *Narrative of Demon* on p. 126.
36. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, p. 107.
37. Aubrey, *Three Prose Works*, pp. 389–90.
38. Ibid., p. 93.
39. Ibid., pp. 93–4, 389–91; 'Paschall' ODNB.
40. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, p. 107.
41. *Narrative of Demon*, p. 8; Aubrey, *Three Prose Works*, p. 93. TNA Prob. 11/254 is the will of Rowland Furse feltmaker of Sprayton proved 15 May 1656.
42. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, pp. 112–13.
43. *Narrative of Demon*, p. 2.
44. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, p. 1.
45. Ibid., p. xxv.
46. Ibid., pp. 5, 7.
47. Ibid., pp. 12–13.
48. Ibid., pp. 20–1, 68.
49. Ibid., pp. 72, 97.
50. Ibid., pp. 16–19.
51. Ibid., p. 42.
52. Ibid., pp. 53–4.
53. Ibid., pp. 55–7.
54. Ibid., p. 19.
55. Ibid., p. 48.
56. Ibid., pp. 47–9.
57. Ibid., p. 51.
58. Ibid., pp. 102–3.
59. Ibid., pp. 114–17. This case is published (rewritten) in R.B., *Kingdom*, pp. 71–3.
60. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, pp. 134–8. See Hunter, *Occult Laboratory*, p. 3 for the widespread interest in the Maxwell case, which appears in both Glanvill, *Saducismus* and Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World*, making it the only case in Bovet that also appears in these other volumes.
61. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, pp. 118–19.
62. Ibid., pp. 129–30.
63. Ibid., pp. 107–13.
64. Ibid., p. 140.
65. Gardiner (ed.), *Registers*, p. 225; Bovett, *Congratulatory Poem* (the EEBO copy contains a handwritten dedication to the King by Bovett); R.B., *Poem*. Although the latter fits Bovet's ideology, there are several other 'R.B.'s publishing at

- this period. Both poems are reproduced in Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, pp. 141–68. *HMC House of Lords NS I* (1900), pp. 250–1 contains a letter of Richard Bovett (apparently from London) with information on a French privateer dated 12 October 1693. A Richard Bovett also signed the Taunton Association Roll in 1696 (TNA C213/226).
66. Humphreys, *Materials*, pp. 75–6 summarises the history of the Bovets of Wellington. I am grateful to many people for references that have helped me trace the Bovets, notably Nancy Cooper, Peter Elmer, Ruth Fisher, Priscilla Flower-Smith, Richard Greaves and Stuart Walsh.
  67. Dunning (ed.), *VCH IV*, p. 91; *Proceedings of Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 29 (1883), Pt 1, pp. 32–3. Bovet was accused of abusing his role as one of the trustees distributing money from the Stawell estate sales for the relief of the soldiers and inhabitants of Taunton: *CSPD 1657–8*, p. 91 (TNA SP 18/156, fos 101, 103 for 9 Sept. 1657).
  68. Bysshe, *Visitation*, p. 203. The 1683 probate inventory of a Philip Bovett of Taunton St Mary is SRO DD/SP/1683/40.
  69. Wigfield (ed.), *Monmouth Rebels*, pp. 17–18.
  70. SRO, DD/SF 3109, letter of William Clarke to Edward Clarke 29 July 1685. However, Clarke had been in dispute with Bovet over the debts of Oliver Lottersham in 1659: SRO DD/SF/12/10/14–28. The alternative spelling suggests that the ‘o’ of Bovet was pronounced as a ‘u’, as is still the case in Bovey Tracey in Devon. The name is also rendered ‘Buffett’ in Green (ed.), *Calendar*, vol. 1 at 30 September 1659 and ‘Bufett alias Bovett’ in *CSPD 1661–2*, p. 443 (TNA SP 29/57, fo. 160, 19 July 1662).
  71. TNA Prob 11/300, made 11 Aug. 1659 and proved 22 Aug. 1660; Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*, p. 39; *Journal of the House of Commons 4* (1644–6), pp. 639–40 and 7 (1651–60), pp. 170–2; *CSPD 1649–50*, 15 Feb. 1650; Underdown, *Somerset*, pp. 151, 159, 164–8, 171, 173, 176, 182, 187, 189–93 (on p. 187 it is noted that Pyne and Bovet had been friendly towards the Quakers, unlike Cary and Hunt).
  72. Bates Harbin (ed.), *Quarter-Sessions Records III*, p. 203 and *passim*. His first recorded action as a JP is SRO Q/SR/87/2–3 in October 1653, and his last 98/106 on 23 June 1659.
  73. Cockburn (ed.), *Somerset*, p. 77; Rutt (ed.), *Diary*, vol. 4, entries for 26 and 29 March 1659; *Journal of the House of Commons 7* (1651–60), pp. 624–5.
  74. *Journal of the House of Commons 7* (1651–60), pp. 771–3; *CSPD 1659–60*, pp. 351 and 379 (9 Feb. and 1 March 1660); *CSPD 1660–85*, pp. 85–7; HMC *51 Leybourne-Popham MS* (1899), pp. 157–8 contains a February 1660 letter from Bovet to Monck recording his efforts to prevent the Restoration.
  75. *Dwelly's Hearth Tax*, p. 3; SRO DD/PH/222/63 (Secretary Nicholas to Phelps ordering Bovet's capture in 1662. In July 1664 he was arrested and interrogated (*CSPD 1663–4*, p. 645) but escaped from Bridgewater, breaking his parole that he would be ‘a true prisoner’, though he seems to have been under arrest again by March 1665 (*CSPD 1664–5*, pp. 19, 30, 287). However, later in 1665 it was said, ‘Buffit is usually in Cornwall’ (*ibid.*, p. 544) but by 3 April 1666 he was ‘within 5 miles of Wellington’ (*CSPD 1665–6*, preface (n. 32) and p. 340). In 1667 he (or Richard junior) was in Exeter, where he refused to tell the watchmen why he was abroad at midnight and ‘began to call them names and abuse them with base language, and they depose

- further that the said Richard Bovet was drunk and that he sware ten oaths' (Devon Record Office, Exeter Sessions Books 65 (1660–70), fo. 258, 14 Sept. 1667). For later years see, from numerous examples in the State Papers, *CSPD* 1671–2, p. 161 and *CSPD January–June 1683*, pp. 104, 184. He is discussed in Clifton, *Last Popular Rebellion*, pp. 46, 60–1, 219; Greaves, *Enemies*, pp. 33, 41, 223; Greaves, *Secrets*, p. 158. 'Col. Francis Buffett' was suspected of involvement in Venner's rising (*CSPD* 1661–2, p. 537).
76. Wigfield, *Monmouth Rebellion*, pp. 44–6, 92–3; *Glory of the West*, which picked out 'Kate' 'the Collonel's daughter' for comment and claimed that she 'was the lass that had his [Monmouth's] heart'. For her subsequent pardon (and that of John Bovett of Taunton) see *CSPD* 1686–7, pp. 202 (8 July 1686) and 440 (31 May 1687).
  77. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, p. 99; Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 418. Rumsey was named in 1686 as one of those, like Catherine Bovet, excluded from the general pardon of those suspected of participating in Monmouth's rebellion.
  78. Bovet, *Pandaemonium*, pp. 133–4.
  79. Humphreys, *Materials*, p. 237.
  80. Wigfield (ed.), *Monmouth's Rebels*, p. 18. The will of John Bovett of Yarcombe weaver, proved 17 May 1672, is TNA Prob 4/4429, while that of Mary Bovett spinster of Yarcombe, proved 20 May 1686, refers to her brother Thomas (TNA Prob 11/383). There are also numerous Bovetts at nearby Stockland, then in Dorset but now in Devon, including a Thomas whose will is proved in 1710 (TNA Prob 11/516-17).
  81. First published in *Notes and Queries*, 11 (Jan.–June 1855), no. 286 for 30 June 1855, pp. 498–9 and reproduced in Humphreys, *Materials*, pp. 237–9 and Hazlitt (ed.), *Brand's Popular Antiquities*, pp. 648–9 and summarised by Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 377–8 (pp. 445–6 records the not guilty verdict on all three charges of bewitching Alice, Sarah and Mary Bovett).
  82. Ewen, *Witch Hunting*, p. 43 and plate opposite (Ewen wrongly states here that the judges were North and Raymond again, as in 1682); Wigfield (ed.), *Monmouth's Rebels*, pp. 63–4.
  83. Humphreys, *Materials*, p. 239; Hutchinson, *Historical Essay*, p. 45 (he wrongly calls the father William Bovet).

## 5 John Beaumont: Science, Spirits and the Scale of Nature

1. Porter, *Making*, pp. 21, 24, 47–8, 79, 83, 226 n. 16. He is also discussed by Ito, 'Hooke's Cyclical Theory', 305–6 and 310. His Mendip publications are frequently cited; e.g. Gough, *Mines*, p. 142.
2. *Historisch-physiologisch- und theologischer Tractat von Geistern, Erscheinungen, Hexereyen und andern Zauber-Händeln, darinnen...D. Bekkers bezauberte Welt...wiederlegt wird; aus der englischen Sprache in die teutsche.. übersetzt von Theodor Arnold. Nebst einer Vorrede des Herrn...Thomasii* (Halle, 1721); Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 396–9. Examples of later use include *View of the Invisible World*, p. 52 from 'Mr Beaumont in his treatise of spirits', later reprinted in *Life after Death* and *History of Apparitions*; Simpson, *Discourse*, p. 52. In 1825 Welby, *Signs*, describes his *Treatise* as 'the chef d'oeuvre of a man of

talent, but whose modes of reasoning have led him into many vulgar errors. His book is overcharged with witchcraft and abstruse reading, but...his "Confession" ...is altogether the result of unshaken conviction. In short he feels what he writes, but his enthusiasm occasionally carries him beyond the bounds of probability and credible circumstance' (pp. xiii–xiv). Introducing the 'Confession', however, he is much more positive, calling this the 'celebrated *Treatise*' of 'John Beaumont, styled the Platonic Philosopher', 'a man of acute reasoning powers and indefatigable research...His confession is at once curious and important, as he seems not to reason from mere theoretical analogy, but from the fullest evidence of experience' (p. 165).

3. *History of the Life*, pp. 96, 111, 119, 226; 'Bond' ODNB; 'Campbell' ODNB; Scott, *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, pp. 294–5. I cannot discover any references to Beaumont in those publications generally accepted to be Defoe's, but the publisher in 1727 of Defoe's *System of Magick* and his *Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions* was John Roberts, who had published Beaumont's *Gleanings of Antiquities* in 1724. For Defoe's aims see Baine, 'Daniel Defoe'; Novak, 'Defoe'.
4. 'Beaumont' ODNB; Ferriar, *Essay*, pp. 67–9. Regarding his drinking, Sloane (see n. 5) records that 'il avoue en quelque endroit qu'il aimoit [or, 'etoit adonne a', in rough copy] la bouteille' but adds 'ce que je n'avois observe pendant pres de cinquante ans que j'avois connu'.
5. Jacquot, 'Sir Hans Sloane', pp. 94–6, prints extracts from *Bibliothèque Nationale MS Français 22229*, fos 258–65, a rough copy of which Sloane retained in B.L. Sloane MSS 4069, fos 94–103, and Beaumont's letters to Sloane are: 4038, fos. 336, 343; 4046, fo. 2034; and 4050, fo. 70. A letter to Toland is 4295, fo. 29. I am grateful to Michael Hunter for sharing with me his collation of the two versions of the memoir. The Bath horoscope is 2282, fo. 31b. In 1683 Beaumont owned MS 1102B. The Sloane Printed Books catalogue (<http://www.bl.ac.uk/catalogues/sloane/>) lists books which belonged to Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), giving the B.L. shelfmark and then Sloane's own catalogue numbers. Beaumont's books are: *Considerations on a Book, entituled The Theory of the Earth, publisht...by the learned Dr. Burnet* (1693) (444.c.17.(4); c 2451); *Postscript to a Book...entituled Considerations on Dr. Burnet's Theory of the Earth* (1694) (444.c.17.(4\*); c 2451); *The Present State of the Universe, or an account of I. The rise, birth...of all the present chief princes of the world. II. Their coats of arms, mottos...III. The names of their chief towns...IV. Their revenues. To which are added some other curious remarks; as also an account of commonwealths* (1694) (793.h.3; G 519); *An Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits* (1705) (719.h.23; R529); *Gleanings of Antiquities, containing I. An Essay for explaining the Creation and the Deluge according to the sense of the Gentiles. II. A Discourse of oracles giving an account of the Sibylline oracles, with an explication of Virgil's fourth eclogue...III. Some Notes concerning familiar spirits* (1724) (704.g.1; c 937). For Sloane's career and collections see McGregor (ed.), *Sir Hans Sloane*, although this barely mentions his collecting of occult manuscripts, and then only as a side effect of his collection of medical and scientific works.
6. Goodwin, 'Beaumont'; 'Beaumont' ODNB. I am very grateful to Scott Mandelbrote for sending me an advanced copy of the revised version of his ODNB entry and sharing other information on Beaumont with me.

7. 'Beaumont' ODNB. He was over 40 when he began to see spirits (Beaumont, *Treatise*, p. 396).
8. *A Catalogue of Several Valuable Libraries* (B.L. C. 186. dd. 6(1)). Brindley of New Bond-Street, who called himself bookseller to Frederick, Prince of Wales, was involved in the sale of many learned book collections and published works of architecture, natural history and medicine, including Mead, *Medica Sacra*.
9. B.L. 816.m.5 (46) or 19.h.1 (24).
10. TNA Prob 11/696.
11. *London Evening Post*, 23 January 1731, no. 490; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1 (1731), p. 34. Sloane, writing in 1740, noted that he had died 'environ dix ans' earlier.
12. Taylor, *Of the Happiness of Believers*, pp. 43–8; *Grub Street Journal*, 4 August 1737, no. 397; *Penny London Post*, 28 March 1748, no. 761. TNA Prob 3/3/5/93 is the inventory etc. of a John Beaumont of Lyons Inn, St Clements Danes Middlesex, dated 16 Sept. 1736, with references to books.
13. Porter, *Making*, p. 19; Hunter, *Royal Society*, p. 103.
14. 'Beaumont' ODNB.
15. SRO Q/SR/127 22/9/57; Stoate (ed.), *Somerset Protestation*, pp. 126, 133, 209, 273; Brown, *Abstract 2<sup>nd</sup>*, pp. 95–6; Scrase and Hasler (eds), *Wells*, pp. 65, 80, 127–8, 153, 202; Nott and Hasler (eds), *Wells*, p. 946; Loxton, *Ston Easton*, p. 75. One of the family married the organist John Okeover: 'Okeover' ODNB.
16. Humphreys, *Somerset*; Oliver, *Collections*, p. 189; SRO DD/SF/12/15/16, DD/H1/A/19, 163, 167, DD/H1 Box 564, DD/X/BU/2-3, Q/RRp/12; Dunning (ed.), *VCH IX*, p. 45; Loxton, *Ston Easton*, pp. 73, 106–7, 125; TNA Prob 11/655; Horwitz (ed.), *Samples*, p. 188.
17. 'Cottington' ODNB; TNA Prob 11/444; Dunning (ed.), *VCH VII*, pp. 16, 25–6, 40, 58.
18. Beaumont, *Gleanings*, pp. 40–1.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 26; Wigfield (ed.), *Monmouth Rebels*, pp. 11, 165; Bodleian Aubrey MSS 13, fo. 79; 'Paschall' ODNB.
20. Beaumont, *Present State*, pp. 35–44.
21. Henning (ed.), *House*, vol. 3, pp. 461–2; Cruickshanks et al. (eds), *House*, vol. 5, pp. 531–2.
22. Cruickshanks et al. (eds), *House*, vol. 3, pp. 957–8 and vol. 4, pp. 825–6; 'Edgcumbe' ODNB; Hunter, *Royal Society*, pp. 216–17; Espinasse, *Robert Hooke*, p. 99; [www.twickenham-museum.org.uk/detail.asp?...321](http://www.twickenham-museum.org.uk/detail.asp?...321).
23. Sloane reports the cause of her disinheritance. For the case see Cruickshanks et al. (eds), *House*, vol. 5, pp. 531–2; TNA E134/7Anne/Mich 35 and 36, E134/IGeo1/East10, E134/2Geo1/Mich 30; printed cases in B.L. 19.h.1 (23–24) or 816 m 5 (46); *Journal of the House of Lords*, 19 (1709–14), pp. 660–1, 692–7; Richardson, *Law*, p. 170; *English Reports*, p. 1177.
24. *Notes and Queries*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series V (12 March 1864), 211.
25. Beaumont, *Gleanings*, p. vi; Hooke, *Diary*, entries for 21, 25 and 28 August, 4 September, 2, 9 and 20 October, 6, 14 and 18 November 1679, and 19 August and 6 November 1680.
26. Gunther (ed.), *Early Science*, vol. XII, p. 244.
27. Bodleian Lister MSS 35, fo. 102; Jacquot, 'Sir Hans Sloane', p. 96; Dalby, 'Weekly Memorials'; *Weekly Memorials*, vol. 1 no. 1 (16 January 1682),

- pp. 1–2, and adverts at end of no. 10 (20 March 1682) and no. 12 (3 April 1682) of Fairthorne edition. Scott Mandelbrote informs me that Aubrey's copies of *Weekly Memorials* throw light on Beaumont's involvement.
28. Birch, *History*, vol. 3, pp. 323, 359, 516; Beaumont, 'Letter of Mr John Beaumont' (dated Stony Easton, 25 August); Beaumont, 'John Beaumont's Account'; Beaumont, 'Further Account' (276 for reference to residence in London); Beaumont, 'Letter from Mr J. Beaumont' (854 'now in London').
  29. Birch, *History*, vol. 3, pp. 327, 393, 394; Hunter, *Royal Society*, pp. 232–3.
  30. Aubrey, *Monumenta*, vol. 2 pt 3, pp. 1062–3; Aubrey, *Natural History*, p. 45; Beaumont, *Treatise*, p. 84; Beaumont, *Gleanings*, p. 33. Hunter, *John Aubrey*, p. 88 n. 4 refers to Beaumont's notes on the manuscript of Aubrey's 'Perambulation of Surrey'.
  31. Hunter, *Royal Society*, pp. 80, 232–3; 'Vaughan' ODNB; Aubrey, *Three Prose Works*, p. 519; Gunther (ed.), *Early Science*, vol. X, p. 79; Ito, 'Hooke's Cyclical Theory', pp. 302–4.
  32. Houghton, *Collection*, vol. 5, nos 102, p. 4 and 107, p. 4, vol. 6, no. 142, p. 1, vol. 11, no. 250, p.1; Beaumont, *Gleanings*, p. 40. A letter to Houghton from Beaumont (dated Wells 2 July 1693) is B.L. Stowe MSS 747, fo. 18.
  33. Ellis (ed.), *Letters*, p. 199; Lankester (ed.), *Correspondence*, pp. 249–50.
  34. Gunther (ed.), *Early Science* vol. X, pp. 195, 201, 206, 214, 217, 220, 221; Hooke, 'Review'; B.L. 793.h.3; Ito, 'Hooke's Cyclical Theory', pp. 302–6, 310.
  35. 'Tyson' ODNB; Hunter, *Royal Society*, pp. 220–1.
  36. *Scala Naturae*, pp. 28–9. Sloane noted that Beaumont, when discussing the famous poets ancient and modern of all the nations, displayed so much erudition that he gave pleasure to a distinguished company at dinner.
  37. Beaumont, *Gleanings*, pp. 26, 37.
  38. Beaumont, 'Two Letters'; the letters are dated 7 April and 17 June 1676. Porter, *Making*, p. 20 states that Beaumont was part of Paschall's Somerset Society, citing unpublished work by Anthony Turner, but Turner kindly informs me that he has no evidence that Beaumont was included.
  39. Bodleian Aubrey MSS 13, fos 63 and 67; Gunther (ed.), *Early Science*, vol. XI, p. 45.
  40. Beaumont, *Gleanings*, p. 40.
  41. Bodleian Aubrey MSS 13, fo. 66a; Gunther (ed.), *Early Science*, vol. XII, p. 244 and vol. XIII, pp. 272, 285–6.
  42. Birch, *History*, vol. 3, pp. 379, 383; Beaumont, *Draught*, reproduced in Gunther (ed.), *Early Science*, vol. XII, pp. 274–8. The section on animals includes: 'Of any strange accidents that have befallen men or women. Of any prodigious births, numerous offsprings, hermaphrodites. Of men and women extremely alike, of prodigious memories, of extraordinary statures, either in excess or defect. Of any that have strange antipathies to meats, drinks, animals etc. Of unusual fastings, sleep, dreams that have strangely come to pass, Of men of extream age. Of sudden deaths, or of any reputed dead that have strangely come to life again. Whether anything remarkable hath attended a family in their lives or deaths. Whether there are any ancient sepulchres of men of gigantic stature, Roman generals or others of ancient times. Whether there have been any strange apparitions or knockings heard in houses, Whether any have been suspected for witches and what judicially



- proved against them. Whether there are any strange customs now in use or whether there are any strange confusions in consanguinity or affinity' (p. 278). For Plot and other natural histories of this period see Mendyk, *Speculum*.
43. Bodleian Aubrey MSS 13, fo. 79; Plot, *Natural History*, p. 251; Nicholson, *English Historical Library*, p. 56. Gough, *British Topography*, vol. 2, p. 189 noted Beaumont's planned natural history and quotes Nicholson that 'the world had just cause to hope for an excellent performance' but that he 'seems to fear his other literary engagements took him off from it. He was a physician and published something about spectres and Burnet's theory.'
  44. Barry, 'Chatterton', p. 58; SRO DD/SH/1-5 (Strachey) and DD/AH/21/1-2 (Palmer); *H.M.C. Sixth Report* (1877–8); 'Strachey' ODNB; Levine, *Dr Woodward's Shield*; 'Hutchinson' ODNB.
  45. Poole, 'Sir Robert Southwell's Dialogue'; 'Cole' ODNB; Jacquot, 'Sir Hans Sloane', p. 95; Beaumont, *Considerations*, pp. 240–1, 398–400, 126. Fowler's approval of the *Treatise* is cited in Greenhill, 'Beaumont', from J. Hunter (ed.), *Diary of Ralph Thoresby* (1830–2), vol. II, pp. 108 and 124.
  46. Bodleian, Ashmole MSS 1814, fo. 272; Gunther (ed.), *Early Science*, vol. XIV, pp. 138, 139, 254; B.L. Stowe MSS 747, fo. 23 (Beaumont to Lister, dated Stony Easton 10 October 1693).
  47. Bodleian Ashmole MSS 1830, fos. 11, 24; Turner, 'Forgotten Naturalist'; Hooke, *Diary*.
  48. Arber, *Term Catalogues*, vol. II, pp. 509, 528 and vol. III, pp. 5–6, 59, 291, 419, 618; Beaumont, *Present State*, p. 100 (in later editions this appears as a preface).
  49. Beaumont, *Treatise*, pp. 260–1, and pp. 128–9, 250, 296 for other London stories.
  50. *Ibid.*, p. 306. The case is also reported in a pamphlet, *Somersetshire Daemon*, and a ballad, *Somersetshire Wonder*.
  51. 'To the Reader'; above n. 27. I owe the information on the Venette translation to Scott Mandelbrote.
  52. There is no evidence of a Dutch or German edition of the work prior to the 1685 English edition, although it was later published in Dutch in 1690 and 1693 (translated from English by D.K.), and the German edition of 1691 states that it has been translated from English into High Dutch by J[ohann] L[ange], so J.B.'s own German version, if it existed, seems to have been lost: Coudert, *Impact*, p. 380.
  53. Beaumont, *Treatise*, pp. 394–6; 'Beaumont' ODNB.
  54. Notestein, *History*, pp. 339–40; Beaumont, *Treatise*, pp. 347–97, especially p. 348 (and cf. pp. 251, 256, 260, 307–8); above n. 2. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 379, 399 and Davies, *Haunted*, pp. 115–16 discuss Beaumont's response to Bekker. The first two parts of Bekker's book were summarised in English in the *Athenian Gazette* 19 for 29 November 1691, the editor noting, 'I hear with pleasure that some are setting themselves to answer Mr Bekker'.
  55. Beaumont, *Treatise*, p. 31. His own experiences appear on pp. 91–4, 197–8, 251, 260–1, 312, 393–7, and stories told him by others on pp. 104–5, 128–9, 184–6, 250, 398–400. All the other stories are from printed material.
  56. *Ibid.*, pp. 308–11.

57. Ibid., p. 337. Locke was a close friend of John Strachey's father. Bostridge, *Witchcraft*, p. 104 n. 59 refers to Beaumont's citation of Locke, in his discussion of Boulton's use of Locke (pp. 95–107: p. 95 notes Boulton seeking Sloane's patronage). The organisation by the senses may also reflect Beaumont's discussion of the case with Sloane, who records that, when he suggested to Beaumont that his encounter with the fairies was merely in a dream, Beaumont told him that he was certain of its reality 'par le temoignage de quatre de cinq sens' (sight, hearing, touch and smell) although he had never tasted them. Sloane also records him as claiming to have a 'sanguine' rather than 'melancholy' temperament.
58. Ibid., pp. 393, 396–7. Sloane records which confirmed Sloane's own physical explanation of Beaumont's visions that his visitations by the fairies ended 'a l'occasion d'un vomissement violent avec diarrhee, dont il fut saisi, et qui dura un tems considerable'.
59. Ibid., pp. 324, 307.
60. Ibid., pp. 92, 394, 197–8.
61. Ibid., pp. 394, 91–3, 395, 91–2.
62. Ibid., pp. 394, 251, 395–6.
63. Ibid., pp. 93–4, 396.
64. Ibid., pp. 395, 200. Sloane records that when he invited Beaumont to dinner with some leading Londoners to discuss his experience of spirits, although he reported his conversations with them without reserve, on being asked by one person (John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, Sloane thinks) about their manners, such as food, drink, clothes, methods of propagation etc.) Beaumont was silent for a while and then replied that he was not at all informed about those sorts of things, which led the duke to tell him his opinion that he had only dreamed it.
65. Ibid., pp. 104–5.
66. Ibid., pp. 394–5. Sloane also reports Beaumont telling him that he had not used conjurations to make the spirits appear, and he contrasts Beaumont's experience of spirits with that of Dr Dee.
67. Beaumont, *Gleanings*, pp. 119, 189, 195–6, 202, 206.
68. Ibid., pp. 191–2.
69. Beaumont, *Treatise*, pp. 31, 214–15, 217.
70. Ibid., p. 391.
71. Ibid., pp. 296–300. See Barry, 'Hell' and next chapter for more on Bedford's letter.
72. Ibid., pp. 63–9, 130, 154, 159, and cf. Beaumont, *Gleanings*, pp. 195–6 on Clarke.
73. Beaumont, *Gleanings*, pp. 192–3.
74. Beaumont, *Treatise*, pp. 160–1; Beaumont, *Considerations*, p. 180.
75. Beaumont, *Treatise*, pp. 160, 32, 214–15.
76. Beaumont, *Gleanings*, pp. 75, 86, 179, 184–5; Wallis, *Necessity* (dedicated to the Earl of Radnor, whose daughter later married Beaumont's brother-in-law Specott).
77. Beaumont, *Gleanings*, pp. 174–6.
78. Ibid., pp. 176–7.
79. Ibid., pp. 100–1, 118, 89–90.

80. Ibid., pp. 17–40. Sloane records that Beaumont's knowledge of fossils had allowed him to refute 'le livre de Mons<sup>r</sup> Woodward' as well as Burnet and that he had done Sloane the favour of placing several very singular specimens from his collection in Sloane's cabinet. See Thackray, 'Mineral and Fossil Collections', p. 127, noting examples of Beaumont's specimens in Sloane's 'metalls' collections now in the Natural History Museum Mineralogy Library: MSS SLO vol. I b, nos 1649–53.
81. Beaumont, 'Two Letters', pp. 739–40.
82. Gunther (ed.), *Early Science*, vol. X, pp. 114, 206.
83. Raven, *John Ray*, p. 430, citing R.W.T. Gunther (ed.), *Further Correspondence of John Ray* (1928), pp. 242, 245; Beaumont, *Postscript*, p. 1.
84. Beaumont, *Postscript*, p. 2.
85. Beaumont, *Considerations*, 'To the Reader' and 'Epistle Dedicatory'.
86. Beaumont, *Postscript*, pp. 6, 2–3, 7, 8, 3–4.
87. Beaumont, *Considerations*, pp. 168, 185.
88. Ibid., pp. 30, 26, 30, 4, 81, 60, 56, 70.
89. Ibid., pp. 174, 21, 169, 171.
90. Ibid., pp. 96, 156, 8, 144, 160, 8, 19–20, 86.
91. Ibid., pp. 115, 181, 183, 145.
92. Ibid., pp. 120, 122–3.
93. *Scala Naturae*, pp. 19–20, 17, 19–20, 23–4, 30, 38, 41.
94. 'Tyson', ODNB; Tyson, *Phocaena*, p. 11; Tyson, *Orang-Outang*, dedication and p. 46.
95. See, from a huge scholarship: Webster, *From Paracelsus*; Daston and Park, *Wonders*; Hutchinson, 'Supernaturalism'; Schaffer, 'Godly Men'; Dear, 'Miracles'; Fix, 'Angels'; Harrison, 'Newtonian Science'; Harrison, *Bible*; Hunter, 'Magic'; Hunter, *Occult Laboratory*; Mandelbrote, 'Uses'; Shaw, *Miracles*; Carter, 'Constant Prodigy'; Walsham, 'Reformation'.
96. Beaumont, *Gleanings*, p. 52.

## 6 Public Infidelity and Private Belief

### The Discourse of Spirits in Enlightenment Bristol

1. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 570. See the introduction above, nn. 6–7, 12–13 for references to the trends discussed in this and the next paragraph.
2. See Bostridge, 'Witchcraft'; Bostridge, *Witchcraft*; Davies, *Witchcraft*; Davies and de Blecourt (eds), *Beyond* as well as case studies such as Carnochan, 'Witch-Hunting'; Muskett, 'Late Instance'; Guskin, 'Context'; Luxton, 'William Jenkin'.
3. Barry, 'Piety and the Patient'. In what follows I have not referenced background evidence cited in the earlier article. Some of my arguments there have been developed further in Shuttleton, 'Methodism'.
4. As far as I am aware, no previous historian of witchcraft has analysed this case, although Kittredge refers briefly to it and cites various of the features in his notes: see *Witchcraft*, pp. 133, 210, 435 n. 135, 515 n. 109, 525 n. 37.
5. Bristol Reference Library, Bristol Collection (hereafter, BCL), 20095 2 volumes c.1750–1800; BCL 20096 for 1762 original. References in the text hereafter to Dyer's diary entries for 1762 refer to the latter volume, not the

retrospective one, unless indicated. My edition of Dyer's diary for 1762, together with all the other manuscript texts discussed here, forms Bristol Record Society's volume 64 (2012).

6. Brown's letters to Dartmouth are in Staffordshire Record Office, DW/1778/I/ii/812; he also enclosed two newspaper cuttings from *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* of 20 February 1762, with the letters concerning the affair discussed below. Owen Davies kindly alerted me to these letters, which were not discussed in the earlier version of this article. Brown (1730–91) was an Oxford graduate from Cirencester, evangelised while curate of Walter Chapman at Bradford-on-Avon. He was in Bristol as a minor canon and preaching by 1756, becoming lecturer at St Nicholas in 1757 (when he married into the Day family of Bristol) and undermaster at Bristol Grammar School 1759–64, then vicar of West Harptree in Somerset 1761–5. The city corporation gave him their living of Portishead in Somerset in 1764, and in 1771 the Dean and Chapter appointed him to Kingston near Taunton (in place of his minor canonship), and he held these two livings until his death at Portishead on 6 February 1791. He was closely associated with various evangelicals, including the Countess of Huntingdon, and Rowland Hill's first curacy was at Kingston in 1773, while the future Methodist 'bishop' Thomas Coke was supposedly his curate; John Wesley met Coke at Brown's house there in 1776. His daughter married the evangelical Sir Harry Trelawney. See Foster, *Alumni*, vol. I, p. 173; Venn, *Alumni*, vol. I, p. 405; Seymour, *Life*, vol. II, pp. 4, 11, 27, 53; Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works* vol. 21, p. 454 (19 April 1764) and *Works* vol. 23, p. 27 (13 August 1776). Brown was a close friend of Dyer's: for example during 1762 they shared ownership of a horse. The second earl of Dartmouth was, like Brown, a keen evangelical who remained within the established church. George Eaton was appointed schoolmaster at the Quaker-sponsored school at Quakers Friars in Bristol at the start of 1760, also lodging and educating boys privately, while his wife and her sister kept grocers' shops in Old Market and without Lawford's Gate. He was very ill in 1771 and died in 1773 (BAO SF/A7/1, 25 December 1759; BCL 20095, 8 January 1760, 19 May 1763, 14 June 1771, 19 March 1773).
7. Mary Squires was the gypsy woman who had been accused of kidnapping Elizabeth Canning in a notorious London case in 1753. On Cock Lane see Grant, *Cock Lane* and, for contemporary responses, *Gentleman's Magazine*, 32 (1762), pp. 43–4, 81–4, 339–40; *Annual Register* (1762), pp. 142–7, and the discussions in Friedman (ed.), *Collected Works*, pp. 419–41 and Grant (ed.), *Poetical Works* on Churchill's poem 'The Ghost'. On 18 February Dyer notes that Durbin was asking whether the London case was witchcraft or a ghost. The *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1762 includes discussion of three other episodes, all presented as impostures (pp. 63–6, 114–15 and 596). Garrick's interlude *Farmer's Return*, which included reference to the Cock Lane affair, was regularly performed at the Bristol theatre from 21 July 1762 onwards, and the details of its performance on 6 August 1762 specify 'an account of the coronation and the Cock Lane Ghost' (*Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 10 and 24 July 1762: see also BCL 7976 for a surviving playbill for the July performance). For newspapers as sources see Davies, 'Newspapers'.
8. *A Copy of a Letter*; Beaumont, *Treatise*, pp. 296–300; Nuttall (ed.), *Calendar*, p. 258, no. 1273, a letter to Doddridge dated 10 September 1747 with a copy

certified as correct by Bedford in Jan. 1740; this certification also appears in the reprint in *Yearly Chronicle*, 51–5, which tells us also that ‘Cornelius Agrippa’s Magic was the supposed book the above-mentioned Thomas Perks made use of’; BCL 396 (mistakenly dated 1763); BCL 10364; Jones, *Relation*, pp. 124–30; *Arminian Magazine*, 5 (1782), 425–9; Sibly, *Complete Illustration*, p. 1121; ‘Raphael’, *Familiar Astrologer*, pp. 694–700, with a footnote by Raphael on p. 699: ‘I have myself seen a very curious telescope and a very ingenious fowling-piece made by this said Thomas Perks and in my last tour to the west of England (1830) I found numerous versions of this particular account still extant among the peasantry’. What is probably Bedford’s own copy of his original letter, with minor differences from the printed version, is in BRO, Temple Lc 7. For Bedford see Barry, ‘Hell’.

9. The line of argument pursued here owes much to a distinguished line of analysis within the history of science. See Shapin, *Social History*, although Shapin’s privileging of ‘gentility’ as the accepted condition for credibility is unfortunate, not least for the analysis of urban culture. There is no intention to imply that ‘public’ and ‘private’ are unproblematic categories of analysis: for an excellent account of the issues involved see Brewer, ‘This, That and the Other’.
10. Barry, ‘Piety and the Patient’.
11. Dyer’s diary for 24 February (for Eaton), 30 and 31 March and 10 April (for Dyer and Brown); Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 7.
12. Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 32.
13. Barry, ‘Press’, pp. 68–9.
14. There is probably an intended reference to the periodical *The Free Enquirer* (which ran from 17 October to 12 December 1761) by Peter Annet of the Robin Hood Society, which was condemned in 1762 as a blasphemous libel. The playwright Samuel Foote cashed in on both issues in his play *The Orators*, in which is *Introduced the Tryal of the Cock Lane Ghost*, which contains a ‘View of the Robin-Hood Society’. There is no evidence that Foote’s play was staged in Bristol at this period, however.
15. Durbin, *Narrative*, pp. 24, 26.
16. Barry, ‘Piety and the Patient’, pp. 155, 169; Barry, *Methodism*.
17. Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 3; here, as in all subsequent quotations, the italics are in the original.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.
20. with an introduction by Robert A. Gilbert (Leicester, 1981).
21. Sharpe, *Instruments*, pp. 233, 273–5 notes the same ‘scant dependence on new scientific ideas’ and ‘standard, non-scientific lines of sceptical argument’. Cf. the comments of the Bristol Quaker James Gough in the preface to his *Select Lives*, p. 13: ‘Some things relating to sorcery and witchcraft, however well-attested at that time, will not easily obtain credit in the present age. I attribute them to the devices of those consummate impostors the Jesuits.’ This is the more striking because of Gough’s closeness to the pietist position of Dyer and Durbin, for which see Barry, ‘Piety and the Patient’, p. 164 n. 43. On conjuring and ventriloquism in this period see Schmidt, ‘From Demon Possession’ and Mangan, *Performing Dark Arts*.
22. Durbin, *Narrative*, pp. 7–8.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6. Despite the gendered emphasis on male witnesses here, the *Narrative* mentions a considerable number of female witnesses, including Durbin's sister (pp. 11, 50–2) and 'two ladies of the company' (p. 25).
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7. Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Drax of Charborough Dorset, had married the fourth earl of Berkeley (d. 1755) and then, in 1757, Robert Nugent, the MP for Bristol; in May 1761 her sister Mary (with a fortune of £10,000) had married Henry Durbin's nephew, the future Sir John Durbin. Major Drax was probably either Thomas Erle Drax (1729–90) or, more likely, Edward Drax of Milcombe Regis (c. 1726–91), who on 16 April 1762 married Mary Churchill of nearby Henbury. Brown's letter to Dartmouth of 24 February also refers to Major Drax visiting the house and confirms that 'a prodigious pinch was given him in the hand that is black and blue even now', while reporting that Durbin's nephew 'went entirely incredulous, even his own uncle's testimonies were not believed'. Brown records that 'Mr Henry Durbin a chymist in Redcliff Street saw a small glass rise about two feet from the table (without being touched by any one present) and was flung at a person': Staffordshire RO DW/1778/1/ii/812. The last quotation refers to the incident on 5 January reported in *Narrative*, pp. 14–15, in which Durbin makes clear that he searched for wires that might have lifted the glass.
26. For example, *Narrative*, p. 22.
27. Barry, 'Piety and the Patient', pp. 161–2.
28. Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 29. Dyer's diary identifies him as attending on 28 January and 6 February and as the clergyman involved on 10 February. Seyer's undermaster was James Brown, who reported on the affair to Dartmouth.
29. BCL 4533, under 1762.
30. BCL 22477, under 1761. Ironically, Catcott is best known for his championship of the authenticity of the Rowley forgeries of Thomas Chatterton.
31. BCL 12196, under 1761. Another account, based on Durbin's narrative, can be found in BCL 7956, fo. 272.
32. In 1788, the surgeon Samuel Norman, seeking to discredit the later 'possession' of George Lukins of Yatton near Bristol, refers to the Cock Lane ghost being discovered to be mercenary, but makes no mention of the Lamb Inn case, despite the fact that several of the participants had been connected with this case (Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, p. 15). The Lukins case is discussed below (nn. 97, 105) and in the next chapter.
33. Staffordshire Record Office DW/1778/1/ii/812.
34. *Arminian Magazine*, xx (1797), pp. 200–2, reprinting letter of 'H.D.' to John Wesley of 5 August 1743. Durbin, assuming it was him, described himself as then 'a student of philosophy for two years'; this would be about three years after his apothecary apprenticeship had ended (see n. 105 below). He had heard George Whitefield at the Baldwin Street religious society and then been given a copy of the Homilies by Wesley, after which he began to yearn for Christ. In his vision he had seen a very bright light arising from the side of a hill, which seemed to enlighten his whole soul; the enlightenment had lasted all the next day. There is an obituary of Durbin in *Methodist Magazine* 2 (1799), pp. 487–9.

35. Nothing in Dyer's accounts of Mrs Haynes' distrust of the children, however, confirms John Evans' statement in 1824: 'Mrs. Haynes had the two girls to her house, still known as Wick-Court, and put them to sleep in one bed on a middle floor. Noises were heard in the night, as theretofore at the Lamb, and, on visiting the bed, Miss Molly was found wanting. Search being made, she was discovered hiding in an upper room, with newly made scratches on her innocent flesh. Nothing alarmed by these supernatural tokens, Mrs. Haynes directed the natural application of a birchen rod to Miss Molly's sensible posteriors; and Dobby was promised a spice of the same wholesome discipline, if she ventured any like experiment upon her hostess's credulity. The Spirit of Evil from that day departed from these precious lamb-kins, and was no more heard of.' (*Chronological Outline*, p. 279) Nor does this account fit the chronology of the case, as the disturbances continued long after the stay at the Haynes's. For the intellectual interests of the (Tory) Haynes family see Barry, 'Chatterton', pp. 57–8.
36. Keate, *Unfortunate Wife* described how she and her husband had been unable to sell a house outside Lawford's Gate, Bristol, for three years due to the 'mistaken notion' that it was haunted by the ghost of a man who had died there after living there 36 years; in 1754 they had to move in themselves to scotch the 'scandalous report' (p. 5).
37. See, for example, 'The real plotters of this invasion of the public peace and news-loving propriety were Mrs. Nelmes [sic] and her daughter Mrs. Giles, the grandmother and mother of "Miss Molly and Dobby," for the purpose of depreciating the value of the house, of which Mrs. Nelmes became the purchaser. An elder sister of the two bewitched ones survived, to share with them the proceeds, on transfer of the premises to other hands.' (Evans, *Chronological Outline*, p. 279). Cf. Nicholls and Taylor, *Bristol*, vol. 3, p. 196; Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 348–50. It was Giles' wife and her mother, Mrs Elmes, who were held responsible for the fraud in these later accounts, but this was perhaps a redirection of suspicion following Giles' death.
38. Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 17.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 49 (20 July).
40. Barry, 'Piety and the Patient'. See also Barry, 'Publicity'.
41. Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 26. Brown told Dartmouth on 24 February that 'several clergymen have attended within this month and have proposed questions in Latin, Greek and Hebrew and right answers have been given by scratches, nay the most low wispers [sic] have been rightly answered and questions only conceived in the mind' (Staffordshire Record Office DW/1778/1/ii/812). As we have seen, this is also mentioned in the newspaper letter written on 13 February.
42. Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 29 and cf. p. 54: 'it would not answer many questions'.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 18. Eaton's journal shows that scratching noises were a feature of the occurrences from the start, and that by 2 January, at the latest, the witnesses were scratching the bedpost a number of times and being answered with the same number of scratches, but there is no mention of specific questions

- being asked by this method in Eaton's account, which runs until 10 January (or in Dyer's diary); Staffordshire Record Office DW/1778/1/ii/812.
46. Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 20.
  47. *Ibid.*, p. 27 (the translations here and below are those given in the footnotes to the *Narrative*).
  48. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
  49. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
  50. *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 3 August 1765; Barry, 'Piety and the Patient', pp. 165–7.
  51. See also his *New Introduction*.
  52. Perkins, *Discourse* was published posthumously in 1608.
  53. Henry More (1614–87) and Anthony Horneck (1641–97) were both close collaborators of Joseph Glanvill, the former editing Glanvill's *Saducismus* and the latter contributing to it an account of the Swedish witchcraft trials of 1669–70. William Burkitt (1650–1703) first published his *Expository Notes and Practical Observations on the Holy Evangelists* in 1700, and it went through many editions as *Expository Notes with Practical Observations on the New Testament*. Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687–1752) published an edition of the Greek New Testament at Tübingen in 1743, and his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (Tübingen, 1742) was often reprinted into the nineteenth century.
  54. Samuel Shuckford (c.1694–1754), *The Sacred and Profane History of the World Connected* (London, 1728 and many later editions); Richard Mead (1673–1754), *Medica Sacra* (London, 1749), translated in 1755 as *Medica Sacra or a Commentary on the Most Remarkable Diseases Mentioned in the Holy Scriptures*.
  55. For excellent guidance on the issues involved, see Holmes, 'Popular Culture?'. On possible conflicts between male and female attitudes to the trials see also Holmes, 'Women' and Sharpe, 'Women'.
  56. Staffordshire Record Office, DW/1778/1/ii/812; *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* 25 November 1752, 20 February 1762; *Lloyd's Evening Post* 15 February 1762. For counter-magic see Owen Davies, 'Healing Charms'.
  57. Durbin, *Narrative*, pp. 11–13.
  58. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
  59. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–13.
  60. *Ibid.*, p. 13. Eaton says this was 'three days before' the events on 5 January.
  61. *Ibid.*, p. 14. Eaton confirms that the first words were heard on 5 January but describes the witch Dobby saw as an 'old woman in ragged clothes a ragged cap and her stockings full of holes, with staring eyes and shortish (the child's own words)', who was the same woman she and her sister had seen in the yard some days before, when she had asked them 'some questions about their going into the country'.
  62. *Ibid.*, p. 15. Eaton confirms that the bite marks and spittle first appeared on 6 January. But Eaton had reported on 14 December, his first day of involvement, that the children claimed to see 'something black and as big as a small puppy dog' run across a chest of drawers at the foot of the bed, and that squeaking like that of a rat was heard in the bed.
  63. *Ibid.*, p. 17. Eaton confirms Rouquet's 'earnest and fervent prayers' for the children on 7 January and confirms that he was there again the next evening.



64. In Barry, 'Piety and the Patient', pp. 161–2, I contrasted Rouquet's willingness to act in this way with the refusal of the other Anglican clergy involved. I have since discovered a suggestion (in Nicholls and Taylor, *Bristol*, vol. 3, p. 196) that the Behmenist minister of St Werburgh's (where Rouquet was later curate), Richard Symes, said prayers in the church for 'two children grievously tormented'. This was not, of course, the same as praying directly over the children, but even this act apparently caused great offence, with many people quitting the church in disgust. Dyer records on Sunday 31 January that he (Dyer) 'put up a note at St Werburghs for the children as I did also last Sunday after church' and on 21 February 'the following note was put up at St Werburgh's this morning vizt "Prayers are desired for two children who continue to be grievously tormented".' Symes, who was a close friend of Dyer, who kept him informed about the case, presumably knew about Dyer's notes, but Dyer does not state that he actually said prayers for them during the service.
65. Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 17.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
68. *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–5. Cf. Dyer's diary 30 November and 7 December, discussed later.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 39. See *Pope's Bath Chronicle*, 26 November 1761, for an advertisement for the 'London, Bath and Bristol Flying Waggon, by way of the Devizes' run by Giles and others; he had been the local agent for a London waggon at the Lamb Inn as far back as 1747 (Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 269).
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 41–2.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 53.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 45–7.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 47–8.
77. BCL 20095, 15 and 16 May 1762.
78. Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 48.
79. *Sketchley's Bristol Directory*, p. 51. His will was proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 14th December 1787, so he is probably the William James who died 5 February 1787 aged 75, with a monument in the nave of St Philip and St Jacob, Bristol (Bigland, *Historical, Monumental and Genealogical Collections*, p. 1565); this also records the deaths of his father, John, from Hereford (d. 12 February 1762, aged 82), his wife, Elizabeth, aged 78 in 1798, six infant children and two adult sons, Rev. Edward Evans James (d. 1771, aged 23) and William (d. 1777, aged 25, in the East Indies). James was operating his London wagons by 1758 (Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 268), and in 1763 one of his clerks (William Dawson) stole £1700–1800 in cash from the wagons and a silver watch from James, for which he was tried in 1764 (BCL 20095, fos 128 and 134). In 1771 he held the mortgage of Joseph Mason's lunatic asylum at Stapleton (BRO 29996 1c), and in 1773 the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported the support given by William James and son (Bath and Bristol carriers) for trials on new

rollers for wagons (vol. 43, p. 559). The son was probably John Sartain James, who by the 1780s was running the wagon service from London to Bath and Bristol (see Gerhold, *Road Transport*, p. 228) and in 1796 is named one of the sons and residuary legatees of William James, along with his brother the Revd Samuel James of Radstock (SRO BC153/2712/3).

80. Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 19.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 20–1.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 23–5.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 33 onwards.
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 35–7. On 18 February Dyer reported that he was ‘fatigued’ by the affair.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
89. See n. 79 above; *Bath and Bristol Guide*, p. 47; Bigland, *Historical, Monumental and Genealogical Collections*, pp. 835–6; *Full and True Account* (discussed in *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*, 2 (1884), p. 332).
90. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
91. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–5.
92. *Bristol Journal*, 15 January 1774 (epitaph by W.O. of Marshfield to William Lluellins, who had died aged 86 on 2 December 1773). The poem was copied in Bodleian GA Glos B4a, fo. 76 and reproduced in Fairley, *Epitaphiana*, pp. 66–7. Llewellyn may well be the man who produced a survey of Stoke Gifford and Stapleton for the Badminton estate in 1733; see also *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*, 4 (1890), p. 469.
93. [Southey], *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 342; Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 224, citing the *London Weekly Miscellany*, 1 September 1739. *Bristol Weekly Intelligencer*, 29 December 1750 mentions an old woman fortune-teller in Mitchell Lane and *Bristol Journal*, 15 September 1752 mentions six impostors practising near Lawfords Gate.
94. See Malcolmson, ‘A Set’; Dresser, ‘Moravians’, pp. 121–7 (memoir of Samuel Tippet); Poole, ‘To Be a Bristolian’.
95. Norman, *Great Apostle*, pp. 10–11; Evans, *Chronological Outline*, pp. 278–9; *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal*, 1 March 1788; SRO Q/SR.359/2/27–29; BRO 22936/144/2/4–6, 10–11 and 21; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 3 August 1791; TNA, Home Office 47/15, fos 134, 282–7. I owe the final two references and the parish register information given here to the kindness of Mike Slater, who also alerted me to the link with Nathaniel Biggs.
96. Staffordshire Record Office, DW 1778/1/ii/812; Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 47.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 24. This was probably the family of Robinson Tudway, a hosier in St Thomas Street, whose death Dyer records in April 1763, leaving a widow, Ann, who later lived in Carolina Street/Court. Dyer records that ‘Miss Tudway’ died there in 1770. Intriguingly in 1773 Rowland Hill, then Brown’s curate at Kingston near Taunton, married a Mary Tudway, born in 1747, though she may have been from the Tudway family of Wells; when in London in 1777 Dyer visited Clement Tudway, MP for Wells. ‘Hill’ ODNB; BCL 20095, fos 127, 156, 183, 190.
98. Barry, ‘Piety and the Patient’, pp. 174–5.

99. Durbin, *Narrative*, p. 54.
100. Ibid., p. 55. For cunning folk see Davies, 'Cunning Folk in England'; Davies, 'Cunning Folk in the Medical Marketplace'; Davies, *Cunning Folk*.
101. BCL 20095, 7 December 1762.
102. Durbin was apprenticed (as the son of a Somerset gentleman) to Rice Charleton, apothecary, on 13 June 1733 for a premium of £100 and freed as an 'apothecary' and apprentice of Charleton on 29 June 1747. In the later possession case involving Lukins, 'Mr Henry Durbin of Bristol, who hath been in the practice of physick 50 years' is one of the witnesses to Lukins' condition cited by the Temple minister, Jacob Easterbrook, who like Rouquet had been trained by the Methodists and who carried out an exorcism of Lukins with the aid of six Methodist preachers (Easterbrook, *Appeal*, p. 30). In his attack on Easterbrook and Lukins, the surgeon Norman notes that Durbin was a chemist but had never practised as apothecary, surgeon, man midwife or physician (*Great Apostle*, p. 28). Norman identifies several of Easterbrook's other Bristol witnesses as Behmenists but does not specifically accuse Durbin of being one. Easterbrook had been James Brown's curate at Portishead 1776–8, and Brown was one of the Anglican ministers 'most cordial in the belief of supernatural influences' who had agreed that Lukins was afflicted supernaturally but would not join Easterbrook in praying over him (*Appeal*, pp. 7–8).
103. Barry, 'Piety and the Patient', pp. 170–5; Barry, 'Publicity'.
104. Durbin, *Narrative*, pp. 26–7, 48.
105. Ibid., pp. 14, 17, 23, 40, 45, 53. Eaton's account includes testimony of pinching being felt by his wife and daughter, and Brown's extracts from Dyer's diary on 15 December 1761 report that Dyer himself felt a pinch and 'saw a small hand and arms draw away from my fingers': Staffordshire Record Office DW/1778/1/ii/812.
106. See, for example, Sharpe, *Instruments*, pp. 253–5. R. Trevor Davies also emphasises the Methodist connection in his survey of late-eighteenth-century material but fails to register the Bristol episode: *Four Centuries*, pp. 188–94.
107. See Rack, 'Doctors'; MacDonald, 'Religion'; Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, pp. 387–8, 431–6; Davies, 'Methodism'; Webster, 'Those Distracting Terrors'; Rack, 'Man'.
108. Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works vol. 21*, p. 352 (27 March 1762).

## 7 Methodism and Mummery: The Case of George Lukins

1. Grose, *Provincial Glossary*, 'Popular Superstitions', p. 4; Ferriar, 'Of Popular Illusions', pp. 58, 114–16, reviewed in *Analytic Review* 9:3 (March 1791), pp. 258–9. Ferriar's article and later *Essay* were frequently copied, for example in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1797) vol. 15, pp. 421–2; Taylor, *Apparitions*, pp. 211–13 ('The Somersetshire Demoniac'); 'Ferriar' ODNB.
2. [Lovell], *Bristol*, pp. 9–10, lines 165–99 reviewed in *Critical Review* 13 (April 1795), pp. 475–6.
3. Priest, *Wonders*, pp. 384–91; Welby, *Signs*, pp. 242–50, stating, 'the narrative of Mr Easterbrook is in every respect supported by authorities of unquestionable veracity and recommended by its perspicuous and intelligible details'.

4. *Gentleman's Magazine* (March 1814), pp. 217–19; *London Magazine* 2:8 (August 1820), p. 193; *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction* 4:100 (August 1824), pp. 147–50; *Christian Observer* 32:4 (April 1832), p. 200.
5. Nicholls and Taylor, *Bristol*, vol. 3, p. 215; Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 483–4; Rack, 'Doctors', pp. 147–9; Kent, *Wesley*, pp. 75–6; Webster, 'Those Distracting Terrors', pp. 384–5; Webster, 'Seeing Salvation', p. 383 n. 26.
6. Davies, *Witchcraft*, pp. 19–22. I have not read a 90-minute radio play on the case by John Fletcher, 'The Mendip Demoniac', broadcast on 15 and 21 December 1980 on BBC Radio 4.
7. *Narrative of Extraordinary Case*; Easterbrook, *Appeal*, pp. 5–8, 12–13, 17; Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, p. 9. For Westcote and other class leaders see Kent (ed.), 'Wesleyan Membership'. Evans, *Chronological Outline*, claimed in 1824 that Lukins had 'exhibited in Temple Church' two or three times before 13 June and that on his way to the church he also invited Messrs Bath and Pinkney of the cutlery and hardware shop at 1 Redcliff Street to 'be witnesses of his premeditated calling of "spirits from the vasty deep"', but they refused (pp. 297–8).
8. See below for Wake's biography.
9. Easterbrook, *Appeal*, p. 12.
10. *Seven Devils!* (Bodleian Mal. 709 (2)); Harrison, *Second Coming*, p. 53; Freeth, *Political Songster*, pp. 148–9, also found in *Parsley's Lyric Repository*, pp. 18–19. It is possible that hymn 202, on the dispossessed demoniac of Luke chapter 8 verse 35 found in a 1789 Bristol publication (Hoskins, *Hymns*, pp. 224–5) was prompted by the case, as Hoskins, an independent minister, ran a chapel in Temple parish, with Easterbrook's blessing (Hey, *Zion's Lamentation*, p. 25).
11. Easterbrook, *Appeal*, p. 13; Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 7–9.
12. Easterbrook, *Appeal*, pp. 18–19; 'White' ODNB.
13. Easterbrook, *Appeal*, pp. 17–18; *Narrative of Extraordinary Case*, p. 23; Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 9–10.
14. *Narrative of Extraordinary Case*, pp. 4, 10–19.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 23 of first edition and pp. 23–4 of later editions.
16. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 10–14.
17. Easterbrook, *Appeal*, p. 21.
18. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 14–17.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 18–22.
20. John Rylands Library, John Walton Autobiography and Diaries 1763–89, vol. ix, pt 2 (1788–9), fo. 31, 10 July 1788; *Notes and Queries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser VI no. 145 (for 9 October 1858), 298.
21. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 26–8.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 22–5.
23. Easterbrook, *Appeal*, pp. 21–2; Norman, *Great Apostle*, p. 12.
24. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, p. 31.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 29–32.
27. Andrew (ed.), *London*, p. 229; Webster, 'Those Distracting Terrors', pp. 384–5.
28. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 58:1 (July 1788), p. 609.

29. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 32–4. Norman, *Great Apostle*, p. 18 refers to ‘my last letter undersigned Philopatris’.
30. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 36, 38–9; Norman, *Great Apostle*, p. 14.
31. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, p. 9.
32. Easterbrook, *Appeal*, p. 22; Norman, *Great Apostle*, pp. 13, 18.
33. Jay, *Autobiography*, vol. 2, pp. 52–4; Telford (ed.), *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 82; *Arminian Magazine*, XII (1789), pp. 155–9, 205–10, 264–6, 324–7, 373–5. Davies, *Witchcraft*, p. 299 n. 70 quotes a manuscript note of 15 October 1834 in a copy of *Narrative of Extraordinary Case in Bath*: ‘Mr Jay told me that in his hearing John Wesley said “I as much believe that Lukins’ case was a real possession as any one recorded in the four evangelists.”’
34. Norman, *Great Apostle*, p. 20; Easterbrook, *Appeal*, pp. 23–4, 30–1.
35. Norman, *Great Apostle*, pp. 3–4, 9–15, 28, 30.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19, 27. For the letters from St George’s see also Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, p. 40; Easterbrook, *Appeal*, p. 29.
37. Norman, *Great Apostle*, pp. 19, 16–17.
38. *The County Magazine for 1788*, 2 (Salisbury, 1788), pp. 92–4, 127–8; *The Weekly Entertainer*, 12 (Sherborne, 1788), pp. 3–12, 187–8.
39. *Monthly Review*, 79 (September 1788), pp. 276–7; *European Magazine and London Review* 15 January 1789, pp. 42–4; *Critical Review*, 67 (January 1789), p. 80; *English Review*, 13 (March 1789), p. 228.
40. Barry, *Methodism*, pp. 8–9, 15–17.
41. *Public Advertiser*, 5 July 1790.
42. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, p. 22.
43. *Arminian Magazine*, X (1787), p. 605; *Arminian Magazine*, XI (1788), p. 607; Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works vol. 24*, p. 108. Broadbent had frequently travelled with Wesley in the 1780s: see Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works vol. 23*, p. 145.
44. Brettell, ‘Memoir’, p. 723.
45. John Rylands Library, John Valton Autobiography and Diaries 1763–89, vol. ix, pt 2 (1788–9), fo. 24, 12 June 1788; Jackson (ed.), *Lives*, vol. 6, pp. 127–8. Valton had first served at Bristol in 1778 and in 1786 had married a Methodist from nearby Almondsbury (Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works vol. 23*, pp. 77 n. 81, 108 n. 37).
46. Lascoon, in *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal* 16 August 1788, claims, ‘it is necessary that the possessed shew by some preternatural sign that they are really possessed, such as by speaking a foreign language which they never before knew; by foretelling with intrepidity and constancy future contingent events; by revealing secrets which they could by no natural means become acquainted with; by exerting a strength of body out of the usual course of nature etc and these repeatedly’.
47. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, p. 8; *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal*, 19 July 1788. For McGeary, appointed headmaster of Kingswood aged 22 in 1784, so still only 26, see Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works vol. 24*, p. 108 n. 2.
48. John Rylands Library, John Valton Autobiography and Diaries 1763–89, vol. ix, pt 2 (1788–9), fos 26–7; Norman, *Great Apostle*, p. 31.
49. Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works vol. 24*, p. 70; Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 482; Morgan, *John Wesley*, pp. 20–2; Dresser,

- Slavery*, p. 141 (pp. 132–3 discuss Wesleyan anti-slavery, but no Methodists are named on the abolition committee established in January 1788 p. 139).
50. Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works* vol. 19, pp. 109–12, 413–14; Raimo, 'Spiritual Harvest'. Southey, *Life*, vol. 1, pp. 203, 209–13, 238, 254–60, 503–4 discusses the Kingswood and other paroxysms at great length (and see vol. 2, pp. 88–9, 209–10, 239 for discussion of Wesley's views on the supernatural, his credulity and his printing of stories in the *Arminian Magazine*).
  51. *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 26 July 1788.
  52. *Narrative of Extraordinary Case*, p. 4; *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 5 July 1788.
  53. Newton, *Dissertation*, pp. 20–1, 32, 22–3, 25, 27, 57, 37, 60; Farmer, *Dissertation*. Newton's arguments are echoed very closely by the letter of 'J.M. of Tetbury' in *Bonner and Middleton's Bristol Journal* of 2 August 1788.
  54. Barry, 'Piety and the Patient'; Raimo, 'Spiritual Harvest'; Elliott-Binns, *Early Evangelicals*.
  55. For his family see [http://easterbrook.org.uk/sw\\_bristol.html](http://easterbrook.org.uk/sw_bristol.html); and many newspaper references, e.g. *Bristol Gazette*, 24 July 1788; *Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal* 26 July 1788; *Bonner and Middleton's Bristol Journal*, 6 December 1788 (sister's death). For his career see [www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/](http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/), 38090; Goss, 'Early Methodism', p. 101; Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, pp. 131–2; Seymour, *Life*, vol. 2, pp. 96–7; Telford (ed.), *Letters*, vol. 5, pp. 82–3.
  56. Sackett, *James Rouquet*, p. 30; Chubb, *Bristol Journal*, p. 32; *Christian Guardian*, 2 (Bristol, 1802), pp. 165–6; Power, *Rise*, pp. 132–4.
  57. Criche, *Sermon*; Moore, *Sermon*; Hey, *Zion's Lamentation*, pp. 23–6; Barry, *Token*. Barry had dedicated a collection of his sermons to Easterbrook in 1789: *Twelve Sermons*, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.
  58. Atmore, *Methodist Memorial*, p. 110; Brettell, 'Memoir', p. 723.
  59. Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works* vol. 23, pp. 187, 194, 256, 419 and *Works* vol. 24, pp. 60, 71, 110, 123–4, 156, 168, 188, 239, 256, 310, 330–1.
  60. Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works* vol. 23, p. 194. Wesley was wrong about Alexander Catcott's father, A.S. Catcott, who had never been vicar of Temple, and several other clergymen had followed Bedford (who resigned the living in 1713) before Catcott junior succeeded in 1767. See: [www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/](http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/), 33720 and 49889 (Catcotts), 32784 and 49369 (Bedford, the latter wrongly stating he remained vicar of Temple until 1739); Barry, 'Piety and the Patient', pp. 166–7, on the Catcotts and Bedford; Barry, 'Hell', on Bedford.
  61. Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works* vol. 24, p. 71. Morgan, *John Wesley*, p. 30 n. 138 mistakenly assumes the 'controversy' here was the Lukins one, rather than slavery.
  62. Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works* vol. 24, pp. 123–4, 168, 188; Telford (ed.), *Letters*, vol. 8, p. 260.
  63. Moore, *Sermon*, pp. 16–17. Corry and Evans in 1816 reproduce the text of the monument to Easterbrook in Temple Church, noting, 'To the piety and the benevolence of Mr. Easterbrook's character, the general esteem and approbation of his contemporaries bear an honourable and an indubitable testimony. It is true that the credulity which induced him to countenance the imposture of George Lukins, the pretended Demoniac, gave grounds to suspect a weakness of intellect, and rendered both his name and his character the object of ridicule. But it should also be remembered, that this was as

much the credulity of the age as of the man and that it requires the exertion of a vigour of intellect conceded only to a few, to rise superior to the prejudices of education, and to be able to reject opinions which are held sacred by a vast majority of our contemporaries. That Mr. Easterbrook was not able to do this, is no reflection on his memory, which is still affectionately cherished by those who knew and appreciated his moral worth.' (Corry and Evans, *History*, II, pp. 270–1)

64. Easterbrook, *Appeal*, p. 20; *Narrative of Extraordinary Case*, pp. 10–11, 17.
65. Easterbrook, *Appeal*, pp. 7–8, 30–1. See [www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/](http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/), 49186 and 51657 (Symes), 26230 and 49493 (Brown), 48263 and 48265 (Robins), 49847 (Wait), 120373 (Beale). Rev. Thomas Beale, perpetual curate of Bengeworth 1772–93, was a friend of John Wesley: Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works* vol. 23, pp. 58, 77, 195 and Wesley also knew a William Wait of Belluton in north Somerset: Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works* vol. 24, p. 168. Fisher, who lived near Bath, had provided the preface to a work by Jacob Behmen published in Bristol by Mills (Barry, 'Piety and the Patient', p. 156 n. 24). In 1783 Easterbrook was one of three sponsors recommending Dr Thomas Robins for an Aberdeen DD; the others were admirers of William Law (as was Robins) and of Swedenborg (*ibid.*, p. 171 n. 58). James Brown and Richard Symes are discussed in the previous chapter, and Symes in *ibid.*, pp. 154, 156, 163, 166n. William Dyer reports in his diary that on 25 June 1784 Symes said that Easterbrook had told him of a Temple woman, a notorious drunkard, now cured of her love of liquor as a result of conversing with the apparitions of several people, and Dyer noted that this 'strange conversion' took place since Easterbrook's ministry in the parish (Bristol Reference Library, Bristol Collection, 20095). Brown, however, was also a friend of Samuel Norman, who refers to him favourably and claims he 'confirmed the truth' to Easterbrook of much of what Norman had stated in his earlier work: Norman, *Great Apostle*, pp. 7, 18.
66. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, p. 22; Norman, *Great Apostle*, pp. 6–7, 17.
67. Southey, *Life*, vol. 1, p. 207 and vol. 2, p. 397; Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works* vol. 24, p. 71.
68. Brettell, 'Memoir', p. 722; Morgan (ed.), 'Letters'; *Letters Lately Published at Bristol*; Bates, *Guinea Street*; Bates, *Portland Chapel*.
69. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, p. 41.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 44–5.
73. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 3, 29; Easterbrook, *Appeal*, pp. 30–1.
74. [www.allnamesuk.co.uk/ri/1682.htm](http://www.allnamesuk.co.uk/ri/1682.htm); [www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/](http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/), 38019, 49852, 49855 (Wakes) and 7437 and 84666 (Barry); P.C.C. Wills 7 Jan. 1758 (Robert Wake) and 26 May 1800 (Basil Wake); Jacqueline Wheeler (ed. Alan Roberts), 'You need your Denshires when you are a Wake' (unpublished paper, kindly sent me by Alan Roberts); Watkins et al., *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 366; SRO BC/153/2733/4, 6 and 9; Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works* vol. 23, pp. 386, 533.
75. SRO 0036/3/3; Wilson, 'Shropshire Woman', pp. 100, 104, 121; 'Randolph' ODNB; [www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/](http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/), 40393. For his father see Barry, 'Piety and the Patient', p. 170.

76. Wake, *Two Sermons*, pp. 5–9, 11–13.
77. Wake, *Liberal Version*, preface and pp. xvii, xxiv; Rivers, *Literary Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 347 (he is much kinder to Randolph (pp. 185–6)).
78. *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 23 February 1805 (his will was proved in the PCC on 4 March 1805 as a Yatton surgeon); [www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/](http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/), 47326, 47328, 47330; Whiting, *Baptist Bibliography*, vol. II wrongly credits Norman's publications to Samuel Norman, Baptist minister of Loughwood and then Bampton. Norman may have been related to Mrs John Norman (d. 1779), an early Methodist convert in Bristol, whose son-in-law James Ireland wrote an account of her life (*Arminian Magazine*, XII (1789), p. 240; Baker (ed.), *Works* vol. 25, p. 626 n. 4), which might explain his friendship with Easterbrook. Ireland was a former sheriff of Somerset and JP who lived at Brislington, near Bristol, and was a close friend of Fletcher, Wesley and other leading evangelicals (Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *Works* vol. 24, p. 155 n. 16).
79. British Library 3044 e.58; *Annual Register for 1788*, 216–17 also reports Norman's death as it appears in the Bristol papers; Bristol Reference Library, Bristol Collection, 20095, 30 September 1788.
80. Norman, *Two Letters*, pp. xv, xvii, xxv, xxiii, xix, xxi, xxxiii, vi, 101. Disney, *Loose Hints*, p. 9 notes Norman's sufferings for the cause in a footnote.
81. Apart from Norman's books, the sources for the statements here are Barraclough, *History*, pp. 32–3; Mary Mason, 'Portbury Hundred Church Records, including Yatton Marriages 1754–1775' at [http://www.portbury-hundred.co.uk/index\\_files/page0003.html](http://www.portbury-hundred.co.uk/index_files/page0003.html) Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 12, 19, 20 (confirming that Lukins' brother Joseph was 'a very worthy man'); Norman, *Great Apostle*, p. 8.
82. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 12, 42; Norman, *Great Apostle*, pp. 23–4.
83. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 18–20, 39, 41; Norman, *Great Apostle*, p. 24.
84. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 10–11, 13; Norman, *Great Apostle*, pp. 23, 26; Easterbrook, *Appeal*, p. 6.
85. Norman, *Authentic Anecdotes*, p. 42; Norman, *Great Apostle*, pp. 9–10, 20; Brettell, 'Memoir', p. 723.
86. Norman, *Great Apostle*, pp. 10–11. For more on Bristol cunning folk, and especially Mrs Biggs, see the previous chapter.
87. Norman, *Great Apostle*, pp. 21, 29–30; BCL 20095 fo. 277; *Notes and Queries* 2<sup>nd</sup> series VI (1858) no. 143, 253–4, citing Evans, *Chronological Outline*, p. 297; Jackson (ed.), *Lives*, vol. 6, p. 127; Barraclough, *History*, pp. 32–3.
88. George Lukins was buried at Bedminster St John on 6 February 1805, aged 63 according to the register, though only 61 according to earlier sources. The cunning woman is Martha Biggs, buried there on 12 December 1804, discussed in the previous chapter. My thanks to Mike Slater for the burial references for both Biggs and Lukins. I was alerted to the obituary by the entry on Lukins on the local history website [www.flickr.com/photos/briz-zebornandbred/2133205804](http://www.flickr.com/photos/briz-zebornandbred/2133205804), although this does not include the further paper coverage of the death. His bad leg might have been the one broken earlier and treated by Norman, but Norman also asserted that when Lukins had been admitted to St George's Hospital in London in 1775 he had claimed his problem was lameness, as before he went to hospital he had assumed the



appearance of a contracted leg, and that it was this complaint for which he was dismissed as incurable (*Authentic Anecdotes*, pp. 40–1). *Jackson's Oxford Journal* noted the death at Bristol of 'George Lukins of Yatton, once a subject of popularity as a demoniac' (no. 2704, 23 Feb. 1805).

89. Norman claimed that before 1788, 'pretending to the immediate inspiration of the Devil, Lukins prognosticated the death of several people of credit... people of weak habits, whose age only would have rendered them infirm' but that he was often mistaken (*Great Apostle*, p. 11).
90. Lewis (ed.), *Correspondence*, pp. 276, 279–81; Roberts, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 120. This is cited by Kent, *Wesley*, pp. 75–6 and More's attitude contrasted with Wesley's credulity.
91. Lewis (ed.), *Correspondence*, p. 283; Roberts (ed.), *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 206; Stott, *Hannah More*, pp. 108–9, 246, 248–9; [www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/](http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/), 41052 (Wylde).

## 8 Conclusion

1. Compare Porter, 'Witchcraft' and Wilson, *Magical Universe* with Saler, 'Modernity' and Walsham, 'Reformation'.
2. Davies, *Witchcraft*; Newton and Bath (eds), *Witchcraft*.
3. Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 591–3; Barry, 'Introduction', pp. 12–13.
4. Scot, *Discoverie*; Wootton, 'Reginald Scot'. For the changing significance of 'illusions' and 'tricks' see: Iliffe, 'Lying Words'; Schmidt, 'From Demon Possession'; Mangan, *Performing Dark Arts*; Clark, 'Reformation'; Clark, *Vanities*.
5. Sharpe, *Instruments*; Hunter, 'Witchcraft Controversy'; Hunter, 'Witchcraft and Decline' and also Redwood, *Reason*.
6. Levack, *Witch Hunt*; Unsworth, 'Witchcraft'; Bostridge, 'Witchcraft'; Elmer, 'Saints'; Bostridge, *Witchcraft*; Levack, 'Decline and End of Witchcraft'; Elmer, 'Towards a Politics'; Davies, 'Decriminalising'; Newton and Bath (eds), *Witchcraft*; Gaskill, 'Witchcraft and Evidence'.
7. Hutchinson, 'Supernaturalism'; Webster, *From Paracelsus*; Shapiro, *Probability*; Dear, 'Miracles'; Dear, 'From Truth'; Schaffer, 'Godly Men'; Daston and Park, *Wonders*; Serjeantson, 'Testimony and Proof'; Sargent, 'Scientific Expertise'; Harrison, 'Newtonian Science'; Harrison, *Bible*; Hunter, 'Magic'; Hunter, *Occult Laboratory*; Elmer, 'Medicine'; Mandelbrote, 'Uses'; Shapiro, *Culture*; Cooper and Gregory (eds), *Signs*.
8. Thomas, *Religion*; Larner, *Enemies*; Larner, *Witchcraft*; Barry, 'Piety and the Patient'; Champion, *Pillars*; Clark, *Thinking*; Walsham, *Providence*; Gaskill, 'Displacement'; Gaskill, *Crime*; Barry, 'Hell'; Clark, 'Providence'; Walsham, 'Miracles'; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*; Jankovic, 'Politics'; Shaw, *Miracles*; Handley, *Visions*; Sneddon, *Witchcraft*; Walsham, 'Invisible Helpers'; Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*.
9. Barry, 'Bristol'.
10. Kittredge, *Witchcraft*; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*; Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*; Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials*; Holmes, 'Popular Culture?'.
11. Shamanism: Ginzburg, *Night Battles*; Ginzburg, *Ecstasies*; Wilby, *Cunning Folk*; Wilby, *Visions*. Demonism: Sharpe, 'Devil'; Clark, *Thinking*; Oldridge,

- 'Protestant Conceptions'; Oldridge, *Devil*; Briggs, 'Witchcraft'; Johnstone, 'Protestant Devil'; Johnstone, *Devil*; Timbers, 'Witches' Sect'. Psychological needs: Roper, *Oedipus*; Willis, *Malevolent Nurture*; Purkiss, 'Women's Stories'; Purkiss, 'Desire'; Marshman, 'Exorcism'; Roper, *Witch Craze*.
12. Gregory, 'Witchcraft'; Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours*; Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*; Purkiss, *Witch*; de Windt, 'Witchcraft'; Sharpe, 'Disruption'; Sharpe, *Bewitching*; Jackson, 'Witches'.
  13. Kittredge, *Witchcraft*; Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*; de Blecourt, 'Witchdoctors'; Davies, 'Healing Charms'; Davies, 'Cunning Folk in England'; Davies, *People*; Davies, 'Cunning Folk in the Medical Marketplace'; Gijswijt-Hofstra, 'Witch-Craft'; Davies, *Cunning Folk* (and see [www.cunningfolk.com](http://www.cunningfolk.com)); Mitchell, 'Witchcraft'; Semmens, 'Usage'; Semmens, 'I will not go to the Devil'; Semmens, *Witch*; Haggard, 'Archaeology' (and see <http://www.apotropaios.co.uk>).
  14. Walker, *Unclean Spirits*; Harley, 'Explaining Salem'; Sluhovsky, *Believe Not*; Ferber, *Demonic Possession*; Gibson, *Possession*; Almond, *Demonic Possession*; Cambers, 'Demonic Possession'; Midelfort, *Exorcism*; Westaway and Harrison, 'Surey Demoniac'; Bonzol, 'Medical Diagnosis'.

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