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**The Ghost in Early Modern Protestant Culture:
Shifting perceptions of the afterlife, 1450-1700.**

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Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Amanda Jane McKeever, 27/09/2010

Abstract

University of Sussex, Amanda McKeever

The Ghost in Early Modern Protestant Culture: Shifting perceptions of the afterlife, 1450-1700

My thesis seeks to address the continuity, change and the syncreticism of ideas regarding post-mortem existence in the wake of the Reformation. Prior to reform, the late Medieval world view of the afterlife was very straightforward. One either went to Heaven via Purgatory, or straight to Hell. In the *exempla* literature of the period, ghosts were seen to provide evidence of the purgatorial system. However, this doctrine was dismantled by reformers who rejected Purgatory wholesale. Reformers then put forth a multiplicity of eschatologies which included various strands of mortalism, none of which allowed for the possibility that the dead could return to the living. In theory therefore, the ghost should have disappeared from the mental landscape, yet it not only survived, but it thrived in Protestant culture.

This raises three key questions which are absolutely central to this thesis. Firstly: by what mechanisms did commitment to ghosts continue in lay and elite discourses in early modern England, when religious authority denied the possibility of their existence? Secondly: what opportunities were there to incorporate ghosts into Anglican or wider Protestant belief? Finally: Why would many Protestant elites want to elide the doctrinal problem of their existence and assert that ghosts existed? The ghost must have served a purpose in a way that nothing else could. It is therefore the purpose of the thesis to examine the shifting role of the ghost in early modern Protestant England.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	piv
<u>Introduction: The Trials and Tribulations of the Early Modern Protestant Ghost</u>	1
I: Historical approaches to the dead: the question of purpose in lay culture	6
II: The question of purpose in elite culture	23
III: Ghostly revelations	29
IV: The ghost story; from fact to fiction	36
<u>Chapter 1: Purgatory, Pilgrimage and Penance: Pre-Reformation relations with the dead 1100-1520</u>	39
I: ‘Allas! Merci, Merci! Merci God almighty!’: Visiting the dead in Purgatory	45
II: ‘bi the dedes and be tha messe sall his penaunce be made lesse’: visitors from Purgatory.	62
III: Monsters of Satan: Revenants in the local community	69
IV: Closing the Door on the Dead	74
<u>Chapter Two: Purgatory, Mortalism and <i>Psychopannychia</i>: The destination of the soul in reformed eschatology.</u>	77
I: Abolition: The Damning of Purgatory	84
II: Resolution? The Problem of Post-Mortem Destination	90
<u>Chapter Three: Witches, Demons and Poltergeists: the influence of Protestant Eschatologies on the Ghost 1580-1650</u>	110
I: The Demonisation of the Ghost: Catholic and Protestant Discourses	117
II: Appropriating the Ghost into the Witchcraft Narrative	136
III: The Separation of the Witch and the Ghost	147
<u>Chapter 4: Mortalism, Sadducism and the Dead: The resurgence of mortalist arguments 1641-1659</u>	158
I: Mortalism, Sadducism and the Dead : the resurgence of mortalist arguments in the 1640’s	163
II: Hobbes and Milton in the 1650’s: Thnetopsychism Reasserted	172
III: The Counter-Attack on the Mortalist Heresy in the 1650’s: The Resurrection of the Ghost by Henry More	177

<u>Chapter 5: “Matters of fact well proved, ought not to be denied”: New Discourse on the Protestant ghost, 1660-1700</u>	186
I: Palpable Experience: Joseph Glanvill and the New Empiricism	193
II: The Collating of Evidence: The New <i>exempla</i> of Thomas Bromhall, Nathaniel Crouch and George Sinclair	203
III: “ <i>Abominable cheats and impostures</i> ”: <i>The Problems of Evidence</i>	218
IV: The Resurrection and the Recycling of the Protestant Dead	228
<u>Chapter 6: From Fact to Fiction: The Rise of the Ghost Story</u>	238
I: “Is’t Thus You Squander Time?”: Liminalities of Time and Space in the Ghost Story	246
II: ‘Almighty vengeance slacks not its dread arme’: Crime and Punishment in the Ghost Story	255
III: ‘It is a most strange and terrible, yet true Relation’: The Language of Truth and the Foundation of the Ghost Story	264
Conclusion	273
Bibliography	277

List of Figures

1. P46: Thomas Carve, 'St.Patrick's Purgatory, Lough Derg, Ireland', *Lyra; sive Anacephalaeosis Hibernica* (Sulzbach, 1666).
2. P52: 'The Weighing of Souls', carving from a door frame, Mont St. Michel, France, 14thC.
3. P53: 'The Battle for the Soul', carving from a door frame, Mont St. Michel, France, 14thC.
4. P54: 'The General Resurrection', wall painting from Bayeux Cathedral, 14thC (restored).
5. P58: 'Purgatory', from Lancing, Richard. *The Dante Encyclopaedia*. London: Garland, 2000. Illustration by Robert Turner.
6. P59: 'The Last Five Temptations', woodcut from a German xylographic block. Book edition of *Ars Moriendi* (Augsburg, 1465).
7. P60: Hieronymus Bosch, Seven Deadly Sins. c.1480.
8. P61: 'The punishment for the sin of pride in Purgatory', a French woodcut published by Antoine Vérard for André Bocard (Paris, 1453).
9. P68: 'Orchestra of the Dead', woodcut by Michael Wolmegut, from Hartmann Schedel. *Liber Chronicum*. (Nuremberg, 1493).
10. P102: 'Lazarus and Dives in Abraham's Bosom', Folio 78, *Codex Aureus of Echternach*, 11thC. (Nuremberg National Museum, Hs.156142).
11. P103: Detail from 'Lazarus and Dives in Abraham's Bosom', Folio 78, *Codex Aureus of Echternach*, 11thC. (Nuremberg National Museum, Hs.156142).
12. P107: 'Lazarus in Abraham's Bosom', window from Bourges Cathedral, c.13thC.
13. P108: 'Abraham's Bosom', window detail from St.Neots Church, Cornwall, c.16th C.
14. P154: Anon, *News from puddle-dock in London* (London, 1674). The cross on the pamphlet was supposed to act as a talisman for the reader.
15. P166: Frontispiece, Richard Overton, *Mans Mortalitie* (Amsterdam, 1644).
16. P195: Frontispiece, Joseph Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (London, 1668).
17. P205: Frontispiece, Thomas Bromhall, *An History of Apparitions* (London, 1658).
18. P215: Frontispiece, Nathaniel Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness* (London, 1688).
19. P216: Woodcut of Ann Bodenham, Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, p11.
20. P219: Frontispiece, Richard Bovet, *Pandæmonium, or the Devil's Cloyster* (London, 1684).
21. P227: 'Geometrical configuration of the elements of the soul', Thomas Wadsworth, *Antipsychothanasia* (London, 1670).
22. P229: Woodcut of the 'Ghost of the Old Man's Head which appeared in the fireplace.' Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, p51.
23. P240: Frontispiece, *The Rest-Less Ghost* (London, 1675).
24. P245: Themes of the ghost pamphlets shown in percentages.
25. P247: Woodcut of the ghost in *The Rest-Less Ghost* (London, 1675).
26. P248: Woodcut of Athenodorus haunted by the ghost of corpse that had been buried in his house. Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, p66.
27. P248: Woodcut of a ghost from Anon, *The Wonder of this Age* (London, 1677).

The trials and tribulations of the early modern Protestant ghost

“What means this thick ill scented mist? What noise is that? Who’s there? Ah! Lightning and at this cold season! Confusion! What’s that I see? Bless me! I shall learn to pray if this continues! Heavens! A Man in my chamber this time of night! I am lost! Undone! Tis my executioner! Speak what! What want’st thou?”¹

This passage, whilst almost comedic in its drama, was not written by any of the early modern playwrights; instead, it was a passage from a pamphlet, printed in the late seventeenth century, to be sold in the street to whoever could spare a few pence. It was not unique, for dozens of these texts survive from the late seventeenth century.

Pamphlets entitled the ‘*true relation of the dreadful ghost*’² and the ‘*strange and dreadful apparition*’³ were plentiful, and rich and complex in detail, loaded with cultural and theological motifs, and such narratives were far more than stories designed to scare the reader. Ephemeral pamphlet literature was not the only literary domain of the ghost. They featured regularly in Elizabethan and Jacobean theatrical productions, and the possibility of their existence was a notion that featured in elite Protestant texts regularly from the 1570’s onwards.

Yet, these texts are problematic, because, according to many Protestant eschatologies, the ghost should not exist. In late medieval Roman Catholic doctrine, ghosts could be allowed within the framework of belief, for they had reinforced the eschatology of Purgatory. Indeed, from the twelfth century onwards, the ghost had been a regular presence, in clerical and monastic writing. These religious works stipulated that, with God’s permission, the souls of the dead who resided in Purgatory could return to the living to solicit suffrages in order to ease their tortuous passage to Heaven. Thomas Aquinas wrote that ‘according to the disposition of Divine Providence separated souls sometimes come forth from their abode and appear to men...that for man’s instruction and intimidation they be permitted to appear to the living; or again in order to seek our suffrages, as to those who are detained in Purgatory.’⁴ The dead could not live amongst us constantly, but could appear when needed.

¹ Anon, *Murder Will Out* (London, 1683) p1.

² Anon, *A True relation of the Dreadful Ghost* (London, 1691).

³ Anon, *A Worlds Wonder* (London, 1659).

⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplementum Tertiæ Partis, Q.6, 1-7 (New York, 1948).

As Aquinas instructed, ‘the saints can appear when they will to the living, but not the damned...while others are unable to do so unless they be permitted.’⁵ The ghost was thought to have been sent by God with a purpose, one which usually illustrated the consequences of sin and improper penance, and so they strengthened the moral and doctrinal teachings of the church. All this, was supposed to have changed when Purgatory was swept away by the Reformation. The eradication of Purgatory from the theological world view created the necessity of forming a new doctrine of post-mortem destination, and so, from the Reformation right until the end of the seventeenth century, Protestants fiercely debated the question of the soul’s afterlife. None of the doctrines that emerged in the aftermath of the Reformation allowed for the possibility of ghosts.

One example was the doctrine of soul sleeping. This view, initially held by Luther, was later to be found among those on the more radical fringe of practice and belief, such as the Anabaptists in continental Europe. Nevertheless, contemporaries recognised several variants of this mortalist heresy.⁶ Psychopannychism was the view that when the body died the soul still existed, but entered a sleep like state, only to be reawakened and rejoined with the new body at the Resurrection. It was only at this point that the body and soul were reunited before entering an immortal state of being. Thnetopsychism was the principle that the soul perished with the body upon death but was reborn and reunited with the body upon the resurrection. The soul was connected with the breath of life, and it was asserted that life and salvation could only be conferred by Divine Grace.⁷ Both Thnetopsychists and Psychopannychists believed in a personal immortality after the resurrection, be it in either Heaven or Hell. The most extreme manifestation of mortalism was Annihilationism (or Sadducism as contemporaries named it) which was the belief that the body and soul both died upon mortal death and that there was no resurrection. None of these three perspectives allowed for a conscious, alert soul after death.⁸

These disparate ‘schools’ of Christian mortalism had no common origin except possibly, among the amorphous ‘Anabaptists’. Even the term ‘Anabaptist’, Norman

⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Q.6, 1-7.

⁶ This view was labelled by Norman Burns as ‘Christian mortalism’, and is itself but a convenient term for referring to a variety of incongruous opinions that had in common only the belief that the soul had no independent, conscious existence after death. Norman Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Harvard, 1972).

⁷ Norman Burns, *Christian Mortalism*, pp12, 18.

Burns argues, is misleading for it implies a coherent theological doctrine, which the many factions and sects did not possess. He points out too, that the Anabaptists were primarily a continental movement that did not gain ground in England. In fact, he argues that this very lack of uniformity of belief was constantly derided ‘by the English Church, the bishops and most of their Puritan critics.’⁹ It was thus relegated to the radical reformist fringe.

This doctrine of mortalism was rejected vociferously by more moderate reformers such as Jean Calvin and Heinrich Bullinger, who contested these ideas as gross heresies and counter-attacked with dogma of their own. In his first work, *Psychopannychia*, of 1534, Calvin directly blasted these mortalist heresies and proposed a philosophy that was more intuitive to the many who had been accustomed to believing in an interim existence for the soul. He argued that the souls of the elect went to Abraham’s Bosom, as related in the tale of Dives and Lazarus in the Gospel of Luke.¹⁰ This, according to Calvin was evidence for a continued *conscious* middle state of the soul, between death and Heaven or Hell. Although, by the seventeenth century, Abraham’s Bosom had increasingly come to be associated with Heaven, Calvin’s original sense was of a paradise, a third place, where the soul awaited the final judgement in a state of felicity marred only by the absence of God. It was, traditionally, a Jewish concept, for Abraham’s Bosom was a section of Sheol (or in Greek, *Hades*), the abode of the dead, where the dead awaited Judgement Day. The elect resided in felicity and comfort until the Last Day, when they would go to Heaven. The damned, meanwhile, resided in Hades by a lake of burning sulphur until they were to be cast in it after the Last Judgement.¹¹ Many of the Church Fathers also supported this belief, so the Calvinist doctrine had a sound scriptural and Patristic pedigree. This place, Calvin

⁸ The terms Psychopannychia, Thnetopsychist and Annihilationist or more commonly Sadducism were all terms used by contemporaries.

⁹ Burns, *Christian Mortalism*, p119.

¹⁰ Jean Calvin, *Psychopannychia* (Geneva, 1534).

¹¹ Calvin *Psychopannychia*; Bryan Ball, *The Soul Sleepers* (Cambridge, 2008); Norman Burns *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Harvard, 1972); B.J Gibbons, ‘Fear, Myth and Furore: Reappraising the “Ranters”’, *Past and Present*, 140 (1993), pp155-194. Augustine mentioned Abraham’s Bosom; ‘the place of rest given to men after death is called Abraham’s Bosom’, (Gen.ad.lit.xii) as quoted in Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, Supplementum Tertiæ Partis*, Q.6, Article 4. In the same passage Aquinas said of Abraham’s Bosom that ‘The rest place of the Holy fathers was called Abraham’s Bosom before as well as after Christ’s coming...it is to this bosom of Abraham that the Church prays for the faithful to be brought.’ For biblical references to Sheol and Hades see Genesis 37:35; Genesis 42:38; Genesis 44:29; 1 Samuel 2:6; Psalms 16:10; Psalms 139:8; Hosea 13:14; Isaiah 14:9; Numbers 16:13; Job 24:19, and the story of Dives and Lazarus, Luke 23: 43.

claimed, was ‘a locality beneath the Earth, in which the light of the world does not shine...this locality has been destined to be as it were a guard house for souls, at which angels are stationed as guards.’¹²

On the other hand, the Swiss reformer Heinrich Bullinger rejected a conscious middle state of the soul, and he argued that there was no scriptural evidence for it. In his *An Holsom Antidotus* of 1548 and *A Briefe and Plaine Confession and Declaration of True Christian Religion* (otherwise known as *The Second Helvetic Confession*), of 1566, he asserted that the soul went to its immediate reward or punishment, a position that the Church of England eventually adopted.¹³ He averred that the soul went straight to either Heaven or Hell upon death:

For we believe that the faithful, after bodily death, go directly to Christ, and, therefore, do not need the eulogies and prayers of the living for the dead and their services. Likewise we believe that unbelievers are immediately cast into Hell from which no exit is opened for the wicked by any services of the living.¹⁴

He claimed this upon the basis that ‘If our soules dooe sleepe, after the death of the bodye, the soule of Christ sleepeth also, and the resurrection is disannulled.’¹⁵

The reformed Church in England rejected mortalism in all its forms and, consequently chose to adopt Bullinger’s line of thought, claiming that it could not lay itself open to accusations of popery by still having a third place for the soul. Hence, the English Church shied away from the doctrine of soul sleeping, as the Edwardine Articles of 1552 clearly stated in article XL: ‘the Soules of them that departe this life doe neither lie with the bodies, nor sleep idle.’¹⁶ A century later, in the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1643, the position of the Church of England was again restated in Article XXXII which said,

¹² Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. John Allen (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1935, Vol. I), pp607, 613.

¹³ Heinrich Bullinger, *An Holsome Antidotus* (London, 1548); Heinrich Bullinger, *A Briefe, and Plaine Confession and Declaration of True Christian Religion, &C. The Second Helvetic Confession* (Zurich, 1562; English version, London, 1568).

¹⁴ ‘Of the Burial of the faithful, and of the Care to be Shown for the Dead; of Purgatory, and the appearing of Spirits.’ Chapter 26, point 3, ‘The state of the soul departed from the body’, in Bullinger, *The Second Helvetic Confession* (1568).

¹⁵ Bullinger, *An Holsome Antidotus* (1548),p200; Bullinger, *The second helevetic confession*, (1566)

¹⁶ The full passage reads, ‘Thei which saie that the soulles of suche as departe hens doe sleepe, being without al sence. Fealing, or perceiuing, until the daie of iudgement, or affirme that the soulles die with the bodies, and at the laste daie shalbe raised up with the same, doe utterlie dissent from the right beilfe declared to us in holie Scripture.’ *Church of England Articles agreed on by the bishoppes, and other learned menne in the synode of London* (London, 1553), No.40, C4r.

The Bodies of Men after Death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their Souls (which neither die nor sleep) having immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The Souls of the Righteous, being them made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest Heaven, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies: and the souls of the wicked are cast into Hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the Judgement of the great day. Besides these two places for Souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.¹⁷

In this declaration we can see the rejection of a third place, a middle-state of the soul and a distancing from heresy. The Anglican position was therefore the most careful solution to the problem of post-mortem destination.

Despite this official line by the Anglican Church, the conflict between Protestant eschatological doctrines was to continue well into the seventeenth century, especially when mortalism gathered pace under the aegis of Richard Overton's incendiary work of 1643, *Mans Mortalitie*. This was printed in the wake of the Arminian and Presbyterian crises of the late 1630's, after the collapse of censorship in 1641, and during the ferment of the Civil War. Despite the distraction of these major events, his work provoked many to respond, frightened by a revival of this doctrine, at a time when so much of the establishment was already under threat. Many in elite circles sought to argue against it and perhaps paradoxically, they found that one of the best weapons to hand was the ghost. What better way to prove the immortality of the soul than the continued presence of the dead among the living?

It must be noted that, out of all these Protestant positions, only Calvin's Bosom of Abraham allowed for even the faintest possibility that ghosts could exist. Other Protestant eschatologies had erased the cross-over between the living and the dead, so long a feature of traditional Catholic faith. The eradication of Purgatory meant that the ghost had become another victim in the attacks on popish culture, and it was declared by reformers that ghosts could not possibly exist as anything other than a construct of Catholic mischief.¹⁸ So, as the new Anglican eschatology officially replaced the Catholic one, the English ghost should have died out, for the theological habitat that had allowed its existence had been abolished. However, they did not go away, but continued

¹⁷ *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (London, 1643).

¹⁸ Samuel Harsnett's, *A declaration of egregious Popish Impostures* (London, 1603).

to remain a feature of early modern culture. In fact, ghosts not only persisted, but thrived, to the point that, by the late seventeenth century, there was an active interest in both elite and lay culture in the ghost. Elites often damned belief in ghosts as a vulgar error, but interest in their existence continued. Elite men such as Henry More, Joseph Glanvill, George Sinclair and Richard Baxter were not only fascinated by the subject of the returning dead, they were greatly exercised with *proving* that they could and did return to the living.

This subsequently raises three questions which are central to this thesis. The first question is: By what mechanisms did commitment to ghosts continue in lay and elite cultures and discourses of early modern England when religious authority denied the possibility of their existence? Secondly: What opportunities were there doctrinally to incorporate ghosts into Anglican or wider Protestant belief? Thirdly: *Why* should Protestants and some elite Protestant writers in particular, want to get around this doctrinal problem by asserting that they existed? The ghost must have served a function in a way that nothing else could. It is therefore the purpose of this thesis to examine the role of the ghost in early modern Protestant England.

I

Historical approaches to the dead: the question of purpose in lay culture

Until recently, there is very little serious scholarship on the ghost in early modern England. Keith Thomas's canonical *Religion and the Decline of Magic* of 1971 was the first historical work to look at the ghost as a serious matter for study. Along with witches, they had been sidelined by historical scholars and neglected, for after all, ghosts did not exist and so they did not need to be treated with academic gravity. Thomas changed all that, arguing that modern scepticism towards the subject was anachronistic. Scholars had to recognise that contemporaries, both elite and non-elite, took the subject of witches and ghosts seriously, whether they believed in them or not, and so, therefore, they were worthy of proper analysis. To Thomas, the most efficient way of overcoming a modern outlook on the subject matter was to treat the past as if it were another country, that is, to take an anthropological approach. However, he

did recognise that anthropological methodologies could be limiting in their outlook.¹⁹ Thomas pointed out one would need a deep understanding of the elaborate classification that each society places onto objects, actions and ideas in order to understand its meaning. Furthermore, symbols are arbitrarily chosen, and original meanings get lost or distorted. He asserted that this was certainly true of the early modern period, when men adhered to many magical superstitions out of tradition and practice, rather than belief.²⁰ So, according to Thomas, the best way to understand the meaning behind supernatural or magical systems, was to view them as part of a macro, rather than a micro picture.

This approach, of seeing the wider picture, has been utilised within this thesis, for looking at the ghost in isolation afforded little understanding of their purpose and meaning. While some close reading of the ghost stories has proven useful, the information gleaned has only made sense when placed alongside larger issues and debates, and compared over different time frames. For example, the ghost in the late seventeenth century was very much concerned with resolving an undetected crime, usually murder. This made little sense theologically until the problem was studied in relation to a larger historical time frame; that is, by looking at belief in ghosts prior to this period. Having done so, a story emerged of continuity and change, and crucially, a syncretism of both pre-and post-Reformation theology. The seventeenth century ghost may not have come from Purgatory, but it still sought interaction and intercession from the living so that penance and justice could be done.

To illustrate this point we can compare the example in the *Trental of St. Gregory*, c. 1450, when Pope Gregory's mother appeared to him during mass to confess the infanticide of an illegitimate child, with the tale of Mrs Adkins, a mid-wife who in 1679 appeared to the residents of a house where she had buried the remains of two illegitimate babies she had killed.²¹ Gregory's mother underwent horrific torments in Purgatory, and she had been allowed to return by God, to her son, in order to request intercession and to see that justice was done. Once the crime had been exposed and suffrages on behalf of her soul were performed, she later returned at peace and in a state of beatification. Mrs Adkins, in 1679, also returned to haunt the scene of the crime, terrifying its inhabitants until the crime was uncovered. The remains of the babies were

¹⁹ Thomas, *The Decline of Magic*, pp748-749.

²⁰ Thomas, *The Decline of Magic*, p749.

²¹ Trental St. Greg.(2) (c.1450, Hrl 3810, BL) in R.Jordan, *Das Trentalle Gregorrii in der Hs. Harley 3810*, (1909), pp354-66.

then granted a sanctified burial. Once the crime had been uncovered, through God's Divine Providence, and the infants had been laid to rest, she appeared no more. The inference was that her guilty torment had ended and that she could, at last, rest in peace. Her tale, like that of Pope Gregory's mother, involved repentance, penance, intercession and justice. Comparison of these two tales, separated by two hundred years, and a profound shift in confessional thought, reveals continuities of themes, changes in interpretations, and a syncretism of both old and new thought, all of which will be central themes of this thesis.

Nuances of continuity, change and syncretism in the interpretation of ghostly phenomena over the course of time from, 1450 to 1700, have emerged as a result of maintaining a rigorous chronological approach. Thomas's account lacks this, and he frequently jumps between centuries. In one sentence he jumps from the Reformation to Henry More in the 1650's.²² In another line he talks of Reginald Scot and Thomas Hobbes in the same breath, although they were separated by half a century and a significant difference in theology.²³ In another paragraph he moves from Henry More right back to the Middle Ages.²⁴ In moving about so swiftly, from one time frame to another, the nuances of continuity and change are totally lost. Because Thomas flits about the centuries, central questions remain unanswered: Why did Protestants still promulgate the idea of ghosts? How did the tenor of ghost belief change over the period, if at all?

The consequence of this lack of chronological rigour has led Thomas to contradict himself in his treatment of the ghost. Initially he stated that Protestant teaching was 'remarkably firm' on the doctrinal point that ghosts did not exist and remarks that 'although men went on seeing ghosts after the Reformation, they were assiduously taught not to take them at their face value.'²⁵ He cited the example of Sir Thomas Wise who when he saw a walking spirit in the reign of James I, was inclined to say that it might have been an angelic apparition and not the ghost of a deceased person. Yet his contemporary Daniel Fealty firmly declared it must have been an evil spirit,

²² Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p703.

²³ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p705.

²⁴ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp712, 713.

²⁵ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp702, 704.

after all it was well known that good spirits no longer appeared after the Apostolic era.²⁶ Thomas added that this was typical of Protestant attitudes towards ghosts for Protestants asserted that it was not that God did not have the power to send human souls back to the living, but it was that He never actually did so, and so ghosts were instead imaginary or demons/ evil angels. He added that belief in ghosts was a ‘shibboleth which distinguished Protestant from Catholic’.²⁷ Although Thomas has clearly set up the argument for confessional differences in attitudes to the existence of ghosts, he then contradicts himself by asserting that it ‘would be wrong to associate the belief in ghosts with any particular denomination. It was to be found among almost all religious groups, and at virtually every social level.’²⁸

As this thesis will show, confessional allegiance was not necessarily the deciding factor as to whether one ascribed to the existence of ghosts, although it is certainly true that the ‘demonic’ explanation was one promulgated by many Protestant elites, there were other important writers who allowed for other possibilities of explanation.²⁹ For example, Louis Lavater, the Calvinist preacher in Zurich, who was the son-in-law of Heinrich Bullinger, wrote *De Spectris* in 1569, in which he did not completely discount the possibility that ghosts were the souls of the dead. His work was published almost immediately in German, so that it would be accessible to the laity in his parish, and his purpose for writing was to put to rest the notion within his parish community that ghosts were real, dismissing them as ‘meere trifles and old wyues tales’, or merely popish fraud.³⁰ As an insight into late sixteenth century ghost lore his work reveals elite reactions to lay beliefs, and in turn shows that the common folk had a complex and well established set of conventions regarding ghosts, well into the generation that followed the Reformation. Furthermore, while lay ghost lore was rooted in pre-Reformation thought, it gradually began to reflect the new Protestant belief

²⁶ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p704, from Anthony à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* (1691-92), iii, cols. 166-8.

²⁷ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p703.

²⁸ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p708.

²⁹ Johann Weyer, *De Praestigiis Daemonum* (Basel, 1563), Trans. Mora, George (New York, 1991); Henry Holland, *A treatise against Witchcraft* (London, 1590); Thomas Cooper, *the mystery of witchcraft Discovered* (London, 1617); Randall Hutchins, *Tractatus de spectris* (c.1593), Trans. Heltzel, Virgil and Murley, Clyde (Huntington Library Quarterly, 1948); John Cotta, *The Infallible and Assured Witch* (London, 1625); Edward Fairfax, *Daemonologia* (London, 1621); William Drage, *Daimonomegeia* (London, 1665).

³⁰ Louis Lavater, *De Spectris* (1569 in German, then French, Spanish and Italian. trans. London, 1572).

concerning ghosts, that is, that supernatural visitors were demons, not returning souls. Lavater used the biblical example of the Witch of Endor to prove that ‘the true Samuell did not appear...but [was] rather some diuelish spirit.’³¹ With Purgatory eliminated, ghosts were not supposed to exist, but Lavater’s work shows that they were very much still a part of the mental landscape. That his book also underwent translations into five different languages (including English), within three years of its publication, shows a demand for literature on the subject and an interest in the matter that should have been eradicated. His work also provides evidence that an interest or a belief in ghosts was not solely confined to Catholicism and was very much a Protestant concern.

There were of course various factions within Protestantism that would never believe in the ghost, whatever strata of society they belonged to. These would be the hotter sort of Protestants, such as Baptists, Unitarians, Quakers, and the various sects that emerged in the early seventeenth century. Those who were more likely to believe were Anglicans, whose attachment to religious doctrine was often quite lukewarm, as well as some Calvinist elites who professed that, if necessary, God could allow the dead to return to fulfil a purpose. Lavater, despite all his rhetoric to the contrary, eventually conceded that ‘it is most certaine & sure...that spirits do often appeare...[and] walke and shewe themselves vnto men.’³² He even uses the word ‘ghost’ in reference to the soul, thus making the link between returning spirits and the souls of the dead.³³

Lavater’s work offers a unique insight into lay belief. Most of the contemporary impressions we have come from elites who wrote with the purpose of refuting ‘vulgar errors’, and, thus, folk ghost lore is often seen only through the prism of elite contempt. Similarly, ghost stories, produced in pamphlets by anonymous authors should not be taken at face value on their own, for the confessional perspective of the author, their societal status and their purpose for writing, remains elusive. Yet, with a combination of these sources, general shifts and trends in contemporary interest in the ghost can be mapped, and it can be stated that belief and interest in the ghost did not, in any way,

³¹ Lavater, *De Spectris* (1572 English Translation), p127.

³² Louis Lavater, *De Spectris*, pp53, 71.

³³ Louis Lavater, *De Spectris*, p77 ‘Oftentimes a litle before they yeld vp the ghost and some time a little after their death, or a good while after, either their owne shapes, or some other shaddowes of men, are apparently seene.’

dwindle after the Reformation, as it should have done, but increased and thrived until it became a whole genre of print culture in itself.

As this proved to be the case, we have to ask why? What function did the ghost serve in early modern society? The ghost has asserted itself even in sceptical historiography. Thomas points out ghosts always had a reason for their appearance, and that their movements ‘were not random or aimless; he was invariably believed to have some end in view and some message to communicate...they are instruments of revenge or protection, they prophesy, or they crave proper burial.’³⁴ Thomas wrote that the medieval ghost returned from Purgatory to the living ‘because of some unrequited crime’, seeking vengeance.³⁵ As I will show in chapter one this was not the case, for they returned from Purgatory seeking suffrages. It was certainly true of the ghost of Antiquity, and again in seventeenth century, but it was not so of the medieval ghost prior to the Reformation. This matters, because the function of the ghost gives us important clues as to why Protestants sought to circumvent the theological problems of their existence. This functional purpose will be dealt with in the last three chapters which examine the period 1640-1700.

Not understanding the purpose of the ghost has led Thomas to form an erroneous conclusion. He argues that ghosts were important for the ‘enforcement of obligations towards ancestors. The essential task of ghosts was to ensure reverence for the dead and to deter those who sought to molest their bones or frustrate their dying wishes.’ He adds, ‘ghost beliefs are thus more likely to be important in a relatively traditional society...one where it is believed that in significant areas of life the behaviour of the living should be governed by the presumed wishes of the dead.’³⁶ This conclusion, as this thesis will show, is very wide of the mark. Their reason for thriving in Protestant culture had less to do with *memoria*, and more to do with other factors, such as the agency that could be bestowed upon the percipient, the reinforcement of the doctrine of Providence, and a counterattack on the heresy of mortalism. Fear of mortalism is a running thread throughout this thesis, but it must be acknowledged that this was a concern confined to elite circles. Of course, accessing non-elite reasons for continued interest and belief in ghosts is difficult. It would be easy to simply attribute belief in

³⁴ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p711.

³⁵ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p713.

³⁶ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p719.

ghosts to ‘vulgar error’, but this is unsatisfactory for as will be shown in chapters five and six, there was a massive upsurge of ghost literature from the late 1650’s until the 1690’s. Two tiers of literature emerged; one was aimed at more elite audiences, and the other was clearly more populist, which suggests that an interest in ghosts was not confined to specific social spheres. Often the boundaries between elite and lay culture were blurred.

The elite genre consisted of collections of ghost tales, collated by educated men such as Matthew Poole, Henry More, Joseph Glanvill, Thomas Bromhall, Nathaniel Crouch, Richard Bovet, Richard Baxter, George Sinclair and John Aubrey, all printed from 1658 to 1695.³⁷ Thomas asserted that ghosts disappeared in these decades, because society was ‘no longer responsive to the presumed wishes of past generations’ and that eventually they were regarded as ‘intellectually impossible.’³⁸ What he has missed is that these men, all Protestant elites, expended a lot of energy seeking to prove they were intellectually *possible* and actually *real*. This is also important because many of these men were either Anglicans or non-conformists who sought to defend Protestant Christianity against the attacks of mortalism and heresy, through the use of something that their own church denied an existence. Their attempts to do this are featured in chapters four, five and six of this thesis.

The other genre was the more populist literature, in the form of pamphlets and ballads. Dozens of examples of this genre have survived, but, because they were printed on independent presses by anonymous authors, we can never know exactly how many were produced, as they were not registered in the licensing records of the Worshipful Company of Stationers.³⁹ In this thesis I will argue that they were aimed at a less elite readership, and that they reflected both Protestant propaganda regarding Providence and crime, and, in turn, non-elite appetites for literature of this kind. In terms of the Protestant agenda of Providence and crime within the ghost story, Thomas was right

³⁷ Thomas Bromhall, *An History of Apparitions* (London, 1658); Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul* (London, 1659); Joseph Glanvill, *A Philosophical Endeavour towards the Defense of the being of Witches and Apparitions* (1666); Joseph Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (London, 1668); Richard Bovet, *Pandæmonium, or the Devil’s Cloyster* (London, 1684); George Sinclair, *Satan’s Invisible World Discovered* (Edinburgh, 1685); Nathaniel Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness* (London, 1688); Richard Baxter, *Certainty of the World of Spirits* (London, 1691); John Aubrey, *Miscellanies upon the following subjects*, (London, 1696).

³⁸ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp723-724.

³⁹ Only one tale is recorded in the register and that is *The Wonder of this Age* which was licensed by the royal censor Roger L’Estrange in 1677. It is a tale in which a victim of murder returns to haunt the guilty and even gives evidence at the Assizes. It will be examined in more detail in chapter six.

when he asserted that ‘they served as an extra sanction against crime by holding out the prospect of supernatural detection.’⁴⁰

This subject was looked at in more detail by Malcolm Gaskill in his *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* published in 2000. Although he focused primarily on crime and murder, he noted the key role the ghost often played as a facilitator of justice. Gaskill contests Thomas’s assertion that belief in ghosts was a marker of confession, and that the ghost gradually died out over the early modern period, unable to sustain its existence and relevance under Protestant attack. Gaskill rightly says that, in practice, ghosts not only remained a key feature of popular belief, but that their role as providential messengers was actually strengthened. He adds, ‘the belief in ghosts remained important even after 1800, and, like witchcraft beliefs, a cautious credulity lingered in the minds of the educated elite.’⁴¹

Gaskill contends that the continued presence of ghosts was due to their usefulness to elites, particularly in bolstering ideas of Providence, which, in turn, bolstered an unreliable system of law enforcement.⁴² He writes, ‘witnesses needed to impart knowledge about murders without attracting suspicion about either its veracity, or how it came to be acquired. Ghosts...served this purpose.’⁴³ Murder most foul, it was asserted in the popular press, could be exposed by God through any means necessary. One of those means could be the haunting of the living by either the victim or the perpetrator of the crime. God would not allow murder to go unpunished; the Bible had said it was so in Genesis 4:10, when Abel was slain by his brother Cain. After the crime God had declared ‘What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth to me from the ground.’⁴⁴ Gaskill writes that this biblical passage had profound consequences on early modern justice systems and it explained why corpses were said to bleed in the presence of the guilty and the dead were thought to return to point the finger of blame. My research, as I will show in chapter six, supports this assertion and will further argue that the ghost story was sub-genre in a whole scheme of literature which focused on Divine Providence and vengeance. The ghost was a useful tool, even though it contravened Anglican eschatology. In fact, there was a strain of thought which asserted

⁴⁰ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp711-715.

⁴¹ Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000), p231.

⁴² Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities*, p214.

⁴³ Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities*, p233.

⁴⁴ *King James Bible* (1611), Genesis 4:10.

that the stranger the incident which uncovered a crime, the more likely it was it was true, and the ghost can be seen to fall into that category.⁴⁵

Gaskell's work focuses specifically on crime and so he does not elaborate on the other functions of the ghost, or acknowledge the wider question of how or why Protestants should accept the ghost as evidence in the first place. In addition, although the ghost was a sub-genre of crime literature, he does not recognise that the ghost was part of a much wider literary tradition.

Of course scholars of literature have long been used to the role of the ghost in contemporary theatre, most notably Shakespeare's use of the ghost in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Moreover, the confessional contexts of the theatrical ghost have been a staple area of research in early modern literature and theatre studies. In 1951, for example, Roy Battenhouse contested the notion that the ghost of Hamlet's father was a soul returned from Purgatory, in the Catholic tradition. He closely studied the behaviour and language of the ghost and concluded that the ghost of Hamlet's father had 'neither the mind nor the action of a Christian Purgatory ghost; [but] that his character fits, rather, a spirit from pagan hell, a region considered purgatorial in classical but not Catholic doctrine.'⁴⁶ He then gave seven points of evidence which purported to prove that Hamlet's father had not come from a Catholic Purgatory but from an after world rooted in the classical tradition.⁴⁷ He concluded that this ghost has more in common with the ghosts of classical tragedy, such as the Orestes of Eurypides and in the Senecan tradition.⁴⁸ This is an interesting conclusion, for, as I have found, many of the elite

⁴⁵ Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (New York, 2001), pp246-50; Joseph Marshburn & Alan Velie, *Blood and Knavery* (Rutherford, 1973), ch.1; Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), ch.4; Barbara Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact* (Ithaca: Cornell Press), ch.4; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998), ch.4.

⁴⁶ Roy W. Battenhouse, 'The Ghost in 'Hamlet': A Catholic "Linchpin"? *Studies in Philology*, 48, (1951), pp.161-192, p.163.

⁴⁷ In point one he argues that the ghost did not come seeking suffrages for his soul as he would have done in the Catholic tradition. In point two the ghost seeks revenge which is not the remit of the purgatorial ghost. Point three argues that the ghost lacked a Christian perspective i.e. the soul does not seek a state of grace. In point four the ghost does not pass any of the Catholic 'tests' i.e. he does not act in the way a Catholic ghost should for he seeks fury and vengeance, not suffrage, comfort and a state of grace. Point five argues that never at any point does the ghost or Hamlet speak of a middle place, naming Heaven and Hell only. Point six avers that none of the play's characters accept the ghost as a spirit from Purgatory, but rather as a 'guilty thing'. Point seven argues that the ghost was either from a Pagan Hell or a non-Christian form of Purgatory.

⁴⁸ Battenhouse, 'The Ghost in 'Hamlet'', p190.

writers, from the 1570's to 1660's, recite and refer back to ghosts found in tales of Antiquity.⁴⁹

Stephen Greenblatt picks up this subject in his important work, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (2001) which broached the central question of whether the ghost of Hamlet's father was shaped by Catholic notions of Purgatory. He contends that, in order to engage with Shakespeare, it was necessary to comprehend the environment and the influences that shaped his works, saying 'we need to understand the way in which Purgatory...was conceived in English text of the later middle ages and then attacked by Protestants...that attack focused on the imagination: Purgatory, it was charged, was not simply a fraud; it was a piece of poetry.'⁵⁰ He then examines classic medieval ghost texts such as *Gast of Gy* and the ghostly tales in the book *Golden Legend* by Jacques de Voragine. He explores the concepts within Purgatorial belief which focused on imprisonment, punishment and intercession to form 'a perfect community of mutual charity and interest.'⁵¹ He then transfers these key themes, prominent in medieval writing on ghosts and Purgatory, onto close textual analysis of Shakespeare's key texts. He raises the notion of the ghost as a figure of false surmise, as in *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*, a figure of historical nightmare in *Richard III* and of deep psychic disturbance in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. He acknowledges the subtext that the ghost was a recognised, successful figure and a creation of theatre itself, and importantly, his work highlights the literary precursors of the 'fictionalisation' of ghosts. The use of the ghost in a story was more than just a dramatic aid, it held instant recognition and social meaning for its audience. Thomas wrote that 'every firm Protestant in the audience would have been justified in regarding the apparition as a devil in human form' and this is certainly true for the period between 1590 and 1650, among the Protestant learned.⁵²

It is precisely because the removal of Purgatory created a vacuum that ghosts were able to persist, argued the folklorist Theo Brown. In her 1979 work *The Fate of the Dead* she examined the common folks' views on ghosts and concluded that there were two levels of belief; 'the official, and the other not publicly acknowledged but actually

⁴⁹ Thomas Bromhall who wrote *An History of Apparitions* in 1658, cited Athenaeus, Cicero, the Chronicles of Hadrian, Herodotus, Homer, Livius, Ovid, Plato, Seutonius and Virgil among others.

⁵⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, 2001), p3.

⁵¹ Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p144.

⁵² Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p705.

relied upon in private.⁵³ She asserts that despite Anglican proclamations to the contrary, the laity still believed that ghosts continued to appear, but were at a loss as to how to explain them. Brown puts this down to a lack of official debate or guidance from the clergy. She points out that, prior to the Reformation, there had been a whole system of interpretation and support for a perceived apparition. The problem was that, after the Reformation, ‘no canon dealt with the laying of unquiet spirits or the clearing of haunted places, presumably because there was nothing to discuss; there were no such things as ghosts. However, as time went on, it became obvious that the ghosts themselves were oblivious to official opinion and continued to come and go at their own sweet will.’⁵⁴ The consequence of this was the unrestrained development of folk mythology to fill the blanks, ‘in the absence of satisfactory direction from the church, something amounting to a new eschatology emerged, and with it a new unexpected belief and ritual.’ Crucially she notes that ‘this owed nothing to Christianity, yet curiously it came about with inexplicable consistency throughout most of the country.’⁵⁵ Rather, this new belief was a fusion of ancient pagan ideas, ‘half remembered old catholic teaching’ and distilled Protestant doctrine.⁵⁶

Her work is important and much undervalued, for it contains many sources and examples of lay ghost belief collated not just from early modern elite writers such as Lavater, Bovet and Glanvill, but also the folkloric collections of the Devon, Cornwall, Dorset and Somerset Antiquarian societies, many of which began collecting local ghost tales in the early nineteenth century.⁵⁷ Her approach of using close textual analysis of the ghost stories is a useful one for the historian, for it provides insights into the complex and varied nature of what she terms as post-Reformation ‘popular

⁵³ Theo Brown, *The Fate of the Dead* (Ipswich, 1979), p8.

⁵⁴ Brown, *The Fate of the Dead*, p19.

⁵⁵ Brown, *The Fate of the Dead*, p22.

⁵⁶ Brown, *The Fate of the Dead*, p83.

⁵⁷ Many of these show the nineteenth century revival of interest in the ghost. The anecdotes were collated by elite antiquarians seeking examples of folkloric or ‘vulgar errors’. Others also reflect an increased interest in the supernatural engendered by the revival of Spiritualism in the late nineteenth century. For example; Fortescue Hitchins and Samuel Drew, *The History of Cornwall* (Helston, 1824); Mrs Bray, *Traditions, legends, Superstitions and Sketches of Devonshire* (London, 1838); Elias Tozer, *Devonshire, Poems, Ancient Customs, Superstitions and Traditions* (Exeter, 1873); John H. Ingram, *The Haunted Homes and Family Traditions of Great Britain* 4th Edition (London, 1888); M.A.Courtney, *Cornish Feasts and Folklore* (Penzance, 1890); William Andrews, *Ecclesiastical Curiosities* (London, 1899); W.G.Willis Watson (ed.) *Calendar of Customs, Superstitions of Somerset* (Taunton, 1920); B.C. Spooner, *John Tregagle of Trevorder: Man and Ghost* (Truro, 1935).

‘underground’ eschatology’.⁵⁸ Also, centrally, her work highlights the disparity between elite edict regarding belief, and non-elite reactions to these edicts, concluding that lay folk came up with a set of ghost beliefs that syncretised all the elements of old and new faiths. Her work, importantly ascribes an agency to the common folk. This is something Robert Scribner addresses in his work.

Scribner concluded, in a chapter on popular belief, that ‘ghosts and poltergeist plagued Protestants and Catholics with confessional indifference’.⁵⁹ He argued that this indifference was generally found among the common folk, rather than the elites. The common folk had their own heterodox and complex systems which resisted reconstruction ‘from above’. Although elites often tried to shape ‘popular belief’ and offered their ideas to the people at large for acceptance’, they were generally resisted. Acceptance was never blanket, so ‘popular belief always has the potential to subvert, to supplement and even replace the ‘official’ with the ‘unofficial.’⁶⁰ For example, he contends that ‘curiously, despite removing belief in Purgatory and so dramatically re-orientating attitudes towards the dead, Protestantism was unable to abolish belief in the presence of the untimely dead.’⁶¹ He puts this failure down to the resistance by the lower folk. But why would they be so reluctant to relinquish such a belief system?

He states that there were two characteristic features which dominated early modern mentality, that is; sacramentalism and magic.⁶² He defined sacramentalism as the belief that the sacred non-material world could be present in the material and profane world, and that the reality of this supernatural world was tangible – the ghost, witches, fairies, angels and devils being evidence of this.⁶³ This supernatural structure of beings from God, right down to Angels, Demons, Spirits and Ghosts, was a world of ‘enormous potency’ which was full of power to ‘help or harm’.⁶⁴ Consequently, involvement, such as interaction with any of these beings, conferred status upon the participant within the community.

In this supernatural ‘other world’, the dead were a special category ‘who demanded and received continual attention in popular belief’ and so percipients who

⁵⁸ Brown, *The Fate of the Dead*, p83.

⁵⁹ Robert Scribner, ‘Elements of Popular Belief’, *The Handbook of European History 1400-1600* ed. Brady, T et al (Leiden, 1994), p237.

⁶⁰ Scribner, ‘Elements of Popular Belief’, p237.

⁶¹ Scribner, ‘Elements of Popular Belief’, p237.

⁶² Scribner, ‘Elements of Popular Belief’, p235.

⁶³ Scribner, ‘Elements of Popular Belief’, p236.

had contact with the dead found themselves able to command an elevation of status amongst their peers.⁶⁵ This could explain why many of the percipients were those of low status within society such as maids, spinsters and old men. Scribner argued that ‘supernatural power is always involved in purely secular power struggles, even at the most mundane social levels.’⁶⁶ He contended that supernatural influence did not diminish with the diffusion of hierarchy and so there were many attempts to appropriate this form of agency in the lower sections of society, be it in contact with ghosts or being the subject of a witches curse. As he wrote, ‘power plays involving supernatural power could be quite varied and complex, they could be inter-personal, inter-communal or involve factional strife within a given community.’⁶⁷

His conclusion was that all elements of interaction with the supernatural gave one agency and status whatever social sphere one was in. Scribner’s approach may be general and sweeping on the subject of the ghost, since he discusses social and cultural issues rather than specific periodisation or instances; nor does he engage with any of the significant contemporary literature on the subject. Nonetheless, he is right to state that the ghost served the important function of bestowing agency, rather than ridicule upon an individual in the lowest tiers of society. This was what made it so resilient to eradication.

Take, for example, the case of Isabel Binnington, a transcript of whose examination by the Justice of Peace on the 24th of September 1662 still survives. The case was a celebrated one that also became the subject of a pamphlet.⁶⁸ Binnington was visited by the ghost of Robert Eliot, an apprentice who had allegedly been murdered by three local women, to whom he had been sent by his employer to collect outstanding debts. Binnington’s testimony was given not just at the local Assizes, but in front of three JPs. The case also involved Eliot’s parents, his sisters, who were married and had families of their own, his employer and his family and friends, Binnington’s husband and family, and many members of her local community, as well as the three accused women and their families. At the centre of this web of people was Isabel Binnington,

⁶⁴ Scribner, ‘Elements of Popular Belief’, p236.

⁶⁵ Scribner, ‘Elements of Popular Belief’, p236.

⁶⁶ Scribner, ‘Elements of Popular Belief’, p249.

⁶⁷ Scribner, ‘Elements of Popular Belief’, p251.

⁶⁸ Thomas Blackwell, *The Relation or Examination of Isabelle Billington of Great Driffeld*, 1662 manuscript x.d.442. Folger Shakespeare Library; Anon *A Strange and Wonderfull Discovery of Murther* (London, 1662).

whose tale was taken seriously and through which a measure of celebrity was afforded to her. Her husband was mentioned, but he was not a key player in the tale for it was she, and she alone, who had contact with the ghost of Robert Eliot. She was the star of the tale. Her voice was given credence and agency in a way would otherwise not have been possible. Chapter six of this thesis will examine the aspects of this case in more detail.

If seeing and interacting with a ghost afforded an individual some measure of power, then so too did control of the dead, usually found within the sphere of witchcraft. Another folklorist, Gillian Bennett, has posited a theory of syncretism between witch lore and ghost lore in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and chapter three of this thesis supports her view. She convincingly traces the ascendance of the demonic ghost alongside the rise of the malevolent witch in society, and she has pointed to their 'mutual influence.'⁶⁹ She criticises Keith Thomas for keeping witches and ghosts separate as two discrete belief systems. Bennett says that his work exemplifies the tendency 'to keep to certain well defined classes of supernatural creatures and exclude consideration of others for convenience sake.'⁷⁰ She points out that in the ghost literature of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, texts by those such as Reginald Scot, Louis Lavater, Pierre Le Loyer, and Noel Taillepied, were based on a close alliance between the ghost and the witch in lay culture. She avers that contemporary ghost literature reveals not merely 'allied' beliefs, but that ghosts and witches formed 'intrinsic parts of a single system. One was seldom mentioned without the other.'⁷¹ Contemporary books on witchcraft in the 1580's and 1590's usually included a section on ghosts, because in the burgeoning pantheon of witch lore, witches were able to send what appeared to be ghosts to their victims of witchcraft. However, within the new parameters of the Protestant faith, these manifestations of the dead were not the real souls of the dead, but 'spirits' or demons conjured to look like the dead and sent by the witch to torment their victims.⁷² Since ghosts could no longer be the souls of returning dead, the explanation that the visitors were of demonic origin was put forward by many Protestant elites, such as Johann Weyer, Thomas Cooper, Henry

⁶⁹ Gillian Bennett, 'Ghost and Witch in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' in *Folklore* 97 (1986), pp3-14.

⁷⁰ Bennett, 'Ghost and Witch in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', p3.

⁷¹ Bennett, 'Ghost and Witch in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', p3.

Holland and Lavater.⁷³ Since it was well known that witches had the power to control evil spirits, often in the guise of familiars, it was logical to conclude that what appeared to be a ghost was in fact a spirit sent by a witch. Consequently, as Bennett wrote, an apparent haunting provided ‘essential evidence for the existence of witches, witches for devils, devils for Satan and Satan for God, because all are part of the supernatural hierarchy which tops the Great Chain of Being.’⁷⁴

My research has confirmed that, from the 1590’s to the 1650’s, the ghost seems to have disappeared from the extant literature of the day. I will argue that this was not due to Protestant successes in eradicating the ghost from popular belief, but, rather, it was as a consequence of the dominance of witch narratives in society from the 1570’s and 80’s. I will argue that the literal ‘demonization’ of the ghost, i.e. explaining its presence as an evil spirit, meant it became absorbed into witch discourse to create a syncretic blending of the two genres. So, for example, behaviour which had previously been ascribed to a ghost, such as the ‘twitching bedclothes off the insomniac, buffeting the sceptical and causing madness’, was instead blamed on spirits that had been sent by a witch.⁷⁵ The witch could send a spirit to imitate the ghost and cause ghost like disturbances. Bennett adds that ‘since the Reformation, ghost and witch had formed an even closer association than merely that of connected links in a single supernatural order, by definitional changes, the homely ghost came for a while to be considered, like witches, as one of the works of the devil.’⁷⁶ So, ghosts became either evil spirits/demons or they were spirits sent by witches in the manifestation of lost loved ones. Chapter three of this thesis will show evidence of how shifting definitions of the ghost by Protestants, both elite and lay, led to the ghost’s appropriation into the story of witchcraft in a way that was to shape the construct of the ghost for the next four hundred years.

⁷² In Edward Fairfax’s, *Daemonologia* (London, 1621), up to eleven different spirits appear to his daughters, often in the guise of deceased friends or relatives. For more on this case see chapter three.

⁷³ Johann Weyer, *De Praestigiis Daemonum* (Basel, 1563) Trans. Mora, George (New York, 1991); Henry Holland, *A treatise against Witchcraft* (London, 1590); Thomas Cooper, *the mystery of witchcraft Discouered* (London, 1617); Randall Hutchins, *Tractatus de Spectris* (c.1593), Trans. Heltzel, Virgil and Murley, Clyde (Huntington Library Quarterly, 1948); John Cotta, *The Infallible and Assured Witch* (London, 1625); Edward Fairfax *Daemonologia* (London, 1621); William Drage, *Daimonomegeia* (London, 1665). Many of their views were based on the biblical texts Luke 8:30; 2 Maccabees 3:24-26; Genesis 18:2; Genesis 19:1; Judges 13:3,19,20; Exodus 24:10,11, and of course the tale of the Witch of Endor in 1 Samuel 28:1-25.

⁷⁴ Bennett, ‘Ghost and Witch in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, pp 3-4.

⁷⁵ Bennett, ‘Ghost and Witch in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, pp 3-4.

⁷⁶ Bennett, ‘Ghost and Witch in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, p6.

In stating that the ghost was not the soul of the returning dead, but really a demonic entity, there was a shift from ‘the morally neutral ghost’ of the late medieval period to the demonic, a change which paved the ways for the gothic horrors that emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In chapter three I show how the witch, the demon and the ghost become intertwined in narratives. I will argue that this led to the rise of what we now call a ‘poltergeist’, an entity, not of human origin, that wrought havoc within someone’s home. Although the late medieval and early modern landscape was littered with demons, it was not until the 1580’s that the demon began to act in a ghostly way and vice versa.

This exploration of earlier ghost lore is needed in order to refute the argument that the ghost was absent from the 1570’s to the 1650’s, and that there was an apparent ‘revival’ of the ghost in the seventeenth century. Rather, I shall demonstrate that the ‘revival’ of the ghost is a fallacy, especially in lay culture.⁷⁷ The ghost had always been there, but it had merely become appropriated into another, more demonic narrative for a period. It is important to recognise that, while belief in demons and witches began to unravel from the mid-seventeenth century, the ghost did not disappear along with them, but reasserted itself as an independent entity in 1650’s, for the first time since the Reformation, and it did so because it was useful for refuting materialism and providing a case for providence. The ghost was not immutable; it shifted and adapted to the demands of the day, but nonetheless remained a constant feature of early modern life.

The writings of Bennett and Brown appear to have influenced Jo Bath and Belinda Lewis in their articles on the early modern ghost. Belinda Lewis argues upon the same lines as Brown, saying that ‘the alternatives offered to ghosts left certain gaps.’⁷⁸ She argues that, traditionally, ghosts had offered comfort and guidance as well as evidence of the afterlife. Like Brown and Scribner, she avers that people created their own ghost lore, one that did not align with the official view. This ghost lore was a syncretic blend of traditional beliefs, such as ghosts providing comfort and guidance, mixed with a new purposefulness, like being an instrument of Providence. She states that it is important not to confuse Anglican policy with lay practice, and that ‘the space between theory and reality was large, grey and untidy and crowded with contingent

⁷⁷ This was a point argued by Sasha Handley in *Visions of an Unseen World* (London, 2007), pp1-49 and it will be addressed in chapter 3 of this thesis.

⁷⁸ Belinda Lewis, ‘Protestantism, Pragmatism and Popular Religion: A Case Study of Early Modern Ghosts’ in *Early Modern Ghosts* (Durham, 2001), pp79-92, p85.

outcomes'.⁷⁹ She also agrees with Bennett's view that since early Protestant theology demonized the ghost, and placed it in the same sphere as witches and demons, it shifted from being a reassuring presence to a terrifying one.

Jo Bath also takes the same line as Lewis and Brown, stating that the eradication of Purgatory left in its wake nothing but 'confusion'. This was due to a lack of homogeneity of thought after the Reformation, and she states that belief in ghosts became an amalgamation of Protestant and Catholic interpretation. So, while ghosts became increasingly infused with the idea of the demonic, they still behaved the way they had always done in traditional thought. This new ghost was created mainly by lay folk in the absence of proper doctrinal guidance.⁸⁰ She adds that 'the tenacity of ghost belief and deep confusion in the popular mind [was] caused by trying to reconcile the irreconcilable, and understand tales which could not be pinned with certainty to any theological perspective.'⁸¹ I would contend that she is incorrect and inexact in her conclusions, for the ghost did indeed change: not just in the period between 1590 and 1660, but also from 1658 onwards, they underwent a shift in interpretation that had much more to do with the refutation of mortalism and the belief that they were enacting God's vengeance. The ghost after the Reformation went through two key shifts in character and I contend that, throughout, there was no confusion as to what they were. In any case, the 'confusion' idea is problematic in terms of historical analysis.

As I will argue in chapter three, commentators were not 'confused', but in fact their views were coherent, if heterogeneous and complex. Commentators were very vocal in ascribing strange occurrences to numerous specific causes, such as popish fraud, drunkenness, imagination, the elements and that great favourite; melancholy. If none of these explanations sufficed then it was without doubt the work of the Devil. Even so, it would be incorrect to state that this was a world-view accepted by all. Lavater's *De Spectris*, of 1569, shows that many residents within his local parish did still believe in ghosts. He also allowed that if God permitted it, the dead could return, but only in exceptional circumstances. This has remarkable resonance with the pre-Reformation Thomist views mentioned earlier in this chapter.

⁷⁹ Lewis, 'Protestantism, Pragmatism and Popular Religion', pp79-82.

⁸⁰ Jo Bath, '“in the Divells likeness”', interpretation and confusion in popular ghosts belief' in *Early Modern Ghosts* (University of Durham, 2001), pp70-78.

⁸¹ Bath, '“in the Divells likeness”', p76.

At the same time, it is crucial to note that although, in the sixteenth century, ghost literature seemed to have been written along confessional fault lines, the reality was that there was a cross-fertilization of ideas between the two. For example, there are ideas, stories and viewpoints found in Lavater's Calvinist *De Spectris* of 1569 that can also be found in the later French Catholic works of Pierre Le Loyer, who penned *Discours des Spectres* of 1586 and Noel Taillepied's *Traité de L'Apparition* in 1588.⁸² Importantly, these works were printed and translated in many languages, including English, rather than solely in the language of the elites, that is, Latin. Furthermore, their multiple reprints suggest that demand for them was high. Both of the French Catholic works mentioned Lavater and there was a surprising symmetry of belief. As I will argue in chapter three, the evidence shows that confessional distinctions were not particularly clear cut, despite the rhetoric of difference that permeates the text. In fact the different religious perspectives influenced and shaped each other. They were complex, but they were not in any way 'confused'. They show that there was a great deal of fluidity and syncretism in ghost lore, and that a certitude that ghosts existed was not peculiar to any particular confession. Nor can an acceptance of the 'reality' of ghosts be divided into categories of status. While many elites emphatically did not believe in ghosts, many others did. The same can be said for non-elites as well. Ghost belief was complex and diverse, and strong opinions were held on the subject by many. This heterodoxy runs through the entire early modern era and these findings run contrary to the aforementioned assertions of Thomas that belief in ghosts was the 'shibboleth' of confessional difference.

II

The question of purpose in elite culture

This 'shibboleth' is something that Peter Marshall takes issue with. Marshall has written extensively on the relationship between the living and the dead.⁸³ In 2002, Marshall

⁸² Louis Lavater, *De Spectris* (Paris, 1569, Trans. English 1572); Pierre Le Loyer, *Discours des Spectres* (Paris, 1586), or English Trans. *A Treatise of Specters* (London, 1605); Noel Taillepied, *Psychologie ou Traité de l'apparition de Esprits* (Paris, 1588) or English Trans. *Treatise of Ghosts* (London, date unknown).

⁸³ Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford, 2002); Marshall and Bruce Gordon, *The Place of the Dead* (Cambridge, 2000); Marshall, 'Old Mother Leakey and the Golden chain: context and meaning in an early Stuart haunting.' In *Early Modern Ghosts*, edited by John Newton, (Durham, 2002), pp93-109; Marshall, 'Deceptive Appearances: Ghosts and Reformers in Elizabethan and Jacobean England', in *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe*, ed. Helen Parish and William G

wrote *Deceptive Appearances: Ghosts and Reformers in Elizabethan and Jacobean England*, in which he argues that despite elite Protestant rhetoric which associated ghosts with the delusions of the Catholic Church, there were tensions amongst Protestants on the subject.⁸⁴ Consequently, to ask the question about whether ghosts were perceived to be more common before or after the Reformation is limited.⁸⁵ Instead, he states that it is more useful to explore how cultural constructions of the ghost were made in elite and popular culture, and how this shaping drew on traditional influences. In his examination of the meanings within the case of Old Mother Leakey, this approach yields interesting and fruitful results.⁸⁶ This is a useful method, which I have employed in this thesis, on a macro level, for it allows a broad spectrum of ghost lore to emerge, whilst highlighting the continuity and change which occurred over the early modern period.

Unlike Thomas, Peter Marshall does not rely on social anthropology in his 2002 work *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, arguing that while cross-cultural comparisons can be illuminating, they can also ‘predetermine conclusions and encourage circularity in argument.’⁸⁷ He writes that it is possible to reconstruct past beliefs if one accepts that there was not one ‘world-view’, but masses of ‘contradictions, complexities and conflicts’. His central aim is to create a meaningful understanding of sixteenth-century attitudes towards the dead, through close textual and contextual analysis of primary sources, such as state records, treatises, books and letters. His intent is to investigate how religious and cultural ideas of the dead interacted with the political processes and the church politics of the Reformation. So he examines how the dissolution of the monasteries, the abolition of Purgatory and the change in funeral rites all set in motion the process of severing the ‘communal’ links between the dead and the living.⁸⁸ His central idea focuses on the premise that the ‘death of Purgatory’ led to the dismantling of the church and state system in a way that was unprecedented. In addition, the abolition of Purgatory, and of all the ways in which suffrages could be

Naphy (Manchester, 2002), pp188-209; Marshall, *Mother Leakey and the Bishop: a Ghost Story* (Oxford, 2009).

⁸⁴ Marshall, ‘Deceptive Appearances’, pp188-189.

⁸⁵ Marshall, ‘Deceptive Appearances’, p194.

⁸⁶ Marshall, ‘Deceptive Appearances’, p199; Marshall, ‘Old Mother Leakey and the Golden chain: context and meaning in an early Stuart haunting’ (Durham, 2002); Marshall, *Mother Leakey and the Bishop: a Ghost Story* (Oxford, 2009).

⁸⁷ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p3.

⁸⁸ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, see particularly chapters 2 & 3.

performed for the dead, allowed three broad themes to emerge and dominate contemporary attitudes to death and the dead. Those themes were ‘memory, commemoration, and the afterlife’ and it is these aspects that he interrogates.⁸⁹ He posits the theory that without local fraternities to sing, pray and read obits for the dead, a fissure between the worlds of the dead and the living appeared. This was widened by the eradication of prayers for the dead during funerary rites and the shifts in liturgy, such as masses and communion.

Marshall contends that, as a consequence of these measures, the dead had shifted from being ‘emblems of continuity with a shared past’ to being appropriated by the Protestants in the course of their anti-Catholic dialogues. Ghosts were a facet of superstitious, papist belief and no good Protestant should give them credence. Their status thus reflected the religious disputes of the living.⁹⁰ In addition to looking at these themes, he broaches the subject of the ghost in a chapter in which he correctly asserts that ‘no scholar interested in the Reformation as an agent of cultural change can ignore what ghosts have to say.’⁹¹ He argues that ‘more than any other manifestation of popular religious culture, belief in ghosts challenged the Protestant maxims that the dead had no interest in the affairs of the living, and the living no role to play in securing the happiness of the deceased.’⁹² Furthermore, he argues that the persistence of the ghost in early modern society is evidence of the emotional claims and cultural leverage they exercised, for the living are always reluctant to let the dead go. Their presence acted as a form of *memoria*. Marshall contends that this is why they were remarkably ‘intractable to the dictates of Protestant orthodoxy.’⁹³

Marshall further states that ‘it may be significant that spirits of the dead seem to have played very little part in English witchcraft cases in this period’, but I disagree with this conclusion, for, as I will examine in detail in chapter three, ghosts do play a significant part in the story of witchcraft, because they become absorbed and syncretised into the witch narrative from the 1590’s to the 1650’s. As a result of this appropriation, activity that had previously been ascribed to ghosts, was put down to the work of spirits who had been sent by a witch in an act of *maleficium*. It is important to

⁸⁹ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p5.

⁹⁰ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p123.

⁹¹ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p234.

⁹² Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p234.

⁹³ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p234.

note that both Catholic and Protestant writers were keen to point out that such spirits could and did emulate the dead, as part of the Devil's grand scheme to deceive Mankind.⁹⁴ Ghostly activity remained part of the mental mindscape of early moderns, albeit in an altered form.

Interestingly, Marshall refutes Thomas's statement that they were 'a shibboleth which distinguished Protestant from Catholic' by demonstrating that Catholics as well as Protestants voiced scepticism about the reality of ghosts.⁹⁵ I have already stated that belief in ghosts was not always dictated by confessional lines, and just as some Catholic writers questioned their existence, some Protestant authors, such as Lavater allowed that, at a push, if God allowed it, the dead could return to the living. Marshall posits the view, like that of Scribner, that, despite the efforts of the reformers to sever the links with the dead, they failed to eradicate the widely held belief that the dead sought communion with the living. He adds, that 'perhaps Protestant teaching in its purest form was simply too counter-intuitive ever fully to take root in the popular consciousness.'⁹⁶ I would contend, that ghosts remained, not because of the intractability of the laity to the new religion, but because they served important social, cultural and theological functions.

Marshall dismisses a functionalist approach as he argues it runs the risk of reductionism, saying that there is a danger of 'downplaying the extent to which the meaning of ghostly apparitions were open, hazardous, and uncertain'.⁹⁷ While functionalist accounts do not explain everything, they can not be discounted altogether, for understanding the function and purpose of the ghost reveals much about Protestant reasons for eliding the problem of their existence at the level of lay belief. This thesis will demonstrate how they were useful to some Protestant elites in refuting the heresies of mortalism and in turn atheism. On this subject, Marshall writes only that 'ideas about the sleep of the soul exercised an obvious appeal to early English evangelicals' and that the anxieties that it may have raised in early reformers' minds, such as Calvin and

⁹⁴ Louis Lavater, *De Spectris* (Zurich 1569, trans. London, 1572); Noel Taillepied, *Psychologie ou traité de l'apparition de Esprits* (Paris, 1588), Trans. Summers, Montague (London, 1933 reprinted Kessinger, 2006); Pierre Le Loyer, *Discours des Spectres* (Paris, 1586 ; trans. Zachary Jones, London, 1605); Johann Weyer, *De Praestigiis Daemonum* (Basel, 1563).

⁹⁵ Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, p703.

⁹⁶ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p263.

⁹⁷ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p262.

Bullinger, had receded in the second half of the sixteenth century.⁹⁸ Marshall thus omits an important and long running threat to many of the established Protestant elite, who were greatly exercised by what they perceived to be a dangerous heresy, late into the seventeenth century. Certainly, it was the perceived fear of mortalism that motivated men such as Nathaniel Crouch, Henry More, Richard Baxter, Richard Bovet and Joseph Glanvill to collate and publish collections of ghost stories from the 1650's onwards, to prove that the soul was still conscious, active and alive post-mortem.

The spectre of mortalism was perceived by many Protestants to be such a threat that many an otherwise stalwart Anglican became quite flexible in entertaining the possibility of ghosts. No historian has done any substantial work on the link between mortalism and ghosts, although mortalism was a large arena of debate from the 1530's right up until the 1700's. This thesis seeks to throw light onto this very issue. Mortalism was seen to constitute a real and present danger throughout the early modern period and, although Marshall's work is an excellent account of the state structures and contemporary intellectual and religious opinions on the ghost, he does not make the link between efforts to rebut mortalism and the presence of the ghost. Marshall also fails to address the issue of continuity and change in a meaningful way. He wrote that,

If reformers periodically engaged in forms of dialogue with popular cultures, and if literary and dramatic representations of ghost often inadequately reflected the tenets of orthodox theology, this still begs the question of whether, and how, popular beliefs about ghost themselves changed over the course of the period.⁹⁹

Yet, having raised this crucial question, he does not answer it saying only that 'the evidential problems involved here are, to say the least, considerable.' He adds that what we know has to be gleaned through elite texts by those such as Richard Baxter or John Aubrey. While, these elite texts do provide a range of insights, Marshall ignores the pamphlets of the mid to late seventeenth century which give us more understanding into how popular culture wanted their ghosts to behave. Continuity and change within the history of the use and the interpretation of the ghost provides the central backbone of this thesis. My research has found that it is possible to construct a narrative of continuity and change by taking the long view, that is, from 1450-1700, and within that time frame, using not just elite discourse, but also more ephemeral literature like the pamphlet, and visual evidence such as woodcuts. Such literature has provided great

⁹⁸ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p225.

insight into lay belief concerning witches, and it can do the same for the ghost. A real and clear story then starts to emerge showing that such a ‘considerable’ task is achievable.

Thomas, Marshall, Bruce Gordon and Gaskill, and the folklorists Brown and Bennett, provide the only serious scholarship so far on the ghost in the early modern period, although other social historians have written populist books on the subject such as Ronald Finucane who wrote *Appearances of the Dead; a cultural history of ghosts* in 1984 and more recently in 2007, Owen Davies’ *The Haunted: a social history of ghosts*. Finucane’s work follows a chronology which does attempt to mark continuity and change. In his section called ‘Reformation Controversies: Demons and Ghosts’ the majority of his examples are taken from French Catholic literature of the late sixteenth century, such as Pierre Le Loyer and Noel Taillepied. He cites the content of their works but offers up no critical analysis of their functions and meaning, nor how they are illustrative of post-Reformation confessional controversies about the dead.

Finucane analyses the writings of Henry More and Joseph Glanvill in the 1650’s and 1660’s and acknowledges that they sought evidence of ghosts to counteract the ‘immediate threats’ posed by ‘philosophical materialism and sectarian splinter groups’ – that is the Enthusiasts – but he cites their main enemy as being the Catholic Church, which is inaccurate.¹⁰⁰ While citing popish fraud was a standard trope throughout the early modern period, my research has shown that the Catholic Church was certainly not perceived to be the main enemy by elite Protestant commentators. From the 1650’s, men such as Henry More and Joseph Glanvill, Nathaniel Crouch, Thomas Wadsworth, Richard Bovet and George Sinclair, were greatly exercised by the heresy of mortalism. Consequently, they produced substantial collections of ghost stories, in an effort to prove the immortality of the soul. These were significant works, and they contributed greatly to the shaping of the Protestant ghost. None of these texts have been mentioned by Finucane. I will examine them in detail in chapter five of this thesis. His work is useful though, for he does recognise that ghosts performed a variety of social functions including exposing crime in the latter half of the seventeenth century. This very particular function is closely examined in chapter six.

⁹⁹ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p258.

¹⁰⁰ Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead; a cultural history of ghosts* (New York, 1984), p123.

Owen Davie's book maintains that the ghost story in England is quite particular, as it is very much shaped by the unique nature of England's Reformation. This was based on magisterial reform rather than any shift in religious belief, as is found elsewhere on the continent.¹⁰¹ Yet ghost belief in England was not created in isolation. As this thesis will show writing and opinions from the continent, particularly in the latter half of the sixteenth century, were very influential in shaping English ghost lore.¹⁰² Davies also states that the purpose of the early modern ghost was that they 'sometimes returned to haunt the sinful and plague the consciences of moral transgressors.'¹⁰³ While this is true, he does not analyse why this was so.

III

Ghostly Revelations

The emergence of mortalism was not the only factor that facilitated the survival of the ghost in Protestant thought. In Pre-Reformation traditional thought, the practice of *Ars Moriendi* affected the nature of post-mortem destination, for example, if one were to die with unshriven mortal sins, one went straight to Hell. However, a sincere death bed repentance could mean that one entered Purgatory, with the hope of eventual salvation. If one was fortunate enough to avoid a sudden death, then a death which involved the last rites could go a long way to advancing one's soul in the afterlife. Furthermore, if, with God's permission, one's soul was allowed to visit the living to request more suffrages, then one could bear witness to the importance of dying well. Given the eradication of this system in favour of one based on instant reward or punishment, it is interesting that even at the end of the seventeenth century, the ghost was utilised by Protestants to attest to the importance of dying well. Many of the dead who returned illustrated how the process of death affected the post-mortem state, and that the ghost and death itself were inextricably linked, yet historians have tended to focus on one or the other.¹⁰⁴ A study of ghost tales provides us with a window on what

¹⁰¹ Owen Davies, *The Haunted: a social history of ghosts* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp3-4.

¹⁰² Louis Lavater, *De Spectris* (Zurich 1569, trans. London, 1572); Noel Taillepied, *Psychologie ou traité de l'apparition de Esprits* (Paris, 1588); Pierre Le Loyer, *Discours des Spectres* (Paris, 1586; trans. Zachary Jones, London, 1605); Johann Weyer, *De Praestigiis Daemonum* (trans. London, 1583); James I, *Dæmonologie* (Edinburgh, 1597); Thomas Cooper, *the mystery of witch-craft Discovered* (London, 1617); Edward Fairfax, *Dæmonologia* (London, 1621).

¹⁰³ Owen Davies, *The Haunted: a social history of ghosts*, p4.

¹⁰⁴ Ralph Houlbrook, *Death, Religion and the Family in England* (Oxford, 1998); Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes Towards Death From the Middle Ages to the Present* (London, 1974); Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (New York, 1981); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997).

constituted a good or a bad death in Protestant thought in England. Ghost stories illustrated what happened if one contravened the Protestant notions of wasting one's time and of dying badly. One had to be prepared for one's calling from God at any given moment and ghosts often illustrated the disastrous consequences of failing to abide by this principle of living. Not only did they provide an arena in which justice and in particular the Divine Providence of the Lord could be explored, they illustrated the perils of both criminal activity and sin, the juncture of which was very blurred in this period. The presence of the ghost in the early modern period reveals a fluid, heterogeneous and non-orthodox approach to the afterlife and suggests that a belief in a middle state of the soul, albeit in very loose and vague terms only, was still widely prevalent in popular thought. The evidence for this is found not just in the continued existence of ghosts, but in the Protestant rituals that surrounded the act of dying itself. As I will discuss in chapter six, the ghost had invariably suffered a bad death, whether as a victim of crime or sudden illness or accident.¹⁰⁵

I will further argue that, by the seventeenth century, if one negotiated a good death, one could be assured, not necessarily of salvation, but of a peaceful state in that amorphous time between death and the resurrection. Early modern ghosts were nearly always in a state of restless agitation. The Protestant ghost did not return seeking suffrages, but there were strong echoes of the negotiation of intercession and suffrages that the dead requested from the living prior to the Reformation. For example, the new Protestant ghost sought restitution or reparation of some kind in order to rest in peace. One message was that they had mismanaged their time while alive. Like the traditional view there was frequent emphasis on not wasting time, and on using one's temporal life well to prepare one's soul for the afterlife.¹⁰⁶ Even if one had been murdered, the ghost of the victim highlighted the perils of not being prepared for God's calling, which could come at any time. To squander one's chance to prepare one's soul while alive was considered to be a blasphemous waste of time. The art of dying, seen as a key feature of medieval thought, was still regarded as an important ritual, albeit in a more

¹⁰⁵ Anon, *A Strange but true relation of a most horrid and bloody murder* (London, 1678); Anon, *Great news from Middle-Row in Holborn* (London, 1679); Anon, *Strange and wonderful news from Lincolnshire* (London, 1679); Anon, *The Midwives Ghost* (London, 1680); Anon, *A full and true relation of the examination and confession of W. Barwick and E. Mangall* (London, 1690); Anon, *An account of a most horrid and barbarous murther and robbery* (London, 1674).

¹⁰⁶ England and Sovereign, *The Book of Common Prayer* (London, 1559), 'By our reioycing which I haue in Christ Iesu our Lord I die dayly', p20.

Protestantised form. The art of dying well now reflected the moral economy of not wasting or losing time. The result is that death, as a particular and brief moment in time was keenly observed by Protestant contemporaries. As Thomas Browne said ‘this is the day whose memory hath only one power to make us honest in the dark and to be virtuous without a witness.’¹⁰⁷ Along similar lines, the Church of England clergyman and chaplain to James II, William Sherlock, observed in 1689, ‘we can die but once, and if we miscarry that once, we are undone for ever.’¹⁰⁸ It was important to get it right.¹⁰⁹

That the *Ars Moriendi* increased rather than declining, tells us a lot about notions of adjustment to the loss of Purgatory and other ideas of post-mortem belief. Ralph Houlbrook points out that changes in funeral rites led to an increasing unease on behalf of the living towards the fate of the loved one, and that in some areas, ‘failure to carry out the appropriate funeral rites was held to invite retribution from the unquiet dead.’ Former rites of passage to the afterlife were ‘designed to benefit both the living and the dead, protecting the former from the unwanted visitation of the latter’ if done correctly.¹¹⁰ With Purgatory officially condemned as ‘a fond thing, vainly invented’ in the 39 articles of 1562, as well as a shift in funerary practise, the emphasis shifted instead to the moment of death itself as the last chance for salvation.¹¹¹

This was apparent in the prevalence of ‘last dying speeches’ at the gallows, in which the condemned were publicly penitent about their crimes and sins.¹¹² For example, Mr George Sandys, who was executed at Tyburn in 1626, was commemorated in a ballad which declared that Sandys had said ‘Lord thou has promist to the penitent,

¹⁰⁷ Browne, *Religio Medici*, p107. For further examples of this see Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, particularly Chapter 6. for primary evidence see Anon, *The life and death of Mr George Sandys* (London, 1626); Anon, *A true relation of an apparition in the likenesse of a bird with a white brest* (London, 1641);

¹⁰⁸ William Sherlock, *A Practical Discourse Concerning Death*, (London, 1689), p268. Despite being chaplain to James II, Sherlock published many anti-Catholic tracts such as, *A Preservative Against Popery* (London, 1688).

¹⁰⁹ As it said in the ‘Order for the Burial’ in the *The Book of Common Prayer* (London, 1559), ‘suffer vs not at our last houre for any paine of death to fall from thee.’

¹¹⁰ Ralph Houlbrook, *Death, Religion and the Family in England*, (Oxford, 1998), p291.

¹¹¹ England and Sovereign, *Thirty-nine Articles* (London, 1562); Clive Burgess, ‘“A Fond Thing Vainly Invented”: An essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in Later Medieval England.’ (ed.) S.J.Wright, *Parish, Church and People, Local Studies in Lay religion 1350-1750* (London, 1988), pp56-84; Houlbrook, *Death, Religion and the Family in England*, ch.3; David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), chs.17-20.

¹¹² James Sharpe ‘Last Dying Speeches: Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth Century England’, *Past and Present* 107 (1985), pp144-167, p150; see also Peter Lake and Michael Questier ‘Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the States in Early Modern England’, *Past and Present* 153 (1996), pp64-107; Thomas W. Laqueur ‘Crowds, Carnival and the State in English Executions, 1604-1868’, Chapter 9, *The First Modern Society*, ed. A.L.Beier et al (Cambridge, 1989).

That thou wilt save me if he doe repent....Oh save my soule, O Lord of thee I crave, Let that mount up, though body rot in grave.’¹¹³ Likewise, Alice Davis, prior to being burned at the stake for ‘petty treason’ i.e. killing her husband cried, ‘God and the world forgive my sinnes, which are so vile and foule, sweet Jesus now I come to thee, O Lord receive my soule.’¹¹⁴ The writer Anthony Munday often wrote of the effort the clergy would go to save the condemned men’s souls, his work forming part of a canon of popular confessional literature in which the condemned would, ‘bethinke themselues of their wickednes passed, and to shew such harty and zealous repentaunce for the same...[and] yet in contrite and humble sorrowing they might be graciously receiued into his heauenly fauour.’¹¹⁵

Sharpe, influenced by Foucault’s view of the political economy of the body, argues that these last dying speeches were integral to the ritual and spectacle of the theatre of public execution.¹¹⁶ He contends that ‘the purpose of these speeches was to remind spectators that the death of the condemned constituted an awful warning.’¹¹⁷ In the words of the indomitable Thomas Beard in 1597, ‘the feare of punishment might bridle and restraine from giving them over to impiety.’¹¹⁸ The warning was not just of physical death, but of spiritual torment. The speeches demonstrate awareness of the importance of the good or bad death, in order to achieve post-mortem peace. As the final words attest, one can have a violent death yet still attain salvation and bargain for peace in the afterlife. If the soul was prepared then it was considered an acceptable death. To die without salving ones conscience by repenting or achieving restitution was considered to be a bad death, one that not only reflected badly on the executors and the state system of justice but also endangered the soul. While this may seem to be a continuation of the Roman Catholic Last Rites, direct communication to God without an

¹¹³ Anon, *The life and death of Mr George Sandys* (London, 1626).

¹¹⁴ Anon, *A warning for all desperate women* (London, 1628).

¹¹⁵ Anthony Munday, *A Breef and True Reporte, of the Execution of Certaine Traytours at Tiborne* (London, 1582); Anon, *A true account of the behaviour, confessions, and last dying speeches of the condemned criminals that were executed at Tyburn* (published annually in London).

¹¹⁶ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (London, 1975).

¹¹⁷ James Sharpe, ‘Last Dying Speeches : Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth Century England’, p150.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Beard, *The Theatre of Gods Judgements* (London, 1642), p2. Beard’s work went through five publications by 1648 and along with Foxe’s *Actes and monuments* of 1563 it was a literary staple among the hotter sort of Protestant. At nearly two hundred pages long, Beard’s tome was crammed with dire relations of immediate divine retribution, all of which served as a warning to ‘those that are not yet obstinate in their sins, to bring themselves to some amendment’. His work fits into a whole genre of literature, including pamphlets, relating dire tales of God’s continued action and presence in the world.

intermediary, was of course one of the bedrocks of Protestant faith, whatever the denomination.

Often in these ghost tales, the message was that the guilty had misappropriated their time, and that they had not repented before death. They were doomed to return to haunt the living until reparation was made.¹¹⁹ It is important to note that they returned to confess to their crime, not to secure salvation. After confessing and exposing their guilt, they were never seen again. It seems that by confessing they had negotiated not eternal salvation, but some measure of peace. They were no longer restless, wandering spirits. The message was that one had to make peace before one died, in *hora mortis*. This was the most crucial point of time in a person's long soul journey, for not only was the fate of the immortal soul decided upon, but the way in which one would spend the space between death and the Last Trumpet.

Warning examples abounded of those who had failed to use their death bed time efficiently by squandering their opportunity to repent of their sins and so, consequently, becoming doomed to restlessness. In *The True Relation of a Dreadful Ghost*, when one Jane Dyer died, 'somewhat discontented on her Death-bed', she was

not long buried before the house was troubled in the Night time with strange and unusual noises... sometimes it makes a knocking, as if it were at the door, at other times...as though somebody walked up and down the room and had been so troublesome that the poor man [her husband] is almost at Deaths door for want of rest.¹²⁰

So, not only was justice, both earthly and divine, a key element of the story, but so was time, and in particular the moment of death, for it was in that instant that one's future peace could be negotiated. Of course all of this did not fall within the parameters of Anglican/ Bullingerian eschatology. It also contradicted the three mortalist perspectives of the afterlife adopted by many other Protestants.

This idea of a middle state clearly persisted in the ghost literature written by elites and non-elites alike. In turn, the notion affected the processes of death and ghost lore. A bad death was seen to precipitate a disturbed afterlife, and it could be argued that a bad death was to be feared on several different levels. One feared for the soul's place in eternity and one could fear a restless state after death. William Sherlock expressed

¹¹⁹ Anon, *Great news from Middle-Row in Holborn* (London, 1679); Anon, *The Midwives Ghost* (London, 1680); Anon, *the Deemon of Marlborough* (London, 1675).

¹²⁰ Anon, *A True Relation of the Dreadful Ghost Appearing to One John Dyer* (London, 1691).

the view, in 1689, that ‘if death comes long before they expected, and cut them off by surprise and without warning. . . . they are lost to eternity.’ He warned the reader that one had to take care to make ‘his calling and election sure, before death comes.’ One must ensure one had ‘timely notice to repent.’¹²¹ Repentance was crucial in securing the soul’s rest.

While good Protestants were warned over the perils of dying badly they were also shown how to die well, and many good deaths appear in seventeenth century cheap print.¹²² Books such as ‘*A Cordiall for a Heart-Qualme*’ sought to give guidance on how to prepare for death, which Birckbek called ‘the King of terrors’.¹²³ He wrote that death came ‘from above, and is inflicted by the divine hand of supreme and infinite Justice.’¹²⁴ Subsequently, all good Protestant Christians should die with as calm a demeanour as possible, in the hopes of attaining peaceful rest in the future. A popular song written in 1688 for the dying, contained the lines ‘grievous pains doth call and cry, I now prepare thy self to dye: All my sins I have lamented, and to dye I am contented.’¹²⁵

Negotiation and efficient use of one’s last minutes was crucial to attaining not just salvation but also a peaceful middle state. Subsequently, sudden or accidental death was feared. Despite the Calvinist doctrine of being prepared for one’s calling at any given moment, *Mors Improvisa*, that is, ‘sudden death, which caught the victim unawares, was greatly feared.’¹²⁶ This concern permeates many of these ghost and murder stories. In the case of a maid servant who was murdered by two robbers, the author of the pamphlet speculates on her sudden demise stating,

How provided for God, or prepared for death, I know not [she] was suddenly cruelly murdered. It is not like they gave her either space, or counsel, first to call on God, ere she died, God not being in their thoughts at that time. Thus came death upon her unawares, and so it doth upon many. . . . we are incident in a world of casualties, that may quickly cut this threed asunder. There is but one way for

¹²¹ Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, p269.

¹²² Anon, *In the likeness of a bird with a white brest* (London, 1641); William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties Eight Treatises* (London, 1622); Margaret Cavendish, *Orations of Divers Sorts* (London, 1662).

¹²³ Simon Birckbek, *A Cordiall for a Heart-Qualme* (London, 1647), B1r. His work was in the tradition of Erasmus who wrote *A Comfortable Exhortation Agaynst the Chaunces of Death* (1553), the tone of which is also one of comfort and pragmatism. Erasmus based his work around the central premise that ‘why shulde we rather sorowe the departing hence, than the entryng into this worlde, considryng that both are egally naturall.’ There is no lamenting, no overt grief, just quiet devotional prayer.

¹²⁴ Birckbek, *A Cordiall for a Heart-Qualme* (1647), B2v.

¹²⁵ Anon, *A Very Godly Song* (London, 1688).

¹²⁶ Mary Abbott, *Life Cycles in England 1560-1720: Cradle to Grave* (London, 1996), p31.

vs to come into the worlde, but many wayes to goes out of it againe...that we stand in peril euerie houre.¹²⁷

The author continued,

We are thus admonished to ponder,
Amidst the hopes, the cares, the feares,
And griefes, that on this life attend,
Thinke euery morning, that ere night,
Thy Sunne may set, thy life may end.¹²⁸

Previously, Purgatory had dealt efficiently with this problem for one could work off one's sins post-mortem if one had died suddenly, but now Purgatory had been abolished, the perils of sudden death were brought into sharper relief. There were dire relations of incidents such as '*the sudden dreadful Death of the Clerks Daughter in Gloucestershire*' in which the said girl 'gave a sudden great scrich and fell down dead before them all.'¹²⁹ There was also a prayer against sudden death in which the devout beseeched, 'Snatch me not away....by the surprise of a sudden death, but deliver me from an unprepared Heart, and an unexpected end...give me time and leisure, if it may please thee, to put my spirit in the best order I can for leaving this world....let me dye in thy favour and rest in peace.'¹³⁰ This fear was exemplified in a case in 1685, where there was a house that was 'in the late dreadful sickness in London, commonly made use of as a pest-house.' There a 'gentleman of good quality' died of a sudden violent illness, possibly the plague, and now 'the house was usually haunted and the persons who lived there were...much affrightened.' His ghost was very active for he spent his time pulling bedclothes off servants' beds, pinching and bruising the maids, tormenting the dog and groaning and howling.¹³¹ This man had left his physical life without preparing his soul. There had been no time to bargain a peaceful afterlife and so he became a tormenting and somewhat malicious entity. This was clearly an ongoing concern for it was the focus of many contemporary writers who warned that one should 'fear God, and mind his power thee to smite, by sudden death into hells fearfull night.'¹³²

¹²⁷ Anon, *A True Report of a Horrible Murther Which Was Committed in the House of Sir Jerome Bowes* (London, 1606).

¹²⁸ Anon, *A True Report of a Horrible Murther* (1606).

¹²⁹ Henry Jessey, *The Lords Loud Call to England* (London, 1660).

¹³⁰ John Kettlewell, *Death Made Comfortable* (London, 1695).

¹³¹ Anon, *A Full and True Account of a Strange Apparition* (London, 1685).

¹³² Thomas Jordan, *A Cure for the Tongue-Evill* (London, 1662).

The emphasis that it was the moment of death itself, that cusp between life and death, that was the crucial determining moment regarding ones post-mortem state was further emphasized, in that ghosts of the dead did not necessarily appear where their corpse was buried, unless they specifically sought a proper burial. Cemeteries in these tales were not the domain of the dead. There were three defined locations for the early modern Protestant ghost to appear. Firstly, they usually haunted the site of death itself. Secondly, they haunted either those who had known them or the perpetrator of the crime in order to point the finger of blame. Thirdly, if they had committed the crime they appeared where the evidence lay.

This idea of a bad death explains why victims of murder and suicides were considered more likely to produce a ghost. I have not found any examples of a ghost who had died well. Presumably they do not exist within the genre for if one were to adhere to the formula of the ghost story, if one died well, then one was at peace post-mortem. As an illustration of this, the inverse of dying well, that is death by self-murder was thought to produce the most malevolent of ghosts. Macdonald and Murphy studied early modern suicide and the real belief that those who killed themselves were tempted by the devil into the act, noting the link between the ultimate agent of unreason and irrational behaviour.¹³³ The early modern ghost, just like the medieval ghost, clearly served as a form of *exempla*, only the emphasis now was on how one died, rather than how one did penance in Purgatory

IV

The ghost story; from fact to fiction

The fear of mortalism and atheism provided good reasons for some Protestant writers to argue that the ghost existed. Ghosts were not just regular features of lurid pamphlets, they were also present in the elite discourses written by members of the Royal Society. Chapter five of this thesis shows how efforts to prove the reality of ghosts centred on employing the new methods and epistemology adopted by the early Royal Society. In the 1650's and 1660's, in the battle against materialism, they sought a whole new exegesis. As Heyd put it, 'those who wished to defend the social, religious

¹³³ Michael MacDonald and Terence Murphy, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), p2.

and cultural order could do so, either by resorting repeatedly to the traditional arguments, or by searching for new responses.’¹³⁴ New means of proving the ‘matter of fact’ of the reality of the ghost were employed by writers such as Joseph Glanvill, Thomas Bromhall, Nathaniel Crouch, George Sinclair, and Richard Bovet in the second half of the seventeenth century. All these elite Protestant men favoured new methods which utilised empirical evidence, credible eye-witness testimony, and experience. This new approach was emulated and made use of by Glanvill, Crouch et al to prove the reality of ghosts. So, from the early 1660’s, tales of ghostly events were fleshed out with the names of witnesses, the location, and the time and the date of the incident. In addition, these men compiled and printed collections of ghost stories, dating from Antiquity onwards. They borrowed, recycled, and changed stories to suit their agenda. They Protestantised Catholic and pagan ghosts, and they changed the nature of others. For example, tales of the medieval revenants were borrowed wholesale, the stories unchanged but for one crucial feature; the revenant character of the tale was changed into a ghost. In chapter four I have mapped the progress of some of these tales, some dating from Classical Greece, and others from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Nonetheless, despite the best efforts of these men to prove the reality of the returning dead, their methods had an unintended consequence, that is, the emergence of the ghost narrative as a genre of fiction. In order to counteract scepticism, and at the same time provide rigorous proof of a haunting, those who wrote in defence of the existence of ghosts added as many ‘facts’ as possible to a relation. As a result, the evidence became increasingly elaborate, and, boundaries between what constituted ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ in these narratives became blurred. So far this direct progression from ‘fact’ to ‘fiction’ regarding the ghost story has not been mapped. Both Ian Watt and Michael McKeon have argued that it was not until Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson put pen to paper in the early eighteenth century that the novel came into being.¹³⁵ Watt convincingly argued that works such as *Moll Flanders* were very much rooted in the pamphlet literature of the period. Watt further averred that the novel was distinguished from other print genres ‘by the amount of attention it habitually accords both to the individualization of its characters and to the detailed presentation of

¹³⁴ Michael Heyd, *“Be Sober and Reasonable”* (Leiden, 1995), p9.

¹³⁵ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley, 1957), chs.2-9; Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore, 1987), see Introduction and chs.2-3.

their environment.’¹³⁶ These authors used the technique of adding ‘colour’ to the story, through use of names, places, time and other details in order to create a believable fiction.

The evidence shows, nevertheless, that these techniques were already utilised by the writers of ghost pamphlets in the latter half of the seventeenth century. These pamphleteers not only used the new epistemology of the natural philosophers, they also entwined the ghost narrative with that of the murder narrative, which had been a popular genre of print throughout the early modern period. Many murder broadsides and ballads contained gory and salacious details, alongside graphic woodcut depictions of the event. When the ghost of the slain victim was added to an account of a murder trial at the Assizes, the blurring of fact and fiction occurred.¹³⁷ This in turn created a rich and colourful genre of ghost story in the second half of the seventeenth century. I would argue that by the time Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* was published in 1764, there had already been a tradition of ghost tales in print. Ghost stories did not appear out of a vacuum in the eighteenth century.

The ghost went through many changes as a consequence of the Reformation, but by the late 1700’s the ghost narrative found a homogeneity of form that is remarkably unchanged to this day. The twenty-first century ghost story has changed very little from the late seventeenth century one, yet the late seventeenth century ghost had changed considerably from the early sixteenth century one. Through adopting a chronological rather than a thematic approach to the subject, the story of these changes has been revealed fully for the first time.

¹³⁶ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, p18.

¹³⁷ Anon, *The Wonder of this Age* (London, 1677); Anon, *An Account of a most Horrid and Barbarous Murther and Robbery* (London, 1694); Anon, *A True Relation of the Horrid Ghost of a Woman* (London, 1673); Anon, *Confession of W. Barwick and E. Mangell* (1690); Anon, *The Deemon of Marleborough* (London, 1675); Anon, *Great News from Middle-Row* (London, 1679); Anon, *Strange and Wonderful News from Lincolnshire* (London, 1679).

Chapter One

Purgatory, Pilgrimage and Penance: Pre-Reformation relations with the dead 1100-1520

In Western Europe, by the eve of the Reformation, the dead and the living had had a mutually beneficial two-way sphere of interaction for over three hundred years, shaped by the development of the idea of Purgatory.¹ It is no coincidence that from the end of the twelfth century, when Purgatory first began to appear in European monastic literature, there was an exponential increase in recorded tales of visitations by the dead to the living.² Ghosts had always been a part of the mental landscape in western culture: however, in Classical literature, from Homer onwards, they were an accepted presence and they played no small part in the tribal culture of pre-Christian Europe.³ It was not until some leading Church Fathers stated that there were no biblical examples of ghosts that their existence was challenged.⁴ In scripture the relation of the Witch of Endor in the book of Samuel provided more questions than it answered, for it was open to a variety of interpretations.⁵ Jean Claude Schmitt argues that in elite clerical circles, prior to the ninth century, the prevailing interpretation was that the spirit was not the returning soul of Samuel, but that it was a demon.⁶ Yet, among the laity, folktales, particularly from the Icelandic, Celtic and

¹ Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago, 1981), 'Until the end of the twelfth century the noun *purgatorium* did not exist: the Purgatory had not yet been born...its spatialization, ...first found expression in the appearance of the substantive sometime between 1150 and 1200.' pp3-4.

² Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1994). Schmitt argues that the process began with the development of the liturgy for the dead, from the ninth century onwards, so that by the time Purgatory became part of the mental landscape in the twelfth century, an increase in ghost lore is easily accounted for. pp33-34.

³ D. Felton, *Haunted Greece and Rome: Ghost Stories from Classical Antiquity* (Austin, 1999).

⁴ Augustine, *The Confessions* (Oxford, 1992), III.19, vi.23; Augustine, *The City of God* (London, 1972). Augustine stipulated that apparitions were not the returning souls of the dead, but angels or demons who came to us in our dreams and visions. He wrote 'For we see, and we plainly perceive, that within the mind innumerable images of many objects discernible by the eye or by our other senses are produced.' *City of God*, Letter CLIX. He continues to argue that it was not the dead who appeared to us but 'by angelical operations then, I think this should be affected, whether permitted from above, or commanded, that they seem in dreams to say something'. *City of God*, 'On care to be had for the dead'.

⁵ 1 Samuel 38: 3-25.

⁶ Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, pp13-15; Patrick Geary, *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1994).

Germanic traditions, were strongly shaped by ideas of the returning dead.⁷ This disparity between clerical and lay perspectives, argues Schmitt, seems to have been overcome by the advent of Purgatory, for the presence of a third place of existence, and a continued middle state of consciousness, allowed the dead to remain present among the living within the Christian tradition.⁸ Ghosts served a useful function, for they provided evidence of Purgatory and upheld the moral teachings of the church. Accordingly, the literature about ghosts from the twelfth century onwards does not come from a lay or folk tradition, but was written by monks and clerics.

It is hard to dispute Eamon Duffy's conclusion that Purgatory was *the* defining doctrine of late medieval traditional religion. It underpinned the whole structure of Mass, alms, prayers, chantries, pilgrimage, penance and other forms of suffrage, and so the laity would have been, as Duffy puts it, 'circumstantially well-informed' about its existence and what their participation in the system involved.⁹ The doctrine of Purgatory was successful on many levels, despite its system of brutal punishments, for while it could facilitate moral behaviour, at the same time it eased anxieties about sudden and premature death. Purgatory provided a useful and comforting alternative to the idea of instant judgement, which involved passage straight to Heaven or Hell for those who had committed venial sins. Within the purgatorial system, death became 'less and less a frontier', but instead 'an annex of the earth and extended time of life and of memory'.¹⁰

In addition, Jacques Le Goff argues that Purgatory provided a close connection between the living and the dead, for it extended communal ties into 'another' world, which enhanced the solidarity of everyone from families to religious confraternities.¹¹ These ties between the living and the dead were created when the dead appeared to the living, requesting suffrages to ease their passage to Heaven. Alternatively, the living could interact

⁷ See in general, Andrew Joyes, *Medieval Ghost Stories* (Woodbridge, 2001); Bob Curran, *Celtic Lore and Legend: meet the gods, heroes, kings, fairies and ghosts of yore* (Franklin Lakes, 2004); Peter Haining, *A Dictionary of Ghost Lore* (Englewood Cliffs, 1984); David McAnally, *Irish Wonders: the ghosts, giants, pookas, demons etc., and other wonders of the Emerald Isle* (New York, 1996); Diarmuid MacManus, *Between Two Worlds: true ghost stories of the British Isles* (Gerrards Cross, 1977); Margaret Miller & Charles Keeping, *Knights, Beasts and Wonders: tales and legends from Medieval Britain* (Leicester, 1969); James Turner, *Ghosts in the South West* (Newton Abbot, 1973); Peter Underwood, *Ghosts of Cornwall* (Bodmin, 1983).

⁸ Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, pp31-34.

⁹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (Yale, 1992), pp338.

¹⁰ Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago, 1981), p12.

¹¹ Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, p12.

with the dead by going on pilgrimages to Purgatory, for it had become part of the topography of the cosmos. The most common surviving story of Purgatory's location is that of St Patrick's Purgatory, located in a cave by a church on an island in Lough Derg, Ireland, to which men such as Sir Owayne and William of Stranton journeyed. Their tales upon their return told of a dark and frightening place, but its horror was relieved by the idea of hope. As Duffy argues, Purgatory was a grim place, terming it 'an outpatient department of Hell' and 'Gods' prison', but there was a difference between the torments of Hell and Purgatory in that at least one was certain of eventual salvation in Purgatory.¹² Purgatory was a place of transition, for it was a step on the way to Heaven, unlike Hell where one was doomed to spend eternity.¹³

This intermediate world, where the soul could reside post-mortem, created a sphere in which one could be a citizen, in that crucial space between death and the Last Judgement. It took the sting out of death: William of Auvergne, the thirteenth century Bishop of Paris wrote that Purgatory was for those who died suddenly or without warning, e.g., 'by the sword, suffocation or excess of suffering, those who death takes unawares before they have had time to complete their penance, must have a place where they may do so.'¹⁴ It allowed for what Le Goff terms the 'domestication of the next world,' which afforded the possibility that 'the dead could be included among the ranks of the social order.' Le Goff argues that this gave society 'a new lease on eternal life': a second chance at salvation.¹⁵ It was, consequently, a popular and readily embraced forum of belief; 'the need for Purgatory, for a final episode between death and resurrection, for a continuation of the process of penitence and salvation beyond the bogus boundary of death was a requirement rooted in the masses, ...by the vox populi.'¹⁶

On another level, Purgatory functioned as a repository of memory in a positive way, for through the attendant practices of suffrage, the pilgrimages to it and the visitations from

¹² Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp345, 354.

¹³ Augustine, *Enchiridion: on Faith, Hope and Love* Chapter XXIX, 'The Last Things', No.111. 'The citizens of the first commonwealth will go on living truly and happily in life eternal. The second will go on, miserable in death eternal, with no power to die to it.' Trans. Ed. Albert C Outler, *Confessions and the Enchiridion* (Philadelphia, 1955).

¹⁴ Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, p244; Thomas de Mayo, *Demonology of William of Auvergne: by the fire and sword* (New York, 2007).

¹⁵ Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, p13.

¹⁶ Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, p288.

its residents, it allowed the dead to remain active within the community.¹⁷ Schmitt addressed the notion of *memoria*, arguing that ‘the goal of *memoria* was to help the living separate from the dead, to shorten the latter’s stay in Purgatory, and finally to enable the living to forget the deceased.’¹⁸ Duffy sees it differently, arguing that the dead needed to be remembered ‘for the dead were, like the poor, utterly dependent on the loving goodwill of others...to die meant to enter a great silence’ and the fear that one could be forgotten within that silence and become stuck, as it were, in Purgatory.¹⁹ This silence had to be breached, and this, according to Duffy, explains the proliferation of wills requesting alms, chantries and masses for the dead. There is little doubt that Purgatory was essential in creating the bond between the living and the dead, and between friendship and kinship, as the dead in Purgatory continued to care for their families on earth and vice versa. Yet, as Duffy points out, the neglected dead could be angry and dangerous if forgotten, which could lead to malevolent ghostly behaviour.²⁰ This, according to Schmitt, was carefully manipulated by the church for its own ends, but was, in turn, also appropriated by the laity and reshaped accordingly.

Schmitt’s evidence for this top down flow of ideas comes from the fact that, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, ghost tales were scribed by monks and clerics in their manuscripts. Within these works he found that the ghost stories could be divided into three broad, reasonably clear categories, such as visitation in dreams, waking visions and the ‘real’. Within these areas of experience an encounter with the dead could be interpreted as *miracula*, *mirabilia* or *exempla*, which are important distinctions. *Miracula*, written mainly by monks dealt with the return of dead saints to the living, who performed wondrous deeds. This type of ghost was firmly grounded in the hagiographical genre. *Mirabilia*, was written by clerics more immersed in lay culture and related incidents of wonder. *Exempla*, was a product of both secular and religious writers who cited tales of the supernatural that often had a moral coda.²¹ According to Schmitt, these tales spread orally through the mendicant orders and eventually ‘through almost all regions of Christendom’. The laity then absorbed and interpreted the tales accordingly, creating in the process a remarkably uniform set of

¹⁷ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p303.

¹⁸ Jean Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1998), p5.

¹⁹ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p349.

²⁰ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p350.

ghost lore in late medieval European society. This created what Ronald Finucane terms as the 'literary ghost' which was found in *exempla* collections compiled by clerics for the use of other clerics, who adapted them for their own sermons. He acknowledges that while these sources are limited for 'most of them represent not the 'popular mind' or 'folk mentality' but are the result of 'conscious artifice by a literate agent who constructed his story in order to amuse or instruct', he argues that 'the tales must have been rooted in widely accepted attitudes, expectations and beliefs.'²²

I have already mentioned how the living could either go on pilgrimage to Purgatory, or they could be visited by the dead from Purgatory, but there was a third type of interaction with the dead, and that was through the existence of revenants. Nancy Caciola's work on revenants provides insight into this third sphere of belief.²³ Revenants were reanimated corpses that rose from the grave to torment local people. They were the medieval form of the zombie and their perceived existence will be addressed in the third part of this chapter. While they were not ghosts, they are important for they resurfaced in a recycled form in the mid- seventeenth century (This will be examined in chapter five). Caciola maps the 'ongoing processes of construction, dissolution and reconstruction of the life/death boundary in European culture' in the Middle Ages and argues that definitions of death and life 'may be grouped into two broad models that competed with one another, even as they overlapped.'²⁴ Whereas Schmitt studies different ghost traditions within the clergy, Caciola seeks emphasis on both lay and clerical traditions, and highlights the diversity of cultural traditions within the period. She argues that work by those such as Jacques Le Goff, Philippe Ariès and Eamon Duffy does not fairly present the great diversity of belief, because their ecclesiastical sources give no indications of anything other than homogeneity. She writes; 'Even as ecclesiastics preserved notice of variant traditions, they also reinterpreted them to conform to their own cultural standards and beliefs, leaving the impression of universality where diversity existed.'²⁵ She maintains that popular culture is 'invariably defined by what it is not, – literate, urban, clerical – rather than what it is.'²⁶ The

²¹ Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, p59.

²² Ronald Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead* (New York, 1984), p59.

²³ Nancy Caciola, 'Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture', *Past and Present* 152 (1996), pp2-45.

²⁴ Caciola, 'Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual', p3.

²⁵ Caciola, 'Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual', p3.

²⁶ Caciola, 'Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual', p5.

issue is as much social as theological and she acknowledges this by engaging in other works of the day, especially medical textbooks. This approach enables her to reject the ensuing two- tiered model of belief that results from the approach of Schmitt et al and says that ‘while it is useful to maintain contrastive distinctions between ‘popular’ and ‘elite’ culture, we should not make the mistake of confounding discursive categories with an actual historical dualism.’ With this in mind, she contends that ‘the social significance of death is constructed with great variety and complexity within different cultural contexts.’²⁷ This is an argument she works convincingly to provide us with an insight into how different traditions defined not just death, but life, what kinds of afterlife were possible, and how the continuing vitality of the body and the soul were interpreted. She examines how communities sought to achieve a balance between the ‘overlapping realms of the living and the dead.’ She is able to see a heterodoxy of beliefs that involve not just those visiting from Purgatory, but visions of saints, revenants and wraiths (those who presage death). While her work does not engage with the origins of beliefs, she notes instead traditions of belief, a fine distinction, but one which prevents belief being bound to a discrete period of time.

Using this approach, she has revealed a much broader system of interaction with the dead, one which was fluid and adaptable. This is important, for although the concepts of the pre-Reformation afterlife were very distinctive and of their time, remnants of many of the key ideas persisted right up to the end of the seventeenth century. So, in order to understand the continuities and change in early modern perspectives of the ghost, examination of the late medieval ways in which contact with the dead was possible is needed. Accordingly, Section I deals with encounters with the dead by pilgrims to St. Patrick’s Purgatory. I have included this for it shows how real Purgatory was in the late medieval mindset. Its abolition and its legacy then takes on more meaning when examined in chapter two. In addition to revealing a way in which the living could interact with the dead, it is important to recognize that some of the themes and visual and symbolic imagery that emerged from the pilgrimages to Purgatory were recycled and continued to persist in later early modern thought. This included notions of post-mortem time, intercession, imprisonment, penance and justice. Section II then looks at the ghost as a visitor to the living from Purgatory, the forms of which later established the conventions of the ghost story in terms of location and

²⁷ Caciola, ‘Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual’, p7.

purpose. Finally, Section III addresses the revenant, for in late seventeenth-century ghost literature, medieval revenant tales were recycled, only the central figure was no longer a revenant, but a ghost.

I

‘Allas! Merci, Merci! Merci God almight!’²⁸ : Visiting the dead in Purgatory

Marshall has explored the geography of the afterlife and concluded that there were five separate post-mortem destinations: Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, *Limbus Infantum* and *Limbus Patrum*, for the souls of the saintly who had died before Christ’s mission on earth.²⁹ As Aquinas wrote, ‘souls after death are conveyed to various corporeal places. We hold that those souls that have a perfect share of the Godhead are in Heaven, and that those souls that are deprived of that share are assigned to a contrary place.’³⁰ The main contrary place was Purgatory and it was not an abstract concept. It had a real topography and the most common surviving story of Purgatory’s location is that of St Patrick’s Purgatory, located in a cave by a church on an island in Lough Derg, Ireland.³¹

Michael Haren and Yolande de Pontfarcy have found that between 1146 and 1517 there were twenty-nine recorded pilgrimages in literature to St Patrick’s Purgatory from all over Europe.³² Robert Easting also states that it was the most renowned and popular pilgrimage site in Ireland, attracting thousands of pilgrims. It consisted of a cave which the pilgrim would enter. They would then find themselves in Purgatory where they could spend anything from twenty four hours to three days. They would then emerge purged of many sins and determined to lead an exemplary life of penance. The most famous of these pilgrimages is that of the Irish knight, Sir Owayne Miles, as first related in *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii* written by the English monk H. of Saltrey (or Henry of Sawtry)

²⁸ OM1 54:4 and 66:2, 3; see also Michael Haren & Yolande De Pontfarcy, *The Medieval Pilgrimage to St Patrick’s Purgatory Lough Derg and the European Tradition* (Dublin, 1988).

²⁹ Peter Marshall, ‘The map of God’s word’: geographies of the afterlife in Tudor and early Stuart England’, in Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, (Eds.) *The Place of the Dead* (Cambridge, 2000), pp110-130. p112.

³⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Vol 5 IIIa QQ.74-90, No.69 (New York, 1948), p281.

³¹ See Fig 1. p48.

³² Haren & De Pontfarcy, *The Medieval Pilgrimage*, pp5-6.

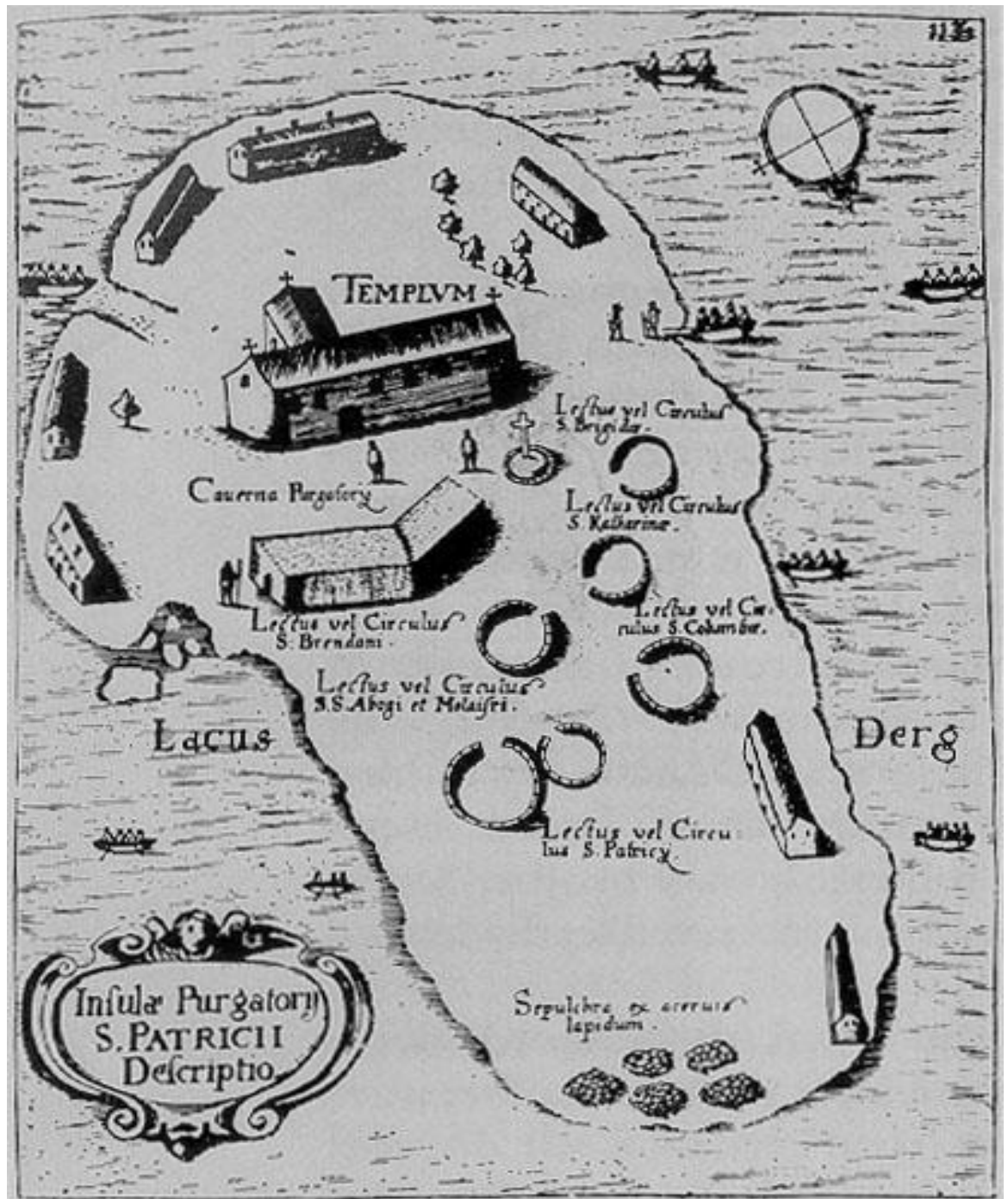


Fig. 1. St. Patrick's Purgatory, Lough Derg, Ireland, Image from Thomas Carve, *Lyra; sive Anacephalaeosis Hibernica* (Sulzbach, 1666).

around 1146/7. Between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, fifteen different Latin versions were written, of which one hundred and fifty manuscripts still survive.³³ It was translated into Anglo- Norman and then vernacular prose and verse by unspecified authors, (but most likely clerical scribes), in most of the major European languages.³⁴ Carol Zaleski has found that St Patrick's Purgatory is mentioned all over Europe in *exempla* books from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century and suggests that the surviving literary forms 'were just the tip of the iceberg.'³⁵ It was a tale that included both the higher and the lower estates. The inclusion of knights in the tale warns the elite classes of the error of their ways, while conveying to the secular classes and their social 'inferiors' that if even their betters could suffer such fates, what could await them, the bottom of the social pile? Zaleski notes that the tales were successful in the large part because they fitted into two of the most popular themes of the day; the pilgrimage and the romantic quest.

Still, the tale was more than just a fantastical quest. It was a spiritual journey that illustrated the importance of the doctrine of penance, repentance and the ways the church had to facilitate these processes. For example, in his investigation into the '*Auchinleck*', a vernacular copy of Sir Owayne's adventures, Robert Easting has noted the increase in moralising passages which upheld the church's doctrine. It names the sins for which the souls are punished- a mixture of the Ten Commandments and the seven deadly sins- and the punishments Sir Owayne would receive to gruesome effect were he to perform insufficient penance in his lifetime.³⁶ While, the genres of the ecstatic vision, revelation and soul journey were intertwined in these depictions of otherworldly experience, they were related as distinct real experiences as opposed to the nebulous quality of a dream. Even though initially Sir Owayne fell into a slumber, at some point he awakened to find the book and staff given to him in his dream to be in his hands, indicating his slumber was more of a

³³ There are three Middle English translations derived from the original Tractatus. The earliest is known as 'St Patrick' in the *South English Legendary* from the late thirteenth century, the others are both known as 'Owayne Miles'. Known as OM1, the Auchinleck version dates from c.1330-40 and of OM2 there are the 'cotton' version c.1440-60 and the 'Yale' is possibly early fifteenth century. For more details see Robert Easting, *St Patrick's Purgatory* (Oxford, 1991); Robert Easting, *Visions of the Other World in Middle English* (Cambridge, 1997), pp xvii-lvii; Haren & De Pontfarcy, *The Medieval Pilgrimage* (1988), pp7-83.

³⁴ Carol Zaleski, 'St Patrick's Purgatory: Pilgrimage Motifs in a Medieval Otherworld Vision', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 46 (1985), pp467-485.

³⁵ Zaleski, 'St Patrick's Purgatory', p471.

³⁶ Robert Easting, *St Patrick's Purgatory* (Oxford, 1991).

spiritual event.³⁷ The tale then shifted from a spiritual vision to a corporeal experience in which Sir Owayne suffered the agonising pains of the torments inflicted by grinning, prancing demons. Through Sir Owayne's pain we can then perceive that he was experiencing a reality and a level of physical interaction that a dream could never imbue. These tales had to appear to be as grounded in reality as possible for credence to lend itself to the message within. As Easting notes, these 'texts became used as sermon *exempla*'³⁸ and so 'vernacular versions for the laity continued to portray the otherworld as physically real-the penitential practices of the Church, after all, had come to depend on it.'³⁹

That Sir Owayne's journey was of the body as well as the spirit was emphasised by the physical torments he suffered in his 'flesche and fel'. He tried to describe the sensations of pain from being burnt, blasted by icy winds, blistered by searing heat, and choked with a foul stench. However, the otherworldly aspect was emphasised by the extreme nature of the pain, 'the pain may no man devise.'⁴⁰ Although the torture was administered by demons, the fact that the torments were of divine sanction was underscored by the tormented crying out 'Allas! Merci, Merci! Merci God almight!'⁴¹ Furthermore, when Owayne was subjected to a punishment he incanted Christ's name: 'On Jhesu Crist he thought. Fram that whele an angel him bare and al the fendes that were thare no might him do right nought.'⁴² This notion of protection through prayer and incantation prevailed in all the tales, and particularly in the *Vision of Tundale*.⁴³ In this tale, Tundale was escorted around Purgatory and Hell by an angel who rescued him whenever the torment got too much. After a particularly nasty punishment in which he was chewed, swallowed and then vomited up by the beast of avarice, Acheron, whilst simultaneously being gnawed upon by snakes and vermin, he

lay a whyle as he were dede,
[then] He sawe the angell before hym stande.
He hadde comferte of that syght
When he sawe the angelle bryght.
The angelle towchedde sone Tundale

³⁷ This sets his experience up as real and in contrast to the Augustinian tradition of thought. See footnote 4.

³⁸ Easting, *St Patrick's Purgatory* (1991), p11.

³⁹ Robert Easting, *Visions of the Other World in Middle English* (Cambridge, 1997), p15.

⁴⁰ OM1 93:5. ed. Easting, 1991.

⁴¹ OM1 54:4 and 66:2, 3. ed. Easting, 1991.

⁴² OM1 89:3, 4.ed. Easting, 1991.

⁴³ *Vision of Tundale*, B.L. MS Cotton Caligula, A II. ed. Rodney Mearns (Heidelberg, 1985).

And gaf hym strengthe, then he was hale.
Then he lovede God for hys grace.⁴⁴

This image of death, punishment, repentance, and God's mercy could not be clearer.

The *Vision of Tundale* (or Tungdal/Tnugdal) was the only other otherworldly vision that could match the popularity and the prolific circulation of Sir Owayne's voyage. There are one hundred and fifty-four surviving Latin manuscripts, plus eleven that have been lost. The Latin was also translated into forty-three versions in fifteen languages, and so, along with Sir Owayne's adventure it was the most widely distributed and well known otherworld text of this period.⁴⁵ It was not set in St Patrick's Purgatory, yet it has striking similarities with *Tractatus*. The Vision of Tundale was written in 1149, in Regensburg, Germany, by Marcus, an Irish Benedictine monk. Tundale was a knight who went to Cork and fell into a three day long coma during which time his spirit visited the otherworld of Hell (*Mali*), Purgatory (*Mali sed non vale* and *Boni sed non vale*) and Earthly Paradise (*Boni*).⁴⁶ These classifications were most likely from St Augustine who used the same terms. However, what linked it with *Tractatus* is the Irish connection, for, although he did not specifically name his location as St Patrick's Purgatory, the visions were not disparate.⁴⁷ Whereas St Augustine used these classifications with reference to purgation being more of a state of being rather than a place, these otherworldly journeys set the notion of purgation firmly in a place with its own topography and specific geography. Prior to Dante's imagining, it was the most comprehensive and complex depiction of the otherworld. According to Easting, it was Tundale's text that Hieronymous Bosch drew upon for his disturbing depictions of purgatorial torment.⁴⁸

The other most prominent surviving Middle-English publication is, again, of a visit to St Patrick's Purgatory. It is that of William of Stranton, a pilgrim from the bishopric of Durham, written c. 1406.⁴⁹ His work appears to be influenced by *Tractatus*, but it was an

⁴⁴ *Vision of Tundale*, B.L. MS Cotton Caligula, A II 581-588.ed. Mearns, 1985.

⁴⁵ Robert Easting, *Visions of the Other World in Middle English* (Cambridge, 1997), p70.

⁴⁶ *The Vision of Tundale*, B.L. MS Cotton Caligula, A.II. ed. Mearns, 1985..

⁴⁷ Augustine, *Enchiridion* Chapter XXIX, 'The Last Things', No.110.

⁴⁸ Easting, *Visions of the Other World in Middle English* (Cambridge, 1997), p71.

⁴⁹ There are two surviving independent copies, one written in the dialect of East Nottinghamshire and the other in one from Warwickshire, which seems to indicate that these stories were disseminated beyond the local area. *The Vision of William of Stranton*, B.L. Royal 17 B and B.L. MS Additional. Ed. Easting, 1991.

independent account of a personal experience. Much research has been done on the influence of these tales upon each other, for there is much evidence of the widespread propagation of the ideas conveyed in these pilgrimages. According to Zaleski, St Patrick's Purgatory was mentioned 'in countless letters, diaries, treatises, and poems by various other pilgrims, both fictional and historical.'⁵⁰ Dissemination can also be seen in the artwork of the period, from Hieronymous Bosch and Brueghel, to paintings and murals on church walls, as visual depictions were an easy way to convey the imagery to the uneducated and illiterate masses. The images were so vivid that they required little explanation.⁵¹ It is at this point that a distinction between these tales and Dante's must be drawn. While William of Stranton, Sir Owayne, and Tundale's experiences were treated by contemporaries as real, albeit otherworldly pilgrimages, Dante's was a purely literary vision. While various scholars such as Jean-Michel Picard and Yolande de Pontfarcy argue about the degree of influence *Tractatus* and *Tnugdál* had upon Dante's vision, there is little disagreement that 'these visions were part of the vast medieval repertoire of images of the otherworld from which Dante could have drawn the elements of his fantastic descriptions.'⁵²

The evidence suggests that by the eve of the Reformation there was a rich multi-cultural pan-European notion of Purgatory.⁵³ The aforementioned tales not only influenced Dante's vision, but contributed to the definition of Purgatory as a physical place, with its own, similar yet hellish topography and temporality, for the reality of experience was not only constructed by the relation of physical pain witnessed and suffered by the pilgrim, but the topography of the landscape. This physical place, leading down from the cave at St Patrick's, could be found on maps and the visitor armed with incantations and a penitent heart, could go on a pilgrimage to it. They usually emerged transformed, vowing to bear

⁵⁰ Zaleski, 'St Patrick's Purgatory', p472.

⁵¹ See Figs. 2-4, pp53-55.

⁵² Jean M. Picard, 'Inferno, v.73-142: The Irish Sequel', in (ed.) John C. Barnes & Cormac Ó Cuilleánáin, *Dante and the Middle Ages* (Dublin, 1995), p274.

⁵³ Pilgrims to St Patrick's came from all over Europe, indicating a wide promulgation of the concept. Sir Owayne Miles was Irish; William of Stranton was from the north of England. Ramon de Perellos was from Catalonia/Aragon, the Sire de Baeugeu hailed from France, and Guido Cissi was Italian. The topography and symbolism of the landscape and the punishments in Dante's *Purgatoria* were not dissimilar from those of the St. Patrick accounts. De Pontfarcy points out that the structural similarities are striking and that 'it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that the backbone or the tectonic structure of the *Commedia* could have been inspired by the *Vision of Tnugdál*, combined with the influence of the *Tractatus*.' De Pontfarcy, 'The Topography of the Other World and the Influence of Twelfth-Century Irish Visions on Dante', (ed.) Barnes & Ó Cuilleánáin, *Dante and the Middle Ages*, p111.

witness and to lead exemplary lives. Additionally, they all recount a landscape that is a nightmarish vision of a familiar geography. As Zaleski pertinently points out, this ‘seems to set the Purgatory legend apart from the other Christian tales of rapture and return from death vision.’⁵⁴ It set Purgatory in a realisable landscape of memory and actuality.

For example, Sir Owayne passed nine fires of torment and twenty one different punishments, through bleak desolate valleys, hellish flaming pits, stinking rivers of filth, and perilous bridges over rivers of fire and burning mountains, all through which a cold, icy wind blew so hard it tormented the flesh.⁵⁵ The imagery in these pilgrimages was essentially a recognizable landscape, though it is one that was bleak and mephitic.

However, the descriptions of Earthly Paradise, reflect a more otherworldly vision, less grounded in corporeality. This paradise was at the top level of Purgatory, just one stage away from Heaven. All the pilgrims were shown this beautiful place on their way out of Purgatory. This realm for the *Boni sed non Vale* was, according to William, ‘whytt and clere as cristall.’⁵⁶ Tundale tells us that it was a place where ‘full clerly ther shone the sonne.’⁵⁷ Sir Owayne, after seeing the walls of precious stones surrounding the Earthly Paradise shining a glorious red gold, decided that Heaven must be ‘a thousandfold brighter than ever was ani gold.’⁵⁸ It was a place of beautiful birdsong, fragrant flowers, and sparkling clear streams. The contrast with the dark, windswept, and malodorous landscape of the lower levels of Purgatory is undeniable. This imagery of light and darkness so entrenched in Christian eschatology would not have been lost on contemporaries of any social standing.

⁵⁴ Zaleski, ‘St Patrick’s Purgatory’, p472.

⁵⁵ The influence of these ideas can be seen in Dante, for he traversed nine circles of hell and a seven level mountain of Purgatory all set in a topographical hierarchy of sin. Similarly William witnesses around eighteen specific torments each meted out in different landscape as he passes through four fields in valleys, rivers, pits, mountains, towers, vast stinking houses of filth and bridges. Tundale’s vision is full of dark malodorous chasms, pits, sulphurous fires, desolate houses, great mountains, frozen lakes, dangerous bridges, high walls, and meteorological storms.

⁵⁶ VWS Add.585.

⁵⁷ VOT 1553.

⁵⁸ OM1 181/2.

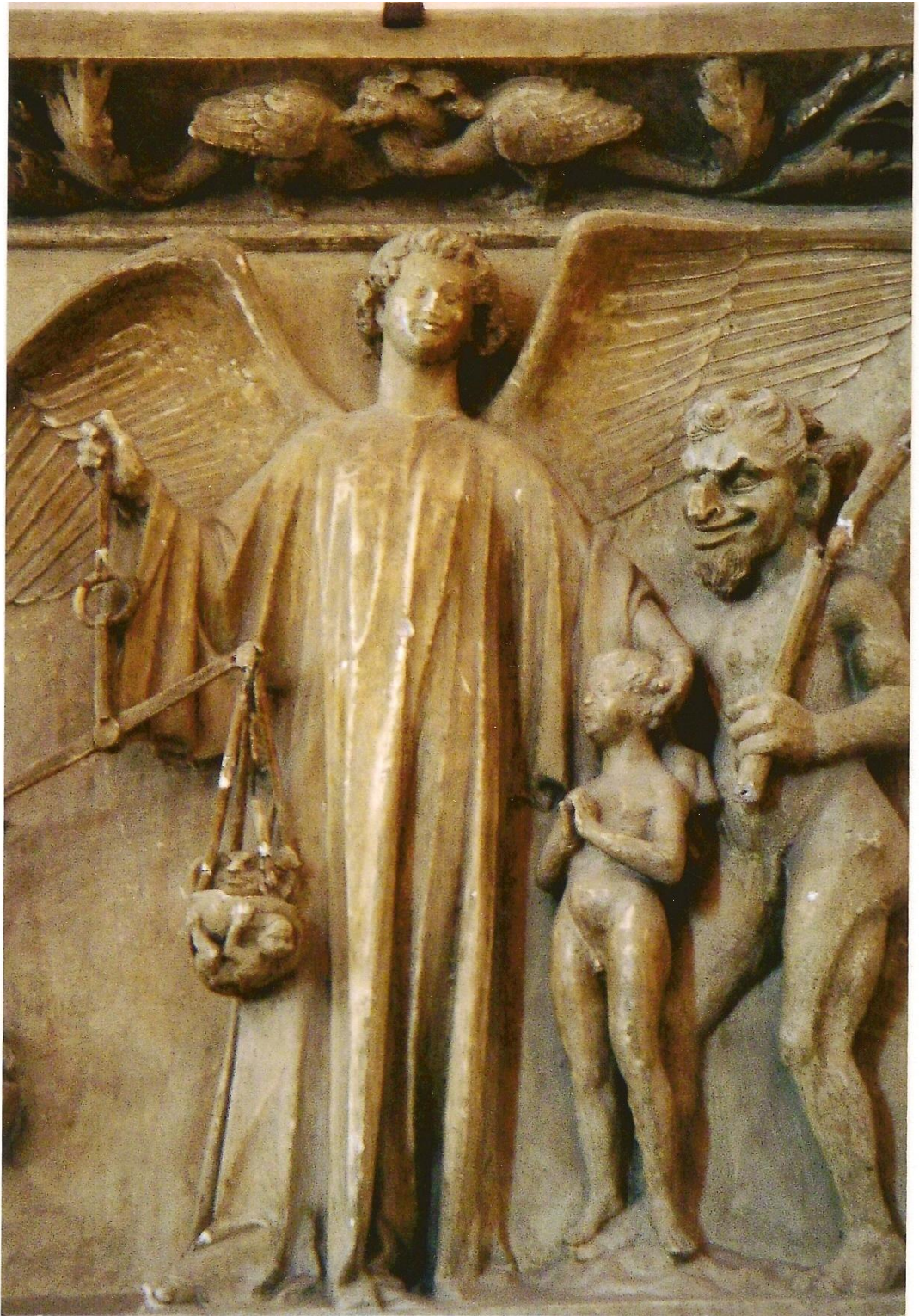


Fig.2. 'The Weighing of Souls', carving from a door frame, Mont Saint Michel Monastery, Normandy, c.14th C.



Fig.3 'The Battle for the Soul', carving from a door frame, Mont Saint Michel Monastery, Normandy, c.14thC.



Fig.4. 'The General Resurrection', restored wall paintings from Bayeux Cathedral, c.14thC.

Lights were a significant part of contemporary devotion, for example the ritual of *Tenebrae Hearse* in which fifteen candles were gradually extinguished over Holy Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and finally, Good Friday, to represent the death of Jesus: literally the light going out of world, would have been a familiar annual event.⁵⁹

This imagery of Purgatory as a vital, familiar landscape created a world that was of the imagination, as well as comprised of the quotidian. This, importantly, engendered the believability of the tale, whilst also making it accessible to the imagination. Whilst the imagery of the demons and fiends were fantastical, the landscape and the familiarity of the pain and the suffering were not, and this cannot be underestimated in facilitating the success of Purgatory in the popular imagination. It was through this imagery that Purgatory became an accepted part of the topography of the cosmos, a new sphere in which one could be a citizen, in that crucial space between death and the Last Judgement.

It was also in these pilgrimages to Purgatory that one can see the beginning of the striking imagery of Purgatory being God's prison. This idea, as I will argue, also later shaped concepts of post-mortem restlessness and anguish in the early modern era. The fields in Sir Owayne's vision were compartmentalised, like prison cells, into divisions for specific punishments. In the description of the great hall, where Sir Owayne was instructed to enter, it said;

Thus thou shalt under erth gon;
Than thou schalt find sone anon
A wel gret feld aflight,
And therein an halle of ston,
Swiche in world no wot y non;
Sumdele there is of light.
Namore lightness nis there yfounde
Than the sonne goeth to grounde
In winter sikerly.⁶⁰

William of Stranton similarly saw compartmentalised fields and fires specific to certain torments, but, most strikingly, in one field he came across 'a grett howse strongley wallyed

⁵⁹ Margaret Aston, 'Death', Ch.12 in R. Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth Century Attitudes; Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994).

⁶⁰ OM1 lines 40:1-6, 41:1-3. ed. Easting, 1991.

about...and trewly ther was the most stynk that ever I felde.’⁶¹ Tundale’s Purgatory, while less horrific than William or Sir Owayne’s, was nonetheless contained by ‘a wall that was wonder rownde; full hygt hyt was as Tundale thowghte.’⁶² In Dante it was the dark, circuitous mountain containing seven levels, inside which are enclosed sections pertaining to specific punishments, where the souls of the sinners were trapped. The motif of the prison was further enhanced by the presence of hideous fiends who acted as jailors. William vividly described these prison guards as having ‘iiij heddys, and sum iiij visages in ther heddys; sum with vj hornes, sum with v. Sum of them hade a visage on ylke elbowe, and sum on ylke knee.’⁶³ This idea of Purgatory as a prison had developed further by the time St Liwina of Schiedam had a vision in the 1430’s in which she saw

walls of a prodigious height, the blackness of which, together with the monstrous stones, inspired her with horror. Approaching this dismal enclosure, she heard a confused noise of lamenting voices, cries of fury, chains, instruments of torture, violent blows which the executioners discharged upon their victims. This noise was such that the tumult of the world, in tempest or battle, could bear no comparison to it.⁶⁴

Another similarity with the prison motif was the time spent in Purgatory. This is important because as I will demonstrate in chapter six, time was a key feature within the Protestant ghost story. These souls were committed for specific periods of time, for specific sins. Yet, while like the pain and the topography, the concept of time was familiar, the practice of it in Purgatory was distorted by an otherworldly temporal logic. It was a time in which ‘the shortest period of time there appears to be a very long duration, an instant appears a day, an hour years’.⁶⁵ In another instance the ghost of a priest declared that a minute in corporeal time equalled a year in Purgatory.⁶⁶ Walter Map, writing in the 1180’s recounted an apparition who declared that a thousand years on earth was the equivalent of three days in Purgatory.⁶⁷

⁶¹ VWS Additional lines 450-453. ed. Easting, 1991.

⁶² VOT B.L. MS Cotton Caligula A II, lines 1514-1515. ed. Mearns, 1985

⁶³ VWS Add. lines 90-93. ed. Easting, 1991.

⁶⁴ Schouppe, *Purgatory*, p23.

⁶⁵ Schouppe, *Purgatory*, p63.

⁶⁶ Schouppe, *Purgatory*, p65.

⁶⁷ Walter Map (c.1140-c.1209), *De Nugis Curialium* I, 9 (1180). Ed. Roger Mynors (Oxford, 1983).

It is possible to see how the lay imagination was captured by this amplification of the quotidian into the horrific and extraordinary, and so the teachings of the church were disseminated in this most unsubtle of ways. Duffy's investigation into contemporary wills requesting masses, alms and prayers for the souls of the dead, indicate that these moral teachings did have significant influence in the lay sectors of society.⁶⁸ Even the saints were not directly admitted to Heaven without some time in Earthly Paradise in the top level of Purgatory, until even the smallest stain of sin was removed from their soul. They may not have endured the extreme physical suffering of others, but they endured the grief of the absence of the beatific vision. This was for the select few, though, for the majority of people entered Purgatory at much lower levels.

Still, while there was little to distinguish Purgatory from Hell in these accounts, the crucial difference is that those who suffered the torments of Hell did so with no chance of reprieve. One was beyond all help and hope of respite or eventual salvation in Hell. As Tundale put it,

ne all the matens ne all the masse
maye not helpe thee fro the fyr of Helle.⁶⁹

As Dante saw written above the gate of Hell 'abandon all your hope who enter here.'⁷⁰ However, Hell was merely glimpsed down through stinking sulphurous pits by Sir Owayne and William of Stranton. The authors were keen to emphasise that they were in Purgatory, not in Hell, despite the horror of the punishments. In Sir Owayne's narrative the word 'purgatori' was written at least fourteen times in its one hundred and ninety-eight verses.⁷¹ William also specifically mentioned 'Purgatorie' three times in the first ten lines alone.⁷² The key difference from Hell was hope. As St Frances termed it, Purgatory was a 'sojourn of hope',⁷³ but in Hell 'those who are here can place no hope in death' for they suffered eternal torment.⁷⁴ The language of Purgatory was of cleansing and purity, after all the name itself is from the Latin *Purgare*, to cleanse.

⁶⁸ Duffy, *Stripping the Altars* (1992), pp.354-366.

⁶⁹ VOT lines 272-274.ed. Mearns, 1985.

⁷⁰ Alighieri Dante, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, Canto 3.7-9 (London, 1984).

⁷¹ In the OM1 version.

⁷² This is true for both the Royal and Additional versions.

⁷³ Schouppe, *Purgatory*, p16.

⁷⁴ Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 3. 46.

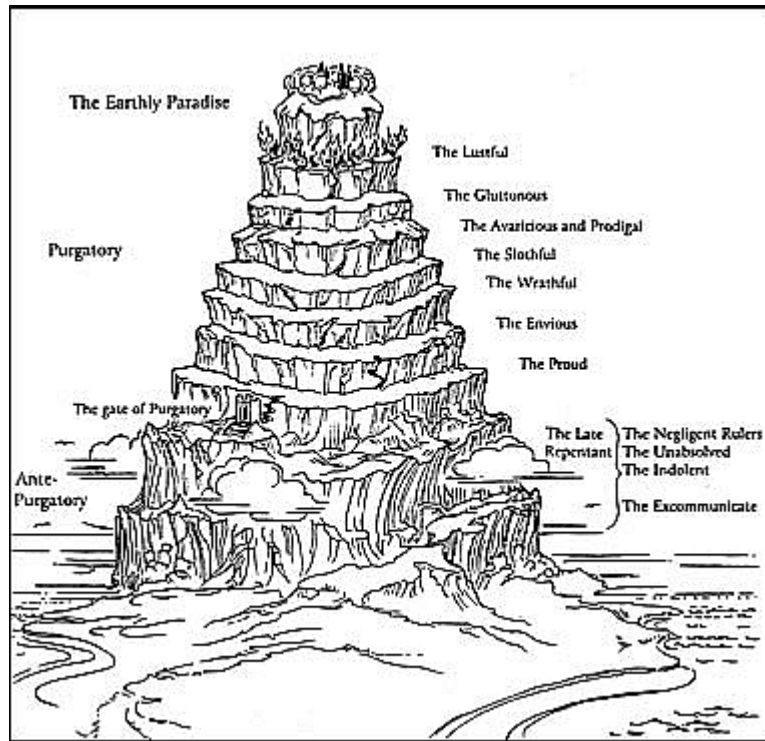


Fig.5. Purgatory, from the *Dante Encyclopedia* (London, 2000). Illustration by Robert Turner.

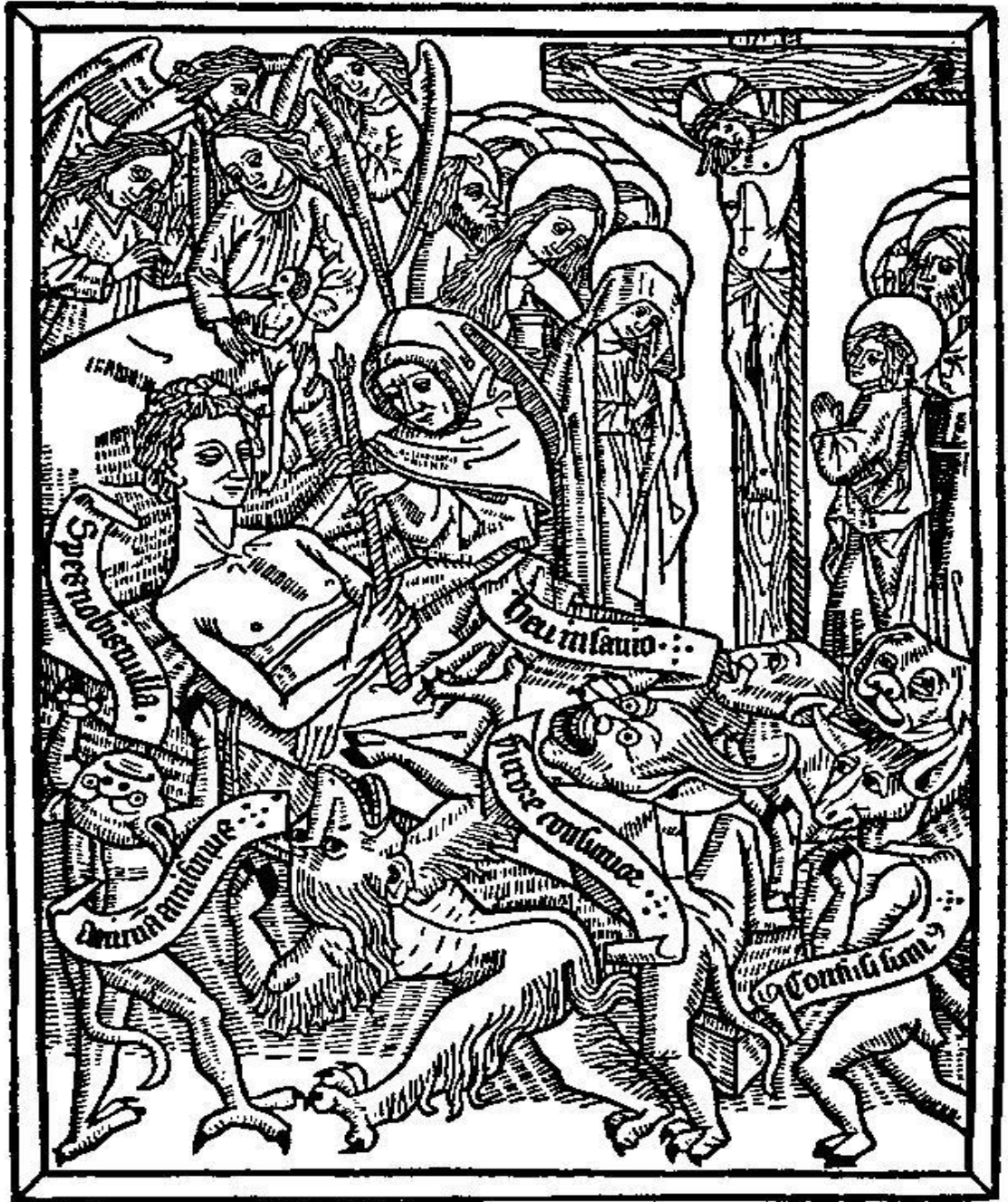


Fig. 6. Woodcut from a German xylographic block-book edition of *Ars Moriendi*, of the last five temptations, in which the demons eagerly await your soul should you succumb. (Augsburg, 1465).



Fig.7. Hieronymus Bosch, c.1480, *Seven Deadly Sins*.



Fig.8. The punishment for the sin of pride in Purgatory.
French woodcut published by Antoine Vérard for André Bocard, (Paris, 1453).

No person could enter Heaven until ‘he be clene of sinne.’⁷⁵ As Dante so eloquently phrased it, it is a place where one is ‘remade, as new trees are renewed, when they bring forth new boughs, I was pure and prepared to climb unto the stars.’⁷⁶

So, despite the horrors, one knew that Heaven waited eventually. These concepts of time, prison and torment are important to keep in mind, for although they appear peculiar to Purgatory, they later reappeared in various forms in seventeenth century ghost stories albeit in a Protestantised version. While a pilgrimage to Purgatory ensured direct contact with the tormented dead, it was not the only means by which this contact was possible. The living could, with God’s permission, be contacted by the dead from Purgatory.

II

‘bi the dedes and be tha messe sall his penaunce be made lesse’: visitors from Purgatory⁷⁷

If the topography of Purgatory was established by the pilgrimages of Sir Owayne et al, its purpose was promulgated by the visitation of the souls of the dead from Purgatory to the living. Not only was the idea of a post-mortem rebirth and of hope for eventual salvation constantly reaffirmed by the church in the practice of masses, alms, prayers and the founding of chantries by the living on the behalf of the deceased, it was also positively reinforced by the appearance of the dead to the living. Such an event would be recorded and distributed among the *exempla* of the mendicant preachers and more often court clerics, and these tales make up the majority of the second genre of tale in the *mirabilia*. While these tales were written by the educated for the higher estates, and often had a conscious ‘literary artifice’, Finucane argues persuasively that in order to achieve their purpose ‘the tales must have rooted in widely accepted attitudes, expectations and beliefs.’⁷⁸ So these tales simultaneously reflected and shaped the medieval world of ghost belief.

While some reflected doctrinal teachings others illustrated more non-Christian elements. The motifs employed had some grounding in the ghost story tradition of

⁷⁵ OM1 144.

⁷⁶ Dante, *Purgatorio*, Canto 33.143-145.

⁷⁷ Anon, *Gast of Gy*, (14thC) Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poet.175. lines 733/34.ed. Edward Foster (Grand Rapids, 2004).

⁷⁸ Finucane, *Appearances of the dead*, p59.

Antiquity, especially in one key aspect, that is, of intercession. Both in Antiquity and medieval Christendom, a soul could return because it was unable to find any measure of peace without the mediation of the living on their behalf. The most widely cited example, right up until the end of the seventeenth century was the ghost of Athens. First cited in Pliny's *Seventh Book of the Epistles* in 108/109 A.D. and also found in Tacitus's *Annals*, it related an incident in which a house was haunted by groans and the rattling of chains which 'grew louder and louder until there suddenly appeared the hideous phantom of an old man'. This ghost so plagued the residents that the house went up for sale and eventually fell into decay, until purchased by the philosopher Athenodorus, who, after nights of being pestered by this ghost and telling it he was busy, followed it out to the garden. The ghost indicated that Athenodorus should dig, and upon doing so he found a skeleton with its bones in chains. It was concluded that the man must have been murdered, and so, the bones were removed and given a seemly burial and the ghost was seen no more.⁷⁹

This story contained many of the motifs that became associated with the ghost story, that is, the rattling chains, the bad and violent death, burial in unsanctified ground and the refusal of the living to listen to what the ghost was trying to say. This ghost had been the victim of a terrible deed and justice needed to be done by the living on its behalf. These ideas, present in the Classical tradition, also feature in medieval and early modern ghost stories, and have remained in place to the present day. Similarly another familiar trope was that of the living haunted by their deeds both psychologically and literally. Suetonius wrote that Nero, having murdered his mother was haunted by her ghost and beaten by furies seeking vengeance.⁸⁰ This is where the main difference between the ghosts of Antiquity and those of medieval Europe lay. Ghosts of Antiquity usually sought revenge or reparation. The medieval ghost sought suffrages to ease its passage through Purgatory to Heaven. The ghost of Antiquity had been wronged in life, but the medieval ghost was paying for the wrongs it had committed in life. The medieval ghosts were often tormented

⁷⁹ This tale was not just in Pliny and Tacitus, it is also cited by Nathaniel Crouch in 1688 as being from 'Camer. Hist. Med. p290.' Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness* (London, 1688), p65. Montague Summers cites it from Gianbattista Fregoso, II Doge of Venice who published it in 1509 in Libri IX *Memorabilium* in the footnotes of Noel Taillepied, *A Treatise of Ghosts* (London, 1933 reprint Kessinger, 2006), p207; Henry More, *Immortality of the Soul* (London, 1659), quoted Athenodorus (the stoic philosopher 1st BCE) from Pliny in his epistle to Sura, p289. Louis Lavater, *De Spectris* (Eng. Trans. London, 1572), also quoted from Athenodorus, pp58-59.

⁸⁰ Thomas Bromhall, *An History of Apparitions*, (London, 1658), p23.

by physical punishment as a consequence of their sin, and they did not return to wreak vengeance or torment the living.⁸¹ For example, at the turn of the twelfth century into the thirteenth century, Caesarius of Heisterbach, a Cistercian monk wrote the *Dialogus Miraculorum*, full of morally weighted *exempla*. In it he related the tale of the apparition of Frederic of Kelle who appeared to a fellow monk declaring ‘I suffer deeply. I stole these sheepskins from a widow and now they burn red-hot upon me. I also made an unjust demand for a portion of land and now I am crushed under its weight. If my sons were to give back this property, they would lessen my suffering.’⁸² It was the sinful seeking intercession who returned to the living. In this case, the sons he returned to visit refused to share out his land as he had requested, and presumably, they too suffered the same punishments in the afterlife.

So, within the key theme of justice was the concept of sin and the reparation of that sin. The most famous medieval ghost story is the *Gast of Gy*.⁸³ This considerable piece of literature at two thousand and seventy lines, was a first hand account of the Dominican Jean Gobi’s experience with the ghost of Gy, in the south of France, around 1323/24. Like the accounts of St Patrick’s Purgatory, it too enjoyed considerable success. There were at least sixty versions of the narrative in all European languages, from Welsh to Swedish. It related the experience of a widow who was haunted in her bedchamber by the spirit of her deceased husband. After extensive questioning by the local friars, it was revealed that he had returned to warn his wife of the importance of a penitent life so that she may not suffer as he did after death. He, of course, also wished her to perform suffrages on his behalf to ease his suffering, for

bi the dedes and be tha messe
sall his penaunce be made lesse.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Furthermore, it is important to note that those who had committed mortal sins such as murder did not appear either in Antiquity or in medieval Europe in the way that they did in the seventeenth century, presumably because they were in the depths of Hell or Hades.

⁸² Caesarius of Heisterbach (c.1180-c.1240), *Dialogus Miraculorum Book XII, Chap.XIV*. ed. Joynes, pp35-36.

⁸³ *Gast of Gy*, (14thC) Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson Poet.175. ed. Foster (2004).

⁸⁴ *Gast of Gy*, Ibid.

By the fourteenth century, intercession from the living would often bring a physical transformation to the ghost which represented its progression to the higher echelons of Purgatory. This metamorphosis was not uncommon and seems to have begun around the twelfth century.

For example, in *Otia Imperialia* written by the itinerant court writer Gervase of Tilbury, a tale was related from twelfth century France called *The Ghost of Beaucaire*. This related the tale of a young man, who was killed in a knife fight, yet was allowed back by divine permission to warn others against a dissolute life. He appeared to his eleven year old female cousin, who conveyed the message, along with his request for suffrages. His request was fulfilled, and he later reappeared saying that, although he was still undergoing punishments, they were considerably less severe. During his last visitation it was noted that he was surrounded by a bright shining light. It transpired this light came from the Archangel Michael who 'his face shining with infinite splendour' revealed he was now a companion of the dead soul.⁸⁵

The narration about King Sancho of Leon has an uncertain date and provenance, but it contains many of the motifs of high medieval purgatorial ghost lore.⁸⁶ After being poisoned, the king reappeared to his wife, Queen Guda, 'clad in garments of mourning' and wearing 'a double row of hot chains around his waist' whilst being devoured by flames. He requested intercession from his wife, who then redoubled her prayers for him, went on missions of good works and founded a chantry. He reappeared after forty days 'relieved of the burning cincture and of all his other sufferings. In place of his robes of mourning, he wore a mantle of dazzling whiteness, like the sacred ornament which Guda had given to the convent.'⁸⁷ The link between his salvation and her good deeds was clearly highlighted.

A tale from the fifteenth century *Book of the Preacher of Ely* told of an incident from 1373, in which a man was visited by the ghost of the mother of his children who approached him as a large black shadow in a country lane at night. At first, he did not recognise her for in life she had had flowing, golden hair and in death it was dark. She pointed this out to him, gave him a handful of her hair and said, "If you arrange for as many

⁸⁵ Gervase of Tilbury (c.1155-c.1234), from *Otia Imperialia*, Part III, Ch.III. S. E. Banks and J.W.Binns, eds. (Oxford, 2002), p765.

⁸⁶ F.X. Schouppe claims in *Purgatory* (Trans. London, 1926), p60 that this was written by a John Vasquez in 940 A.D. although this date is uncertain as it predates the idea of Purgatory by three hundred years.

masses to be said for me as the hairs you hold in your hand, then I will be released from my pain.” The man did as he was requested and when she reappeared some time later to him in the same place, the man saw her as a ‘resplendent light moving swiftly towards him. When it reached him, a voice came from within the light, thanking him and saying; “Blessings upon you among all men for freeing me from my terrible pain.”’⁸⁸ She was no longer stained and shadowed by her sin, but she had been transformed into an essence of light, reflecting the imagery so prevalent in the descriptions of earthly Paradise and Heaven.

The point regarding suffrages was made clearly in all these stories. After all, as Schmitt points out, ‘suffrages were based on a system of equivalency, of compensation and of exchange with the living.’⁸⁹ The ghost not only represented the principles of God’s mercy, but it also reinforced the idea of salvation by good works, as charity was one of the greatest theological virtues.⁹⁰ Spiritual credit could be earned by the living through intercession on behalf of the dead. The ghost, in requesting help, facilitates this process, as with the lady who transformed into light, and her still-living lover receiving her blessing.

As mentioned in Section I, light and darkness were common Christian motifs. In these ghost stories, the dead became transformed into light, symbolising the cleansing of the stain of sin from the soul. Similarly, ghosts rarely appeared in daylight, they haunted the shadows of the night and the dark hours just before dawn, as Thietmar of Merseburg stated at the turn of the eleventh century, ‘as the day is to the living, so the night conceded to the dead.’⁹¹ This further emphasized the fact that they had not yet reached God’s divine light and that they were still tainted by the penumbra of sin. It also imitated the darkness of Purgatory.

It is not just when they appeared, but where, that was an important feature of the ghostly narrative. The ghost of Gy appeared in the bedchamber he shared with his wife, and specifically, near the marital bed, which according to the tale, was the symbol of their committed relationship. Thietmar of Merseburg wrote of a ghostly gathering just before

⁸⁷ Schoupe, *Purgatory*, pp60-61.

⁸⁸ ‘Book of the Preacher of Ely’ in ed. Joynes (2001) pp40-41.

⁸⁹ Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, p67.

⁹⁰ 1 Corinthians 13: 2-13.

⁹¹ Thietmar of Merseburg (975-1018), ‘Chronicon’ Book I, Chap.VII, Trans. David A.Warner, *Ottoman Germany: The Chronicon of Theitmar of Merseberg* (Manchester, 2001), p77.

dawn, in the cemetery, next to a holy chapel.⁹² Caesarius told tales of ghosts appearing in a courtyard, and in a churchyard at Bonn during twilight. There was an encounter with a spirit on a highway before first light, the tale of the spirit of a father knocking on the front door of his son's house, and a dead husband visiting his widow by their bed.⁹³ The preacher of Ely wrote of a cross by a highway as a place of visitation.⁹⁴ In the *Mirabilia*, the more fantastic courtly tales, Walter Map wrote of a lady in a lake, a man of the woods, and spirits that come and go through windows.⁹⁵ Gervase of Tilbury spoke of spirits, both good and bad, appearing in water ways, a cemetery, a faithless wife's new marital bed, the home and a young girl's bedchamber.⁹⁶ The most common location was the church and its cemetery, the bedchamber, roads and rivers. The roads and rivers reflected pre-Christian ideas of liminal geographical boundaries to the otherworld and were not out of keeping with the idea of St Patrick's Purgatory, which was located in a cave on an island in a lake. These 'portals' reflected that Purgatory was a liminal place. The church and cemetery reflected more immediate community locations of cross-over and integration between the living and the dead. Schmitt argues that since the cemetery was located in the centre of any village or town, by the church 'the dead grouped the living around them.' As the cemetery was thus between the church and the village, it was consequently an intermediate place.⁹⁷ As the living had to traverse through it to get to church or even to cross the urban landscape they were constantly reminded not just of their own mortality, but their duties towards the dead. As he says 'thus the cemetery was an oneiric and fantastic place.'⁹⁸ Certainly, depictions of the *danse macabre* would have heightened the sense that cemeteries were the domain of the still active dead.⁹⁹

⁹² Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, p75.

⁹³ Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, Book I, Chap. LXIII.

⁹⁴ 'Book of the Preacher of Ely' ed. Joynes, p40.

⁹⁵ Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium* ed. Roger Mynors (Oxford, 1983), pp149-155, 163.

⁹⁶ Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, Banks and Binns, eds. (2002), pp678, 722-723, 735-737, 755, 761.

⁹⁷ Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, p183.

⁹⁸ Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, p183.

⁹⁹ See Fig.9. p73.



Fig. 9. 'Orchestra of the Dead': woodcut by Michael Wolmegut, from Hatmann Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum*, (Nuremburg, 1493).

III

Monsters of Satan: Revenants in the local community

So far, it has been demonstrated that there were two ways in which the dead and the living could have contact in pre-Reformation society- through a pilgrimage to Purgatory or by visitation from those requesting intercession. It was in the cemetery that another encounter with the dead occurred, not with a ghost, but with the revenant, that is, a reanimated corpse. It is important to examine the tradition of the revenant, for elements of this tradition were often incorporated into ghost narratives in the mid-seventeenth century. Or rather, the same story reappeared, matching in every particular of detail, but different, in that the revenant had changed into a ghost. This is relevant for it shows how seventeenth-century Protestant writers on ghosts cast about for, and recycled stories to suit their agendas. This will be discussed in detail in chapter five, but in order to understand the progression of the revenant narrative, it is necessary to show its origins. These revenants are not to be confused with the French use of *revenant* for ghost, derived from *revenir*. These revenants were a distinct form of dead, akin to the modern day zombie. They abounded in northern European, particularly Icelandic sagas, where they were called *Draugr*, and they were also found in many medieval clerical court writers of *mirabilia* such as Walter Map, William of Newburgh, and Caesarius of Heisterbach from the tenth century onwards.¹⁰⁰ They differed from medieval ghost stories in that they had no obvious tradition in Antiquity and they were not shaped by the teachings of Christianity. They owed more to pre-Christian Scandinavian tales and suggest a persistence of such lore, despite the pervasive influence of the Christian church.

Furthermore, unlike those who returned from Purgatory, they were usually malevolent. They reflected fears that death, especially death on a large scale, wrought by inexplicable plagues and disease could, like the revenant, stalk the community. These revenants were either reanimated corpses, caused by the entering of a demonic spirit into

¹⁰⁰ Joynes, *Medieval Ghost Stories*, pp87-90; Caesarius of Heisterbach (c.1180-c.1240), *Dialogus Miraculorum*; Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon* (10th C); Walter Map (c.1140-c.1209), *De Nugis Curialium*; Gervase of Tilbury (c.1155-c.1234), *Otia Imperialia*; William of Newburgh (1136-1198), *Historia Rerum*

the cadaver, or they could be the actual dead, animated and able to rise from the tomb until its flesh decayed, at which point the spirit departed to the otherworld.¹⁰¹ They were always fleshy though rancid with deterioration; they were never skeletons, like those depicted in the *danse macabre*. Nancy Caciola argues that they indicate that there was perceived to be ‘a liminal period in which the death of the personality is absolute but the death of the flesh is not yet complete. Psychic and physical death do not coincide.’¹⁰²

What separated these dead, or rather the undead, from the ghostly is that their animating force was thought to be the soul which was still trapped within their decaying flesh. They were malevolent in the extreme, physically attacking the hapless who encountered them, often their still living families. No outside agency was held responsible for the corpse’s reanimation, and in fact little reason was given at all for the phenomenon, other than that the revenant was guided by its own internal will. This lore depicted these beings as preternatural, rather than supernatural, for although they were the returning dead, they did not fit into the classification of the ghost. They were corporeal, not ethereal in form, and they were visibly decayed. Furthermore, they had no spiritual quest to fulfil, and no penance to pay. They certainly did not fulfil any divine purpose other than that they were uniformly people who had lived and died badly, that is, wickedly and irreligiously. So, they could therefore be seen as a warning to the living in the same way that the purgatorial ghosts were. As Nancy Caciola put it, ‘the bad death of a malicious person gave cause for fear that his cantankerous vitality might live on within the corpse itself.’¹⁰³ This was very much a material, rather than spiritual concept of death and the afterlife. Indeed, this was exemplified in their activities.

According to the Yorkshire Canon William of Newburgh in his twelfth century work *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, there was a case in Buckinghamshire where the corpse of a man returned from his tomb the day after his burial. Night after night he attempted conjugal relations with his terrified and revolted wife. He then ‘took to prancing among the animals in the byre and the fields around the house.’¹⁰⁴ This activity roused the whole

Anglicarum: Prodigiousa. Ed. Joynes (2001); *Beowulf*, Trans. M.J.Swanton (Manchester, 1978); *Laxdæla Saga* (c.11th C) Trans. Magnus Magnusson & Herman Pálsson (London, 1969).

¹⁰¹ Caciola, ‘Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture’, p97.

¹⁰² Caciola, ‘Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual’, p33.

¹⁰³ Caciola, ‘Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual’, p29.

¹⁰⁴ William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, Book V, Chap.XXII. ed. Joynes (2001), p97-98.

community into taking action. Firstly they kept watch over him and found that he was able to wander in the ‘full light of the sun’. Terrified, the villagers consulted the clergy and the case found its way to the Bishop of Lincoln, who was ‘just as amazed as everybody else.’ He declared that intentions to exhume the corpse and cremate it were sacrilegious and so he prepared a scroll of absolution, which was placed on the dead man’s chest. This done, the cadaver stayed in his grave.

In another narrative from William of Newburgh (who unfortunately did not record dates), a priest who had led a life of infamy rose from the dead and became a nuisance in his former monastery. He also attacked his mistress. In order to deal with the ‘monster’, a priest of a ‘doughty character and two stalwart young men’ struck him with a battle-axe. When they went to dig up the corpse the next day, the cadaver was indeed afflicted with a bleeding axe wound. The dangerous materiality of the flesh was emphasised not only in this, but also by the fact they decided to burn the body and scatter its ashes, thus rendering it harmless.¹⁰⁵

William of Newburgh also told the tale (again undated) of a revenant, who rose each night and wandered around his town Berwick followed by a pack of dogs. He wrote that

The simpler folk of the town feared that they might accidentally run into the lifeless creature and be physically attacked; the more thoughtful were afraid that, unless something were to be done quickly the air circulating around the town would become infected by the corpse and so lead to general sickness and death in the town.¹⁰⁶

This passage indicates an interesting disparity in the difference between the ‘simpler folk’ and the ‘more thoughtful’, but what is telling is that, while both have different reasons to fear the revenant, both groups do not appear to doubt the fact of its being. This is at odds with the theology of Hell, or even Purgatory. These revenants had led dissolute lives and died unrepentant yet they had not gone straight to Hell. They were certainly not eligible for Purgatory, which would have provided the opportunity for an interaction with the living and the continuation of life. It was possible that they could go to Hell once the body was no more, either by natural decomposition, or as was common in these tales, through

¹⁰⁵ William of Newburgh, *Historia*, Book V, Chap.XXIV. ed. Joynes, pp99-100.

¹⁰⁶ William of Newburgh, *Historia*, Book V, Chap.XXIII.ed. Joynes, pp98-99.

decapitation and burning. The sinisterly numinous character of these events was evil in nature, as the language reveals. They were called ‘monsters’ that were ‘helped’ by Satan.¹⁰⁷ Unlike ghosts who were released from Purgatory by divine permission to seek suffrages, these were fleshly agents of the Devil. They had to be dispatched by at least ten ‘sturdy young men’ who dismembered their corpses and then burned the remains.¹⁰⁸ The revenant symbolised the weakness and sinfulness of all flesh, bestowed upon mankind by original sin. In contrast with the spiritual quest of the ghost, the revenant was very much about the corporeal flesh and thus about sin, as was emphasised by his violent and often libidinous activities. What is also of note is that such happenings were perceived to be commonplace. William of Newburgh claimed that the notion,

That the corpses of the dead, moved by some kind of spirit, leave their graves and wander around as the cause of danger and terror to the living before going back to tombs which open up to receive them, is not something which would easily be believed, were it not for the fact that there have been clear examples in our own time, with abundant accounts of such events. Nothing of the sort is reported in books of former times.¹⁰⁹

The last line is telling for, in another of William’s stories, a town afflicted by a revenant was ‘Poisoned and infected by the corpse, the neighborhood became filled with the sick and the dying who had inhaled the pestilence. Soon the town...was almost empty.’¹¹⁰ It is perhaps pertinent that the author also made reference to ‘a rising pestilence...[which] was general throughout England at this time.’¹¹¹ It appears that these particularly malignant dead were being blamed as harbingers of death on a large scale. This category of the harmful dead indicated contemporary concerns of the sudden death, which was a bad death, the instance of which was no doubt increased in times of endemic outbreaks. The language of ill omens and contagions foreshadowed the language of corruption and filth that saturated the literature of the post-plague fourteenth century. It also presaged the rhetoric of divine punishment, later deployed from the time of the plague until the late seventeenth century.

¹⁰⁷ William of Newburgh, *Historia*, Book V, Chap.XXIII. ed. Joynes, p98.

¹⁰⁸ William of Newburgh, *Historia*, Book V, Chap.XXIII. *Ibid*, p99.

¹⁰⁹ William of Newburgh, *Historia*, Book V, Chap.XXIV. *Ibid*, p99.

¹¹⁰ William of Newburgh, *Historia*, Book V, Chap.XXIV. *Ibid*, p101.

¹¹¹ William of Newburgh, *Historia*, Book V, Chap.XXIII. *Ibid*, p99

It is notable that the imagery of the corruption and pestilence of the corpse reflects the pollution of the purgatorial landscape by the filth of sin. This, of course, denotes the nature of the corpse, which was not just malevolent in character, but the opposite of what was clean, holy, and pure. Likewise, revenants appeared in similar places to the ghost, they could arise from the cemetery, but they frequented rivers and fields, terrorised highways, monasteries and rampaged about ladies' bedchambers. They appeared in the same places because despite their material corporality, they were still very much liminal. They were neither alive nor dead; their souls were no longer subject to higher human emotions, but dominated by base ones such as lust, anger, and vengeance. The natural conclusion of this symbolism was therefore to destroy the flesh, i.e. the body, for that was where the corruption started and ended. As with Purgatory, the punishment and destruction of the corporeal sinful flesh was the dominant motif. Those involved in the story did not hesitate to enact a gruesome end to the undead body in order to protect the community. Here was the idea of an individual's corruption infecting the community, not just with disease, but also with sin itself.¹¹² In a society where to tolerate sin was as good as committing it oneself, and as God was watching at all times, this was a matter for the community to resolve urgently lest they fall short on Judgement Day. To remove the source of spiritual and material infection was necessary for both material and spiritual survival. The soul could then be released to its natural destination, in these cases, Hell. There was no suggestion that the destruction of the body also destroyed the soul. The same theology, which allowed the soul to continue its life in Purgatory and Heaven, also pertained to the wicked, who as we saw before, were punished for all eternity.

¹¹² Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, *First Part of the Second Part*, Q.83. Article.4 talks of 'the infection of actual sin.' Augustine, *the City of God*, XIV, 16, seq.24. discusses the 'infection of original sin.' Genesis 20:9, 'thou hast brought on me and my kingdom a great sin.' Jer.16:18.'They have defiled my land' with sin. Rom.5:12 'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.'

IV

Closing the door on the dead.

It is clear then, that by the Reformation there was a well established relationship between the living and the dead. While Le Goff and Duffy talk of the hope of Purgatory and the positive encouragement of charity and mercy this imbued, the relationship between the dead and the living was complex and could often be fraught with guilt and fear. As Peter Marshall and Bruce Gordon point out, there was a multitude of reactions to the dead. They wrote that ‘the interests of the living and the dead were not always as convergent as the model of reciprocity in prayer and intercession might imply. The dead might be hostile to the living; the living fearful of, or indifferent to, the dead.’¹¹³ Suffrages could be ignored and forgotten, forcing the dead to return on occasion to prompt the living into faithful and merciful duty. The dead could chide, comfort, or be helpful. They could also be violent, disruptive, and dangerous. They were demanding and needed appeasement. They could inflict punishment themselves, as in the man who came back to beat his widow to death when she remarried years later.¹¹⁴ They could harm babies in their cradles,¹¹⁵ and they frequently predicted death.¹¹⁶ However, as the *Gast of Gy* illustrated, they could come to help and offer guidance. They reinforced belief in life after death. They underpinned the doctrinal teachings of the church regarding absolution, extreme unction, repentance and morality. These practices shaped the lives of the majority of late medieval Europe’s population for four hundred years, until the sixteenth century and the Reformation.

Reformed arguments against the existence of Purgatory were to have profound long term effects not just on the practices of the faithful, but also regarding the relationship between the living and the dead. Peter Marshall claims that the abolition of Purgatory was a moment of profound rupture, and ‘perhaps the most abrupt and traumatic of all the cultural apertures opened up in the sixteenth century.’¹¹⁷ One of the consequences of this rupture was the creation of a sense of distance between this world and the next. Yet, I would

¹¹³ Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, *The Place of the Dead* (Cambridge, 2000), p7.

¹¹⁴ Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, III, Chap. XCIX. Banks and Binns, eds. (2002), p755.

¹¹⁵ Gervase, *Otia Imperialia* III, chap. LXXXVI. ed. Joynes, p76. See also Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. Mynors, p163.

¹¹⁶ Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, Book I, Chap. VII, ed. Warner, pp70-71 and also Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, Book XI, Chap. LXIV, ed. Joynes, p35.

¹¹⁷ Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford, 2002), p108.

contend that the evidence suggests that while the relationship between the living and the dead was indeed altered, a dramatic rift did not occur. Even though the Anglican Church adopted Heinrich Bullinger's doctrine that one's soul went straight to Heaven or Hell upon death, this did not eliminate interest in the ghost in either lay or elite culture. Here I would dispute Marshall's point about Protestant teaching being too cruelly counter-intuitive to ever fully take root in the popular consciousness.¹¹⁸ Close examination of reformed texts, especially by Jean Calvin, suggests that reformed eschatology could in fact allow for the continued presence of the dead among the living. This was not true of all reformed eschatology, of course, for mortalism in its three forms did not allow for a conscious sentient soul post-mortem at all.¹¹⁹ Yet, ghosts still continued to haunt both the lay and elite alike. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the laity knew from experience that ghosts existed. Secondly, they retained certain elements of traditional Roman Catholic views, although this is not necessarily the same as persistent crypto-Catholicism. Thirdly, they needed them for various reasons and so, they allowed them to assert their agency. This will be more fully explored in chapter four. Fourthly, they continued to exist because another strand of thought appeared which was purposefully put forward in direct opposition to mortalism by Calvin. In his work *Psychopannychia* of 1534, he revived the Hebraic and Patristic tradition of Abraham's Bosom. Reformers had rejected Purgatory, for many reasons, such as the corruption of the indulgences system. Nonetheless, the key substantial argument against Purgatory, was that there was no scriptural evidence to support its existence. Feeling that the Roman Catholic Church had lost its way they turned to the Church fathers and the Scripture, and within both traditions Abraham's Bosom was cited as a place where the souls of dead awaited the Last Judgement. This was a third place where the soul waited, conscious and sentient in a middle state between death and the Resurrection. It was still possible that the living and the dead could remain in contact. Subsequently, we see elements of purgatorial thought remain and become absorbed into mainstream Protestant thought. How this happened will be the subject of the next chapter. It is also pertinent to

¹¹⁸ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p263.

¹¹⁹ These forms were *Psychopannychism* in which the soul was thought to sleep between death and the Last Judgement; the second was *Thnetopsychism* which stated that the soul perished post-mortem but was resurrected and rejoined with the flesh at the Last Judgement through Divine Grace, and finally *Annihilationism* or *Sadducism* was the view that both the soul and the flesh perished at death forever. These terms were used by contemporaries and they will be examined in more detail in chapter two.

this thesis to examine firstly upon what grounds Purgatory was disputed, and secondly, what reformers suggested should take its place. The new doctrines of the reformers affected the processes of temporal punishment, and brought the doctrine of Divine Providence into sharper focus. If one could not do penance for sin in the next life, greater emphasis was placed on leading a godly life. The ghost then, became a means by which the consequences of leading a bad life could be illustrated. Furthermore, to understand why one reformed eschatology should be adopted by the Anglican Church, and why others were rejected is important, for such decisions had consequences on the place of the dead in society.

Chapter Two

Purgatory, Mortalism and *Psychopannychia*; The destination of the soul in reformed eschatology.

As I have shown in Chapter One, the late medieval system of belief allowed for a rich and complex interaction between the dead and the living, with distinct protocols and a defined landscape and geography. While the dead could be menacing and at times violent, on the whole they served a useful function. Purgatory had facilitated a positive system of intercession and interaction that was considered to be beneficial to both sides of the mortal divide. Purgatory was, as Diarmaid MacCulloch put it, ‘one of the great success stories of Christian theological construction.’¹

I now turn to the reforms of the early to mid-sixteenth century church in England and I will look at how reformers arguments altered this relationship. It has long been argued that the removal of Purgatory from reformed eschatology was one of the most seismic shifts of the Reformation.² Yet, a close examination of elite texts suggest an altogether different picture for they imply that the relationship between the living and the dead had not been completely severed, and that a third place, where the soul could rest in an interim state between death and the resurrection, was still possible and was still perceived to exist in the late sixteenth century. So, this chapter will look at how Purgatory was debated in reformers’ texts and then show through close examination of texts such as *Psychopannychia* by Jean Calvin that a third place was still possible within the parameters of Calvinistic and Anglican doctrine in the early stages of the Reformation.³ In intellectual theological debates regarding the function of Purgatory, the arguments set forth by Simon Fish, William Tyndale, John Frith, Ulrich Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger and Jean Calvin amongst many centred on why it should be abolished. I will examine the alternative

¹ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603* (New York, 1990).

² A.G.Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1964); Clive Burgess, “‘A Fond Thing Vainly Invented’: An Essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in Later Medieval England’, *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750*, ed. S.J.Wright (London, 1988); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (Yale, 1992); Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford, 2002).

³ Jean Calvin, *Psychopannychia* (Geneva, 1534), Trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh, 1844; reprint Grand Rapids, 1958).

eschatological systems they proffered, and importantly for this thesis, the effect this was to have on the relationship between the living and the dead.

With regards to its abolition, A. G. Dickens famously posited the view that Purgatory was an onerous presence in pre-Reformation England.⁴ He argued that Purgatory was a doctrine based on ‘intellectual slackness’, which, as such, ‘played into the hands of Protestant critics.’ While he concedes the doctrine had its ‘ardent believers’, he declared that ‘the evidence suggests that a marked decline of interest, a more secular and sceptical attitude, was beginning to manifest itself even before the rise of Protestant beliefs.’⁵

So far, the existing historiography on the matter has set itself against these benchmark conclusions, and it has chosen to focus either on the popularity of the doctrine or the dissent its abolition caused. Historians have aligned themselves in a ‘for’ or ‘against’ Purgatory style of argument. For example, Clive Burgess contested Dickens’ view that Purgatory was burdensome, implying that Dickens’ own Protestant views had made him unable to sympathise with this doctrine.⁶ Burgess claimed that ‘Historians have turned a blind eye both to it and what it implies, which is effectively to forfeit proper understanding of the role that the laity played in the parishes in later medieval England.’⁷ He continued saying that the positive effects of Purgatory have been misconceived by historians unable to understand its meaning in society. He claimed that the doctrine created ‘a ‘circular flow...uniting classes of men... [and] mitigating social tension.’⁸ All levels of society were concerned about the afterlife and purgatorial punishments, and this then created a communality of the practice which brought the people together. This was in contrast to Dickens’ view that there was a discord of practice between the laity and the clergy, for such rituals of faith ‘predisposed rapport between the two orders.’⁹

Burgess’ sympathetic reassessment of the popularity and importance of Purgatory was extended by Christopher Haigh who refuted many of Dickens’ assertions that there was

⁴ A.G.Dickens, *Reformation and Society in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London, 1966), pp20-24.

⁵ A.G.Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1964), pp22, 287. He argues that anti-clerical feeling among the laity against the abuse of the system of suffrages by ‘avaricious and uncultivated clerics’ had already established conditions in which the rejection of Purgatory was possible. p382.

⁶ Clive Burgess, “‘A Fond Thing Vainly Invented’: An Essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in Later Medieval England”, *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750*, ed. S.J.Wright (London, 1988), pp56-84.

⁷ Burgess, “‘A Fond Thing Vainly Invented’”, p58.

⁸ Burgess, “‘A Fond Thing Vainly Invented’”, p69.

⁹ Burgess, “‘A Fond Thing Vainly Invented’”, p71.

mass dissatisfaction within the populace at large towards a corrupt and dysfunctional church. Close analysis of regional attitudes led him to conclude that, while ‘long-term religious discontents can be disputed, the significance of Protestantism as a progressive, ideological movement can be doubted, the continuing popularity and prestige of the catholic church can be stressed, and the political Reformation can be explained as the outcome of factional competition for office and influence.’ He asserted that the church was a lively and relevant social institution, and the Reformation was not the product of ‘a long-term decay of medieval religion...the fact that there was a Reformation does not mean that it was wanted: it does not imply there was a deep-seated popular demand for religious change.’¹⁰ To Haigh, the evidence garnered from wills, bede rolls and chantry records suggested that Purgatory and the whole process of suffrages that surrounded it was a popular institution with elite and lay people alike.¹¹ The evidence suggested that people were content to bequeath and donate resources to the church in order to facilitate a quicker journey through Purgatory to Heaven. Such bequeaths also demonstrated lay faith in the local fraternities that their requests would be carried out.

This perspective is supported by Eamon Duffy who wrote that it is an ‘irrefutable’ fact that the cult of the dead was the main cult of the living; ‘wherever one turns in the sources for the period one encounters the overwhelming preoccupation of the clergy and laity alike, with the safe transition of their souls from this world to the next, above all with the shortening and easing of their stay in Purgatory. He added that ‘it is a preoccupation which shows no slackening up to the very moment of the Reformation.’¹² He further asserted that it was the single most influential factor in shaping the organisation of the church, for ‘the influence of the cult of the dead was ubiquitous...and can be seen as an incubus dominating the religion of the living.’¹³ Duffy argues persuasively that the

¹⁰ Christopher Haigh, *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), pp2-4.

¹¹ For example in Lincoln in April 1532, Richard Denys requested in his will that after his widows death that his ‘hole messuage with th’appurtenaunces...to the lorde abbot and convent of the monastery of Our Blessyd Lady of Kyrksted and to their successors.’ ed. David Hickman, *Lincoln Wills 1532-1534* (Lincoln, 2001), p12; In Wells, John Aishe in 1543 willed iiijd to the brotherhood of Batcombe. Thomas George in the same year also left them iiijd. John Hoper of Bruton left xijd ‘to the fraternity of the Blessed Mary’ in 1543 and Henry Russe left iij s iiijd to the brotherhood of Castle Carie a not inconsiderable sum. William Gane of Bruton in 1544, bequeathed xijd to his local brotherhood and Thomas Curtys of Shepton Mallett willed vjs viijd to the fraternity of his parish. Dorothy O. Shilton & Richard Holworthy, eds. *Medieval Wills from Wells* (London, 1925), pp21-24.

¹² Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p301.

¹³ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp302-303.

popularity of Purgatory and the relationship between the living and the dead that it engendered, led to a large scale reluctance on behalf of much of the population to relinquish this eschatological system. The converse Catholic revision of Dickens holds the conclusion that the Reformation was magisterial in nature, and that the Catholic laity was forced to sever its relationship with Purgatory by a ruling Protestant elite minority. This was a difficult and protracted process, and it took a couple of generations of reform, until the 1580's at least, for the eschatology of Purgatory to truly dwindle, until it was finally swept away by the 'relentless torrent carrying away the landmarks of a thousand years.'¹⁴

Similarly, Peter Marshall agrees with Duffy that Purgatory was a popular doctrine, yet he does not agree with Duffy's view that the Reformation was long and slow. He contends that the loss of Purgatory was more of a rupture, a cataclysmic break. The dismissal of Purgatory was the single most important occurrence of the Reformation, over and above the loss of the saints, the Pope, the Virgin and transubstantiation. According to Marshall it was 'a profound moment' of social and cultural upheaval.¹⁵ Gordon and Marshall write that 'certainly, it would be difficult to overstate the importance, in terms of formal theology, liturgy, ecclesiastical structures and ritual practice of the abrogation of purgatory and the repudiation of any form of intercession for the dead.'¹⁶

Marshall points out that the attack on Purgatory and its attending practices not only struck at the heart of the Catholic Church in England but was a 'kind of cultural de-programming' by ruling Protestant elites.¹⁷ Furthermore, he argues that the loss of Purgatory was a seismic shift that affected all levels of society. Its demise undermined the whole *raison d'être* for swathes of the clergy, altered policies in fiscal management and even urban architecture and planning, since, after all, 'key aspects of the community's structure had been bound up with its ongoing relationship to souls in the afterlife.'¹⁸ Now, 'men and women had to re-imagine their own postmortem fate.'¹⁹

This re-imagining suggests that Purgatory was an imagined premise, and thus, a false premise, a point he picks up on saying, 'one adjective more than any other was paired

¹⁴ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p593.

¹⁵ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead* (2002).

¹⁶ Gordon and Marshall, *The Place of the Dead*, P10.

¹⁷ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p100.

¹⁸ Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, 2001), p40.

¹⁹ Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p40.

with Purgatory, serving at once to explain and to expel the fearfulness with which the concept was held to be indelibly imbued – ‘feigned.’²⁰ This afterlife of the imagination is a theme Stephen Greenblatt expounds upon in his *Hamlet in Purgatory*. He examines the Protestant arguments against Purgatory in the writings of those who depicted the place as a fable, or a ‘vast piece of poetry’ – no doubt a reference to Dante’s fictional vision and the pilgrimages to St Patrick’s Purgatory by Sir Owayne. His view is that Purgatory had the ability, as good fables do, to ‘seize hold of the mind, create vast unreal spaces, and people those spaces with imaginary beings and detailed events.’ As such, the priest’s power over his flock derived from ‘their hold over the imagination.’²¹ He wrote that ‘what is most startling is not the fraudulence of the imaginary place but its power.’²²

Greenblatt refutes the slow and resistant Reformation of Duffy and Haigh as well as the cataclysm argument of Marshall. Instead, he aligns himself with Dicken’s polemic, that the Reformation and its rejection of Purgatory was not an unwanted, terrible event at all, because Purgatory was not a central feature in people’s lives. He argues that the notion of an intermediate place between Heaven and Hell ‘had come to seem, for many heretics and orthodox believers alike, essential to the institutional structure, authority, and power of the Catholic Church. This degree of importance is certainly an exaggeration, but it is not a complete travesty...it was part of a much broader, popular understanding of the meaning of existence, the nature of Christian faith, and the structure of family and community.’²³ Furthermore, he adds that ‘as a popular belief, Purgatory aroused-or at least was meant to arouse-fear’ for the many who did not have the financial means to secure suffrages.²⁴ In addition, ‘terror of the purgation that lies ahead is an essential agent of moral restraint as well as an inducement to the pious acceptance of tribulation... [thus] fear was a gift to be assiduously cultivated.’ He continues to assert that ‘the discourse of Purgatory was meant not only to manage, contain and ultimately relieve anxiety; it was explicitly meant to arouse it, to sharpen its intensity, to provide it with hideous imagery.’²⁵

²⁰ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p58.

²¹ Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p33.

²² Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p38.

²³ Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p14.

²⁴ Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p28.

²⁵ Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p71.

There is a problem with all the existing historiography on Purgatory, however, for it all focuses primarily on the ‘popularity’ of Purgatory.²⁶ I wish to break away from this kind of narrative, for it can be reductive. I wish to focus instead on the broader eschatological questions that arose surrounding its abolition. By focusing on the popularity of Purgatory, no answers regarding ghosts can be found, for the question of its popularity can only produce two responses, whereas examination of the competing eschatologies that emerged in the wake of its demise provides a nuanced insight into the question of how the ghost persisted. Furthermore, throughout the course of this thesis I will examine aspects of continuity and change within the identity of the ghost, and the origins of these shifts can be found in the reformed discourses of the afterlife.

In addition to this, apart from Marshall’s exegesis on reformed doctrines of the afterlife, historians have tended to generalise about reformed eschatological doctrine, citing the Anglican position that after death one’s soul went straight to its reward or punishment in Heaven or Hell.²⁷ Yet, this doctrine was selected by the Anglican Church from several competing, equally scripturally valid eschatologies. Protestants by no means agreed on the afterlife and this was to have profound and long term consequences, not just on the unity of the reformed church but also upon the relationship between the living and the dead, right up until the end of the seventeenth century. This is something to which historians, apart from Marshall, have paid scant attention. This chapter will therefore study these heterodox ideas and then throughout the rest of this thesis, I will demonstrate the consequences of these doctrines on both lay and elite perceptions of the afterlife and the dead. It will also be argued that there was not a clear severance between pre and post-Reformation, nor was there a shift in which one system of thought replaced another. Instead, the evidence shows

²⁶ Dickens for example talks of ‘lay resentment’ and its ‘jealousy and malice’ towards those who orchestrated the whole system which supported Purgatory as a doctrine, such as doles, the reading of bede rolls, prayers and masses for the dead, the founding of chantries, indulgences and the bequeathment of material goods to the church in one’s will to hasten one’s passage to Heaven. Purgatory was thus a deeply unpopular doctrine. *The English Reformation*, pp20-21, 29-30, 382. Duffy on the other hand while stating that Purgatory was an ante-chamber of Hell also argues that the doctrine encouraged good deeds and charity and established an important bond between the living and the dead which bound the community together. It thus had a powerful hold over the popular imagination in a positive way. *Stripping of the Altars*, pp343-376.

²⁷ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971), ‘The reformers denied the existence of Purgatory, asserting that at the moment of death all men proceeded inexorably to Heaven or Hell, according to their desserts.’ p702.

that there was a syncretism of what Tessa Watt terms ‘traditional’ belief, already in practice informed by ‘folk’ elements and reformed faith.²⁸

For many Protestants, while the whole system of suffrages, indulgences, obits, chantries, masses and prayers for the dead was eradicated from religious practice, the concept of a third place, a middle state of the soul persisted. It was not the continuance of Catholicism that allowed for this third place, but the amalgamation of reformed ideas with older more traditional ones. Old ideas became appropriated and Protestantised to create a syncretism of belief that defies simple confessional labels. I would contend that while the relationships between the community of the living and the dead were indeed fractured, they were not totally severed and despite Anglican orthodox rhetoric to the contrary, many people still allowed that the dead could roam and interact with them. As Gordon and Marshall put it, ‘Protestant writers remained deeply influenced by the medieval culture of death and intercession.’²⁹ They make the cogent and important point that ‘Protestant and Catholic responses to the dead in early modern Europe could show remarkable points of similarity, in spite of radically opposing theories of salvation, death rituals and views of the afterlife.’³⁰ My research will show that there is truth in this statement.

What is more, the dead took on a new symbolism and meaning that, combined with traditional belief, formed a new system of interaction with the dead that was neither wholly Catholic nor Protestant in character. It was perhaps even more complex and rich in its imagery and purpose. So, by studying reformers views on the afterlife, it can be shown that the dead did not disappear, as they should have done with the loss of Purgatory, but continued to be active by haunting the living.

²⁸ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991). In this thesis I will use the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘post-Reformation’ rather than Catholic and Protestant, which are far too reductionist and generalized, especially as Protestantism is an umbrella term which covers several competing doctrines and eschatologies. As Bruce Gordon points out, methodological frameworks that embrace before and after snapshots of belief are unproductive for nuances of continuity and change are then lost, after all the shifting theological processes of the sixteenth century were ‘in reality dynamic, evolutionary and thoroughly untidy.’ Gordon, *The Place of the Dead*, p10.

²⁹ Gordon and Marshall, *The Place of the Dead*, p11.

³⁰ Gordon and Marshall, *The Place of the Dead*, p12.

I

Abolition: The Damning of Purgatory

Suffrages, Purgatory and the whole intercessionary system that allowed the living and the dead to interact and co-exist were attacked by many of the reformers, from the Lutherans, Hussites and Anabaptists, to Zwingli, Bullinger and of course Calvin. Amongst the many perceived abuses of the Catholic Church decried and denounced, Purgatory was the one notion that was consistently derided. Luther famously denounced the whole system, declaring that ‘They with their teachers, will be damned eternally, who believe they have the certainty of salvation through letters of indulgence...papal indulgences cannot take away the guilt of even the least venial of sins.’³¹

In a similar vein Zwingli declared,

how is it that we are so stupid as to believe in such vapid and suspicious nonsense when we see, forsooth, that those who affirm a Purgatory teach in what ways its fires can be quenched, and in the same breath offer their aid for hire?...Purgatory is very much like certain quack medicines that are carried about by peddlers...The genuine Holy Scriptures know no Purgatory after this life.³²

In England it was first rejected in ecclesiastical law in the Edwardine Articles and then in 1559, the *Act of Uniformity* finally dispensed with this system of mutual support and the chance for post- mortem absolution was taken away. As it famously stated in Article XXII of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*;

The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping, and Adoration as well of Images as of Reliques, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.³³

So, what were the grounds of its abolition? Luther objected to it in terms of heresy, blasphemy and corruption, but in England the debate regarding Purgatory and its ensuing consequences took a slightly different turn.³⁴ In the 1530’s, in England, it was the writings

³¹ *Luther’s and Zwingli’s Propositions for debate: The Ninety-Five Theses of 31 October 1517 and the Sixty-Seven Articles of 19 January 1523*, (Ed.) C.S. Meyer (Leiden, 1963).

³² Zwingli, *The Sixty-Seven Articles of 19 January 1523*.

³³ ‘The Thirty-Nine Articles’ (London, 1563).

³⁴ Luther, *The Ninety-Five Theses* (1517), No.27, ‘There is no divine authority for preaching that the soul flies out of Purgatory immediately the money clinks in the bottom of the chest.’, No.28, ‘It is certainly possible that when the money clinks in the bottom of the chest avarice and greed increase: but when the church offers intercession, all depends on the will of God.’ No.32, ‘All those who believe themselves certain of their own salvation by means of letters of indulgence, will be eternally damned, together with their teacher.’

of Simon Fish, William Tyndale and John Frith that sparked dialogue and provoked reactions from elites of the Catholic establishment such as Thomas More and his brother-in-law, John Rastell. Fish's opening salvo, *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars* of 1529, denounced the corruption of the church and demanded a vernacular Bible in order to expose the lies and hypocrisy of the said church. Crucially, he assailed Purgatory, declaring: 'there is no Purgatory but that it is a thing invented by the couvitousnesse of the spiritualitie onely to translate all kingdomes from other princes unto them and that there is not one word spoken of it in the Holy Scripture.'³⁵ His argument hinged on the industry of suffrages and indulgences, saving particular venom for the Pope who, according to this system, had the power to hasten many through Purgatory to Heaven, but according to Fish chose not to do so, as 'he is a cruell tyraunt without all charitie if he kepe them there in pryson and in paine till men will give him money.'³⁶ This was considered to be doubly for 'that remission of sinnes are not given by the Pope's pardon, but by Christ, for the sure faith and trust that we have in him.' Purgatory, he declared, was a falsehood based on a system of corruption and lies in order to extort money from the vulnerable.

Fish's text of 1529 was a small treatise written in the vernacular in a plain and succinct style. It was only fourteen pages long but it was among the first to implement the power of the press to broadcast a polemic that could reach a much wider audience than the elite circles of learned academia, church or court. It was sufficient to stir Thomas More into a response. He defended the doctrine in *The Supplycacyon of Souls* of 1529, in which he wrote 'that yt may be as an holesome tryacle at your hart agaynst the dedely poyson of theyre pestylent {per}suasion/ that wold bryng you in that errour to wene there were no Purgatory.'³⁷ Fish's book was the work of a heretical and godless man, and to More, his views were

nothyng ells/ but a falshed vnder pretext of playnesse, crueltye vnder the cloke of pyte/ sedycyon vnder the colour of counsalye/ prowde arroga[n]s vnder ye name of supplycacyo[n]/ & vnder ye prete[n]ce of fauour vnto pore folk/ a deuylshe desyre of noyau[n]ce both to pore & rich/ preste/ religieuse/ & lay ma[n]/ prynce/ lord/ & peple, as wel quycke as dede.³⁸

³⁵ Simon Fish, *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars* (Antwerp, 1529), p7.

³⁶ Fish, *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars*, p7.

³⁷ Thomas More, *A supplycayon of souls* (London, 1529), Aiiir.

³⁸ More, *A supplycayon of souls*, Aiiir.

More, through the use of argument then sets apart picking apart Fish and Tyndale's heresies. He cited Aquinas and used biblical examples in his defence.³⁹ In turn, More's work prompted William Tyndale to write *An Answer unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* in 1531, in which he scathingly lambasted the Catholic Church and its doctrine of Purgatory. Tyndale urged his readers to

Judge whether it be possible that any good shuld come out of their dome ceremonies and sacramentes into thy soule. Judge their penaunce/ pilgrimages/ pardons/ purgatorye/ prayinge to postes/ dumme blessings/ dumme absolucyo[n]s/ their dome pateringe/ a[n]d howlinge/ their domme straunge holye gestures with all their domme disgysinges, their satisfaccions and iustifyinges. And because thou findest them false in so manye thinges/ trust the[m] in nothinge; but iudge the[m] i[n] al thinges.⁴⁰

To Tyndale, Purgatory was one big lie and he was clearly not afraid to say so. It is hardly surprising that writing of this nature eventually led to his martyrdom in 1536.

Rastell joined the fray in 1530 with his *New Boke of Purgatory*, which was a direct response to Fish. In his work he laid out a dialogue in parts between Comyngo, 'an Almayne, a Christeman' and Gyngeman, 'a Turke of Machomett law' in which the Christian argued that there was no Purgatory and the Muslim put forth the view that there was, the German no doubt being a Protestant. Rastell was a lawyer and printer who very much supported More's traditional perspective, until his later printed dialogue with John Frith changed his mind, and he became a convert to the Reformed cause.⁴¹ He eventually became an agent of Thomas Cromwell and printed Protestant treatises. However, this document was printed before this conversion and it sought to make its case by employing reasoned dialogue rather than using just scriptural evidence. It set up the Protestant arguments which the Muslim then dismantled in a dialogue written in the tradition of

³⁹ He cites Ezekial, Christ, Adam, the story of Lazarus and Dives, where he interprets Abraham's Bosom as a section of Purgatory.pxxvi, Diir. He also wrote. 'Another place ys there also in the olde testament that putteh purgatory quyte owt of questyon. For what ys playnner then the places whych in the boke of the Machabees make mencyon / of the deuowt remembrau~ce / prayoure / almyse / & sacryfye / to be done for sowlys when the good and holy man Iudas Machabeus gathered money among the peple to by sacryfye wythall to be offred vp for y^e sowlys of theym that were dede in the batayle. Doth not thys place of scrypture so openly declare the nede that we sowlys haue in purgatorye / & the relyefe that we fynd by the prayour and suffragys of good peple vppon erthe / that all the heretyques that barke so faste agaynst vs / can fynd neyther glose nor colour to the contrary?', Diir.

⁴⁰ William Tyndale, *An Answer vnto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* (Antwerp, 1531), A4r.

⁴¹ Cecil H. Clough, 'Rastell, John (c.1475-1536)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*.

Antiquity. That a Muslim was doing so demonstrated that even a man who did not profess to be a Christian could see the rational logic of Purgatory.

In the second part of the book, the two protagonists debated on the nature of the soul. Gyngeman the muslim posits the theory that there were three types of soul; ‘A soule vegetatyf, a soule sensytyf and a soule intellectyf.’⁴² Comyngo concurs that this was the case and that Man was dualistic, Gyngeman continues with ‘man is nothyng ellys but a lyfley body sensyble and reasonable so those two thynges joined togyther that is to say the body and the reasonable soul do make a man.’⁴³ Furthermore Gyngeman adds ‘it is wysdome to believe that the Soule of man is immortall...and incorrutyble and shall never dye...and to believe the contrary is great folyshnes.’⁴⁴ The basis of Rastell’s argument, and indeed the point which underlined his whole work, was that good works, penance and repentance were the only means by which the soul could enter the gates of Heaven. Rastell argued that it was well understood that reason dictated that there must be a Purgatory for ‘that somtyme man dyeth wythout makynge full satysfaccyon...For we se by experyence that there be many peple in the worlde whyche dye sodeynly, some be sodeynly drowned, some sodeynly slayn and some dye sodeynly of some other sekenes & peradventure have no tyme to remember god or thynke of any repentaunce.’⁴⁵ Until penance was complete, Heavens gates were closed. As Rastell concluded, once one passed into death and successfully traversed Purgatory, the soul, after leaving Purgatory for Heaven, became ‘the most parfyte beynge’, for it was no longer hampered by corruptible flesh.⁴⁶ It was thus beyond access or contact, and thus safe from the filth and corruption of our sin.

This polemic in defence of Purgatory stirred John Frith into a response which along with his views on sacramentarianism, was to see him condemned and burnt at Smithfield as a heretic in 1533, three years before Tyndale met the same grim fate. His *Disputacion of Purgatorie* was set out in three works, one which refuted Rastell, the second which contested More’s *Supplycacyon of the Soulys* and the third part which railed against the Bishop of Rochester, whom Frith had singled out due to his fervent stance against reformed

⁴² John Rastell, *A Newe Boke of Purgatory* (London,1530), C2r.

⁴³ Rastell, *A Newe Boke of Purgatory*, C2r.

⁴⁴ Rastell, *A Newe Boke of Purgatory*, C2r.

⁴⁵ Rastell, *A Newe Boke of Purgatory*, H4r.

⁴⁶ Rastell, *A Newe Boke of Purgatory*, D4r.

thought.⁴⁷ Unlike Rastell, he chose to spurn both the dialectic form, and the works of the Church Fathers, in favour of the Bible as his source of evidence. Such an approach, in which scripture alone was used as the basis for polemic consequently placed patristic works and dialogue in opposition to the purity of God's word.⁴⁸ In his *Supplycacyon*, More had sought prove Purgatory through incidents from the scriptures, although he had no direct biblical quotes, and Frith neatly countered his points through the same method. The crux of his argument was that Christ's death had been sufficient to wash our souls clean from the stain of sin, and that all we had to do in order for our souls to be cleansed was to embrace Christ as our saviour and redeemer. He argued that God was not a vengeful God who enjoyed punishing us, instead he wished to forgive us in his infinite mercy. All we had to do was embrace forgiveness of others in our hearts and accept Christ. To believe in Purgatory was to reject Christ and his death, for Christ

tristeth not after oure blode, but suffered al tourmentes in his awne bodie to deliver us from the paynes that we had deserved...[he] hath in his awne person purged our sinnes...if thou thought hys bloude sufficient then woldest thou seke nonother purgatorie...if god ofhys mercye & thorow the bloude of his sonne jesus have not remityed ye payne due vnto ye cryme, then shall we all be dampned for the payne due unto everye dysobedyence that ys agenst god ys eternall dampnacyon. And therefor yf thys paune were not forgiven us then are we styll under condempnacyon and so were Christes bloude shed in vayne and could save no man.⁴⁹

He concluded that 'if Rastell saye truth the[n] is Christ deed in vayne.'⁵⁰ His argument was not about the stain on one's soul that needed purging, the clean versus the unclean, but instead concerned the faithful versus the faithless: a God of anger versus a God of love. Salvation was not gained through penance and good works, but by faith in Christ's sacrifice. This was not a new argument, and goes right to the heart of the Protestant critique of Roman Catholicism, for as Zwingli had said a few years before, 'if Heaven could be scaled by our merits, there would have been no need for Christ's coming down. Likewise, if our sins must be cleansed by the fire of Purgatory, of what profit is Christ?...if we can go to

⁴⁷ Frith criticised Rastell for trying 'to proue purgatorye by naturall philosophy' and More who 'laboureth to proue purgatorye by scripture' alone. Bishop John Fisher had penned and published several polemics against reform including *A Sermon had at Paulis...concerning certaine heretickes, which tha[n] were abiured for holdynge the heresies of Martyn Luther that famous hereticke* (London, 1526); John Fisher, *The Sermon of Joh[a]n the bysshop of Rochester made again ye p[er]nicious doctryn of Martin Luther* (London, 1527). Fisher was executed in 1535 for opposing Henry VIII's divorce from Katherine of Aragon.

⁴⁸ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p63.

⁴⁹ John Frith, *A Disputation of Purgatory* (Antwerp, 1531), E3r.

⁵⁰ Frith, *A Disputation of Purgatory*, C3r.

Heaven by means of Purgatory...they make him a liar when He said that through him alone is access to the Father possible.’⁵¹

Rastell had further asserted that Purgatory was necessary for the good of the commonwealth, for to have no Purgatory would be to ‘bryng them from the drede of God...and we know well that the fraylte of mankynde is such that it is evermore prone and redy to vice than to vertue: wherefore man hath nede to haue both a brydel of law which is to punysh vyce in this world & also a brydell of ye drede of God.’⁵² Frith countered this with the view that good works motivated by fear did not bring salvation, for ‘if thou do it for feare then workest thou not of loue.’⁵³ On a more practical level he pointed out that a system where one could indulge in a last minute repentance with the knowledge of a merciful sending to Purgatory with eventual salvation, would acheive quite the opposite moral effect; ‘the yonge saye I will take my pleasure whyle I maye and if I maye haue but one houres respite to crye God mercye I care not for then shall I go but to Purgatorye and so shall I be sure to be saued.’⁵⁴ He concluded that to believe in Purgatory was an act of ‘rechlesse boldenesse.’

Instead of regarding Purgatory as a prison of God, or as Duffy termed it, the ‘antichamber of Hell’⁵⁵, Frith proposed that ‘we are justified by faith, we are at peace with God thorow oure lorde Jesus Christ.’ There was no need for Purgatory then. He continued, ‘when these faithfull or rightwyse departe then ...they are fooles which thinke them to be in payne or affliccion: for it affermeth that they are in peace...and so it is not possible that there shulde be such a payneful purgatorye.’⁵⁶

Purgatory had been roundly rejected by the early reformers, but the eradication of this doctrine led to profound disagreements. Although a single doctrine was eventually adopted by the newly formed Church of England, it was not a position which was universally agreed upon by elite and lay folk alike. This was not only to have long term consequences on reformer’s attempts to create a unified and cohesive post-mortem doctrine, but it also shaped reformed attitudes to the ghost.

⁵¹ Ulrich Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, (Ed.) S. M. Jackson and C.N. Heller (Durham, 1981), pp289-290.

⁵² Rastell, *Newe Boke of Purgatorye*, H3v.

⁵³ Frith, *Disputation of Purgatorye*, Dr.

⁵⁴ Frith, *Disputation of Purgatorye*, S2r.

⁵⁵ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p343.

⁵⁶ Frith, *Disputation of Purgatorye*, D5r, C6r.

II

Resolution? The Problem of Post-Mortem Destination

The Reformed assertion that salvation was achieved by faith alone, undermined the existing salvic system of good works and penance, and negated the need for Purgatory. If one was already cleansed by faith in Christ, then there was, in theory, no need for further cleansing post mortem. Where then did this leave the dead? The absence of Purgatory engendered much learned debate on these matters, to the point where it was questioned whether the soul was indeed immortal at all. It was at this point that the early emergence of various forms of mortalism began to be debated among the reformed elites. Reformers argued that Purgatory negated the necessity of the Last Judgement and the General Resurrection, doctrines mentioned in Christ's gospels. To dismiss these events was to dismiss Christ's suffering, his resurrection and his promise of the second coming. On the Continent, in order to stress the importance of these final things, the Anabaptists stated that the soul slept between death and the General Resurrection. They argued that to have a conscious awake soul in the interim, in either Heaven or Hell, would negate the need for the Resurrection. The soul then had to be unsentient post mortem. This view, termed by Burns as 'Christian mortalism', is itself but a convenient term for referring to a variety of disparate views, all of which centred upon the doctrine that the soul had no independent, conscious existence after death.⁵⁷ There are a few key distinctions among the mortalist views that can be identified. Contemporaries recognized several variants of the more general mortalist heresy, that is Annihilationism (Sadducism), Psychopannychism and Thnetopsychism.⁵⁸ Luther's early stance on the soul was psychopannychist, basing his position on the scriptural references to death as 'sleep'. Jesus himself had referred to death as sleep. The gospels of Matthew and Luke both related the tale of Jairus' daughter, in which a young girl had died. Jesus had visited the death bed and declared 'the maid is not dead, but sleepeth', before restoring her to life.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Norman Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Harvard, 1972); Bryan W. Ball *The Soul Sleepers: Christian Mortalism from Wycliffe to Priestley* (Cambridge, 2008); Peter Marshall, 'the map of God's word': geographies of the afterlife in Tudor and early Stuart England', in Gordon and Marshall, *The Place of the Dead*, pp110-130.

⁵⁸ The terms used were those used by contemporary writers.

⁵⁹ Matthew 9:24 and Luke 8:52, 'Weep not, she is not dead, but sleepeth.'

Luther also disputed the Roman Catholic Church's official doctrine that the soul was a spiritual 'form' of the body which was thus able to undergo torment in Purgatory. He declared this to be a papal lie, for nowhere in the scriptures was there any textual evidence to support the notion of Purgatory. Nor, Luther contended, was there any confirmation that the soul went straight to Heaven or Hell, for that would negate the need for the Resurrection, the Second Coming and the entirety of Christ's mission on earth. There was however, scriptural substantiation that the soul slept after death, excluded from the possibility of heavenly bliss until the General Resurrection, when it was reawakened and reunited with the flesh to begin eternal life, be it in Heaven or in Hell.⁶⁰ Luther advocated Psychopannychism many times in his works.⁶¹ He quoted Ecclesiasties 9:5,6

5.For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

6.Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.⁶²

Writing on this passage, he said ' I thinke there is not a place in the scripture of more force for the dead that are fallen in sleepe, understanding naught of our state and condition, against the invocation of Saintes and fiction of Purgatory.'⁶³ He continued, 'the dead are a sleepe, and feele nothing at all. For the dead lye there accompting neither dayes not yeares, but when they are awakened, they shall seeme to haue slept scarce one minute.'⁶⁴ He also wrote that death should be regarded as a 'deep, strong dark sleep; to consider the ...grave as nothing other than a soft couch of ease or rest.'⁶⁵

Both Thnetopsychists and Psychopannychists believed in a personal immortality after the resurrection, be it in either Heaven or Hell. These doctrines are important to this

⁶⁰ Daniel 12: 2, 'And many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake: some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always.' 2 Peter 3:4, 'Where is his promise or his coming? For since the time that the father's slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.'

⁶¹ Martin Luther, *Christian Song, Latin and German, for use at Funerals* (1542), Henry Jacobs and Adolph Spaeth, eds. *Works of Martin Luther*, Vol.6 (Philadelphia, 1932), pp287-288; Luther 'Notes on Ecclesiastes', in *Luther's Works*, eds. J. Pelikan & H.T.Lehmann, vol.15. (St.Louis, 1972), p.150; Luther, *An Exposition of Salomon's Booke* (London, 1573), 151v; Norman Burns, *Christian Mortalism*(Harvard, 1972); Bryan Ball, *The Soul Sleepers* (Cambridge, 2008).

⁶² Luther, 'Notes on Ecclesiasties', J. Pelikan & H.T.Lehmann, eds. *Luther's Works*, vol.15. (St.Louis, 1972), p.150.

⁶³ Luther, 'Notes on Ecclesiasties', vol.15, p150.

⁶⁴ Luther, *An Exposition of Salomon's Booke*, 151v.

⁶⁵ Martin Luther, *Christian Song, Latin and German, for use at Funerals*, (1542), *Works of Martin Luther*, Vol.6 (Philadelphia, 1932), p288. The gospels of Matthew and again in Luke 8:52, tell the story of Jarius' daughter, who Jesus restored to life after saying 'Weep not, she is not dead, but sleepeth.' Matthew 9:24.

thesis because none of these three perspectives allowed for a conscious, alert soul after death.

John Frith's stance was Psychopannychist in nature. He wrote that when a man's soul departed, it 'resteth in peace as in a bedde...because we are justified by faith we are at peace with God thorow oure Lorde Jesus Christ.'⁶⁶ William Tyndale also agreed with the doctrine of soul sleeping, arguing that to think otherwise was to render the resurrection pointless. As to where the soul went to sleep, Frith simply said, 'what God doth with them, that shall we know when we come to them.'⁶⁷ In agreeing with soul sleeping, both these men were unusual among the English reformers. They also opened themselves up to further accusations of heresy and both took their views to the stake. The majority of the English reformers held views more in line with the traditional notion of a conscious, immortal soul, due in no small part to the continental influences of Heinrich Bullinger and Jean Calvin. Nevertheless, the opinions of these men were quite disparate. The only common eschatological ground they shared was the estimation that the soul was immortal and that mortalism in any guise was a heresy. As to what happened to the soul post mortem, they both came up with different solutions, and despite the strength and influence of Calvinism in England, it was Bullinger's line that became the official orthodoxy. In order to understand why, we must take a close look at their writing.

Heinrich Bullinger's works *An holsome antidotus or counter-poysen, agaynst the pestylent heresye and secte of the Anabaptistes* (1531) and *A briefe, and plaine confession and declaration of true Christian Religion, &c. The Second Helvetic Confession* (1566) rank alongside Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* as the most influential of reformed texts in England. Gordon claims he was one of the 'most widely consulted figures of the age' and some 12,000 of his letters survive showing that he had correspondence with the leading reformers of Europe, including England, furthermore during the Marian regime many of the Protestant exiles stayed in his house as religious refugees.⁶⁸ Like Calvin, his work was available in Latin and French on the continent, but *An holsome antidotus* was so well known in England and considered so influential that it was printed into English in

⁶⁶ Frith, *Disputacion of Purgatorye*, E4r.

⁶⁷ Frith, *Disputacion of Purgatorye*, E4r.

⁶⁸ Bruce Gordon and Emidio Campi, *Architect of Reformation: An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger 1504-1575* (Grand Rapids, 2004), pp17-21.

1548, a year before Calvin's own attack on the Anabaptists, *Psychopannychia*, was available.⁶⁹ In *An holsome antidotus* he makes his views on the Anabaptist movement clear, with countless references to the 'pestiferous venime' of their beliefs which contaminated, blinded and infected 'the myndes of ye rude and symple people, with pernicious & detestable opinions'.⁷⁰ Yet, it is not until his later *Second Helvetic Confession* that he very clearly defined his doctrine of the afterlife. Bullinger clearly disputed the mortalism of the Anabaptists for he declared,

For we believe that the faithful, after bodily death, go directly to Christ, and, therefore, do not need the eulogies and prayers of the living for the dead and their services. Likewise we believe that unbelievers are immediately cast into Hell from which no exit is opened for the wicked by any services of the living.⁷¹

Gone was the third place, one's final destination was instant upon death. Burns argues that this was the most important Protestant declaration of anti-mortalist statement, as it 'became an international standard for Protestantism'.⁷²

It also allowed no room for Purgatory or a middle state of the soul. Bullinger rehearsed the Protestant commonplace that Purgatory had no basis in scripture and that it was, in fact, contrary to the Christian faith saying;

I believe in the forgiveness of sins, and the life everlasting, and to the perfect purgation through Christ, and to these words of Christ our Lord: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24).

In answer as to how the mildly sinful could get to Heaven, due to the requirement of spotlessness of the soul in order to enter, he quoted the gospel. He pointed out that faith in Christ absolved us, 'Again: "He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet,

⁶⁹ Burns points out that while *Psychopannychia* was written in 1534, a full and complete English translation of the work was not published in England until 1581. An abridged version was however published in English in 1549, a year after Heinrich Bullinger's *An Holsome Antidotus* (1548 which was originally penned in 1531).

⁷⁰ Heinrich Bullinger, *An Holsome Antidotus* (London, 1548), fo.14v-15r. He also wrote 'for it is added by manner of exposition: [Jesus said] that where I am, ther ye may be also. Therefore are we taken in soule from death to everlasting life.' fo.205r.

⁷¹ Heinrich Bullinger, *The Second Helevetic Confession*, Chapter 26, point 3, 'The state of the soul departed from the body'. ed. Forgotten Books (Charleston, 2007), p105.

⁷² Burns, *Christian Mortalism*, p26.

but he is clean all over, and you are clean” (John 13:10).⁷³ His stance was unequivocal and uncompromising and in direct contrast not just to the Anabaptists, but also to Calvin. It was as simple as belief versus unbelief. Belief held the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven and that was all that was required for salvation. One’s soul went straight to Heaven if one believed the gospel of Christ. If not, it was simple, one went to Hell.⁷⁴ Since belief was an ongoing process, an active life choice, sudden death should subsequently hold no fear, for one should be ready at any time to hear God’s call. He rejected any possibility that the dead could return to the living, stating unequivocally that ‘we count those apparitions among the laughingstocks, crafts and deceptions of the Devil.’⁷⁵ The souls of the dead were out of reach of the living.

Calvin had taken a different view in his first theological tract *Psychopannychia*, written in 1534. Like Bullinger his motivation was to decry Anabaptist heresies, in particular their view that the soul ‘sleeps in a state of insensibility from Death to the Judgement Day, when it will awake from its sleep.’⁷⁶ His response was to write his treatise against ‘these babblers [who] have so actively exerted themselves, that they have already drawn thousands into their insanity.’⁷⁷ Like Bullinger, he was concerned about the infectious spread of the heresy. His statement perhaps reflects his fear of the spread of the heresy, rather than the reality, but the inference is that the idea had spread considerably already throughout the Germanic states and possibly beyond. He claimed that the idea of soul sleeping mortalism lay with the Arabs, and that it was at some point taken up by John, Bishop of Rome who was forced to recant it, whereupon the idea ‘lay smouldering for some ages, but has lately begun to send forth sparks, being stirred up by some dregs of Anabaptists. These spread far and wide, have kindled torches.’⁷⁸

⁷³ Bullinger, *The Second Helevetic Confession*, Chapter 26, point 4, ‘Purgatory’ ed. Forgotten Books, 2007, p108.

⁷⁴ Bullinger, *An Holsome Antidotus*, p203. He wrote ‘after our death [we] entre into euer lastyng lyfe, and into the Kingdome of God, for he taketh vs away, when he calleth vs from death to lyfe.’

⁷⁵ Bullinger, *The Second Helevetic Confession*, Chapter 26, point 5, ‘Apparition of Spirits’, ed. Forgotten Books, 2007, p108.

⁷⁶ Jean Calvin, ‘Psychopannychia’ (1534); ed. Henry Beveridge, *Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith* (Grand Rapids, 1958), Vol.3. p419. As Calvin refers to the main body of subscribers to this disjointed movement as Anabaptists, this term shall be used.

⁷⁷ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, p414.

⁷⁸ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, p415.

It was not just soul sleeping that concerned him, but the other strains of mortalism as well. He castigated the notion of Thnetopsychism in which the soul ‘perishes along with the body, and vanishes away and becomes evanescent till the period when the whole man shall be raised again.’⁷⁹ He also targeted the Sadducees’ views on Annihilationism. The Sadducees had refuted any notion of a resurrection at all, meaning that the soul perished with the body for all eternity. Calvin stated that this belief was so erroneous, that Christ himself condemned it many times in the gospel. He mourned that these various mortalist beliefs constitute ‘so many stumbling blocks to our faith, through which the name and word of God are blasphemed among the ungodly.’ In reference to all forms of mortalism he ranted, ‘nothing can be more absurd than this, O pernicious pest! O tares certainly sown by an enemy’s hand, for the purpose of rendering the true seed useless!’ He adds ‘Divine truth is avowedly attacked... [and] God’s light [is] extinguished by the Devil’s darkness.’⁸⁰ In arguing his case for an immortal soul which remained sentient after death, he turned to the scriptures:

Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live or die we are the Lord’s. For this Christ both died and rose again, that he might be Lord of the living and the dead.” What more solid foundation could there be on which to rear our faith, than to say that Christ rules over the dead?⁸¹

He backed up this point by citing Revelation 6: 10, 11 in which the dead martyrs cry to the Lord for vengeance, adding,

The souls of the dead cry aloud, and white robes are given unto them! O sleeping spirits! What are white robes to you? Are they pillows on which you are to lie down and sleep?...if the souls of the dead cried aloud, they were not sleeping. When, then, did that drowsiness overtake them?⁸²

After all, Christ had stated after his resurrection that “because I live, ye shall live also.”⁸³ Jesus had also declared in Matthew 22:32 that he was “God not of the dead but of the living”, so Calvin claimed that this inferred that the soul never perished.⁸⁴ He argued that since we were made out of dust our body naturally returned to dust, however, our soul was of divine origin, ‘God derived [it] from another quarter’ and so it lived on. Only God had

⁷⁹ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, p419.

⁸⁰ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, pp417, 418, 426.

⁸¹ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, pp444, 445. The biblical quote is Romans 14: 8-9.

⁸² Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, pp446- 447.

⁸³ John 14:19.

⁸⁴ Matthew 22:32.

the power to destroy a soul. The souls of everyone were immortal and the only form of death the soul could take ‘is to be without God – to be abandoned by God and left to itself: for if God is its life, it loses its life when it loses the presence of God.’⁸⁵ Calvin’s dualistic position on the nature of the soul could not be clearer, ‘We...maintain both that it is a substance, and after death of the body truly lives, being endued both with sense and understanding.’ After all, the soul was ‘the image of God in man.’⁸⁶ The mortal flesh was the Tabernacle of the soul; liberation came with death. He said ‘it is a mistake to suppose that I am here to affirm anything else than THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL. For those who admit that the soul lives, and yet deprive it of all sense, feign a soul that has none of the properties of soul.’⁸⁷ Accordingly, death was merely a rite of passage, ‘for this common death that we all undergo, as it were by a common necessity of nature, is rather to the elect a kind of passage to the highest degree of immortality.’ He contended that ‘while the flesh is delivered over to death, life is claimed for the spirit,... one dies and the other lives...the mortification of the flesh is the quickening of the spirit.’⁸⁸

Having blasted mortalism in all its forms, he then set out his position on the soul’s destination. In his *Institutes* he clearly voiced his views on Purgatory, saying that anyone who sought expiation of sins through any means other than the blood of Christ was not only blaspheming, but condemning their immortal souls to Hell. After all, Purgatory ‘is a pernicious fiction of Satan, that makes void the blood of Christ, that...intolerably insults the Divine mercy...and is a horrible blasphemy against Christ.’ Furthermore, not only was the system of suffrages corrupt, but it was based upon lies, for ‘there is not a syllable, in all the law or the gospel, which allows us to pray for the dead, it is a profane abuse of the name of God.’⁸⁹ Yet, despite this rhetoric, Calvin’s solution to the problem of post-mortem destination was in contrast to Bullinger’s view of immediate punishment or reward. He posited the view that the soul went to a place called the Bosom of Abraham, which appeared in the tale of Dives and Lazarus found in the Gospel of Luke.⁹⁰ Calvin’s original meaning was that Abraham’s Bosom was not Heaven, but a third place, where the soul

⁸⁵ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, p454.

⁸⁶ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, pp419, 425.

⁸⁷ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, p427.

⁸⁸ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, p428, 443, 457.

⁸⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Trans. John Allen (Philadelphia, 1935, Vol. I), pp607, 613.

⁹⁰ Luke 16:19-31.

awaited the final judgement. It was, traditionally, a Jewish concept and Abraham's Bosom was a section of Sheol (or in Greek, *Hades*), the abode of the dead, where the dead awaited Judgement Day.⁹¹

In adhering to this view Calvin was aligning himself with the Fathers, some of whom had adopted this belief. Hippolytus described Hades as a place in which 'the souls both of the righteous and the unrighteous are detained.' This place he believed was 'a locality beneath the Earth, in which the light of the world does not shine...this locality has been destined to be as it were a guard house for souls, at which angels are stationed as guards.' The righteous, it seemed, were not kept together with the unrighteous, for while they were present in Hades they were 'not in the same place as the unrighteous....they are brought into a locality full of light....enjoying always the contemplation of the blessings which are in their view....there is neither fierce heat, nor cold, nor thorn...as they wait for the rest and eternal revival in heaven which succeed this location.' Whilst there they in residence they were 'hymned by the angels stationed at the place...enjoying always the contemplation of the blessings which are in their view.'⁹² Abraham's Bosom was an annex that was according to Hippolytus, 'toward the right' section of Hades. There, the good awaited the General Resurrection when the souls would be reunited with their bodies, which are made 'pure and no longer corruptible.'⁹³ Similarly, in his *A Treatise on the Soul*, Tertullian argued that the soul must be corporeal in nature after its departure from the flesh in order to be punished or refreshed; 'whatever amount of punishment or refreshment the soul tastes in Hades, in its prison or lodging, in the fire or in Abrahams Bosom, it gives proof thereby of its own corporeality.'⁹⁴ Augustine also wrote that 'for the time that intervenes between man's death and the final resurrection, there is a secret shelter for his soul, as each is worthy of rest and affliction according to what it has merited while it lived

⁹¹ For biblical references to Sheol and Hades see Genesis 37:35; Genesis 42:38; Genesis 44:29; 1 Samuel 2:6; Psalms 16:10; Psalms 139:8; Hosea 13:14; Isaiah 14:9; Numbers 16:13; Job 24:19; and the story of Dives and Lazarus, Luke 23: 43.

⁹² Hippolytus, 'Against Plato, On the cause of the Universe', ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson *Iranaeus and Hippolytus: Ante Nicene Christian Library Translations of the Fathers Down to AD325, Part Nine* (Edinburgh, 1869), p47.

⁹³ Hippolytus, 'Against Plato, On the cause of the Universe', p47.

⁹⁴ Tertullian, 'A Treatise on the Soul', ed. S.L.Greenslade, *Early Latin Theology: Selections from Tertullian, Cyprian, Ambrose and Jerome* (Philadelphia, 1978).

in the body.’⁹⁵ In these ideas we can perhaps see the origins of the geography of the third place and of Purgatory itself, for Abraham’s Bosom was remarkably similar in many aspects to descriptions of the upper echelons of Purgatory, where the *Boni* and *Boni sed non vale* were bathed in the divine golden radiance of the Lord in an Earthly Paradise, where luscious fruit-bearing trees grow and song birds sing with Angels.⁹⁶ It was where the saints abided, their punishment being mainly the deprivation of the beatitude, before their souls were spotless enough to enter Heaven. The parallels are striking.

So Calvin, in his rejection of Purgatory, went not just to the scriptures but to the Patristics for an answer. Like Purgatory, Abraham’s Bosom was an earth-bound third place. His description was very like that of Hippolytus. Calvin depicts it as ‘the invisible place assigned them [the righteous] by the Lord, and there remaining until the Resurrection.’ As such, it was a ‘temporary receptacle of faithful souls...a heavenly Jerusalem, i.e. a vision of peace’ a place of rest in which ‘there will be none to terrify thee.’⁹⁷ This was not a place of penance or torment for the soul has been released from the impurities and corruption of the flesh and ‘is truly spiritual...and not subject to the tyranny of the flesh, rebelling against it.’⁹⁸ It was a place of peace and rest, the antitheses of the dreadful torments of Purgatory, and a domain in which the faithful ‘keep themselves under his hand, sleep, and have peace.’⁹⁹ He continued, ‘we desire indeed to part from this prison of the body, but not to wander uncertain without a home: there is a better home which the Lord hath prepared for us.’¹⁰⁰ That home was Abraham’s Bosom. It was a place where souls were discharged ‘from the warfare of this world’ yet this place was not Heaven. He wrote,

still, something is wanting which they desire to see, namely, the complete and perfect glory of God, to which they always aspire. Though there is no impatience in their desire, their rest is not yet full and perfect...they have not reached the summit of their felicity. Why are they nevertheless, happy? Because they...perceive God to be propitious to them and see their future reward from a distance and rest in the sure hope of a blessed Resurrection....[when] we afterwards pass into the land of

⁹⁵ Augustine, ‘Enchiridion: on Faith, Hope and Love’, Chapter XXIX, ‘The Last Things’, No.109. Trans. ed. Albert C. Outler, *Confessions and the Enchiridion* (Philadelphia, 1955).

⁹⁶ For these descriptions see Robert Easting, *Visions of the Other World in Middle English* (Cambridge, 1997); and Haren & De Pontfarcy, *The Medieval Pilgrimage to St Patrick’s Purgatory Lough Derg and the European Tradition* (Dublin, 1988); Mark Musa, *Dante’s Purgatory* (Bloomington, 1981).

⁹⁷ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, p468 and Job 11:18-19.

⁹⁸ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, p443.

⁹⁹ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, p435.

¹⁰⁰ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, p443.

promise...After we take up our residence in the land, we feed abundantly. White robes and rest are given us.¹⁰¹

It was here that Calvin expressed a view of Heaven which differed from the traditional Catholic position in that it does not yet exist, for Heaven would be the New Jerusalem. It was to be a place that came into being when the earth was made new and sanctified by the Second Coming. While this view of eternity was radically different from the Catholic tradition of Heaven, Abraham's Bosom does not stray too far from the notions of Purgatory. For example, like Purgatory, it was a temporary abode that was under the earth. It was a place where people awaited entrance to Heaven. What is more, the dead were still sentient and conscious, in a middle state of the soul in a third place. What separated this paradise from Heaven was the deprivation of the beatific vision. True felicity, when mankind and God were reunited, could not be achieved until after the Last Judgement.

Those that were not worthy of Abraham's Bosom were 'dragged toward the left by angels who are ministers of punishment...forcing them down to the lower parts' next to the 'lake of unquenchable fire' which they are not as yet cast in, but, as Hippolytus wrote, they 'shudder in horror at the expectation of the future judgement, already feeling the power of their punishment...no sleep will give them rest; no night will soothe them; no death will deliver them punishment;no voice of interceding friends will profit them.'¹⁰² Although Hippolytus wrote this about seven hundred years before the first mention of Purgatory in Catholic literature, one can clearly see some common ideas and how the torment of souls in a place that is not yet Hell, influenced the landscapes of Purgatory. The crucial difference was that they were beyond help, as so forcefully stated in the last line.

While Calvin reinstated the idea of Abraham's Bosom, his view of where the unsaved went to was less clearly formulated in terms of imagery. Yet, his vision was very similar to that of Hippolytus, for Calvin stated that the unrighteous were 'kept in eternal chains against the judgement of the great day...the spirit of the reprobate, while it waits for the dreadful judgement, is tortured by that anticipation.'¹⁰³ The wicked were, in the meantime punished by their conscience, for the soul 'cannot have a worse executioner to torment it than an evil conscience. How can there be sleep amongst such anguish? The

¹⁰¹ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, pp437, 466, 467.

¹⁰² Hippolytus, 'Against Plato, On the cause of the Universe', pp46, 50.

¹⁰³ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, p450.

wicked are like the tempestuous sea which cannot rest, and whose waves cast up mire and dirt, “there is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord””¹⁰⁴

In reaching back to the early church in search of answers he had redefined an old eschatology and made it distinctly Protestant, in that those who were to be saved were the faithful and those who were not, were the unfaithful. Gone were the nuances of the categorisations of different sins which either condemned one to Hell or required different cleansing punishments. Instead, one either accepted Christ’s gospel or one did not, and so one was either saved or one was not. According to Calvin, going to one’s immediate reward as espoused by Bullinger, negated the point of the General Resurrection, the end of days and Christ’s Gospel. There had to be an intermediate place for the soul to reside until the end of days and the tradition of Hades had scriptural warranty. Abraham’s Bosom, was a third place that was located, like Purgatory, in the earth somewhere, and it was this proximity to the living that still allowed for the possibility of interaction between the communities of the living and the dead. Unlike Bullinger, Calvin’s theories did not close the door completely between the two worlds.

Calvin also introduced a specifically Protestant notion of the tormented dead, for the idea of post-mortem anguish had taken on a new twist. The physical torment had gone and it was now replaced by mental and emotional torment. How it differed from the pre-Reformation perspective was that, instead of physical punishment for all, there was now mental anguish for the sinner and peace for the righteous. Here was a concept that incorporated older elements, for it re-invoked the Church Fathers and in its essence had a similar structural thesis to that of the Catholic Church. In fact, it was probably because of the lack of complete severance with these traditional ideas of a waiting room for the dead, that his eschatology was not adopted by the Anglican Church.

Bullinger’s perspective was much more radical, completely rejecting all notions of a middle state when he wrote,

If our soules dooe sleepe, after the death of the bodye, the soule of Christ sleepeth also, and the resurrection is disannulled. For Christ did proue that ther was an euerlasting lyfe by his rising agaune, which can not be euerlasting if the soul slepeth, and begynneth then to lyue, when iudgement dothe come. Wherefore the

¹⁰⁴ Calvin, *Psychopannychia*, p458.

sleepe of the Anabaptistes, dothe euacuate and disanull, the gospel and the resurrection.¹⁰⁵

His view of immediate reward or punishment was not heretical in the way the mortalist view was, for it still allowed for an immortal soul, furthermore it emphasised the importance of the Resurrection. The nature of the reformed church in England, apart from a few vocal and prominent minorities of the hotter sort of Protestant, was essentially conservative, and it rejected mortalism in all its forms. For example the Edwardine Articles of 1552, clearly stated in article XL that

Thei which saie that the soulles of suche as departe hens doe sleepe, being without al sence. Fealing, or perceiuing, until the daie of iudgement, or affirme that the soulles die with the bodies, and at the laste daie shalbe raised up with the same, doe utterlie dissent from the right belife declared to us in holie Scripture.¹⁰⁶

Calvin and Bullinger were impatient with mortalism of any form, insisting on the scriptural authority of the soul's immortality. Perhaps precisely because Calvin and Bullinger linked mortalism with heresy, it never found a substantial foothold in Anglican eschatology. As Burns put it, 'Anabaptists were the scandal of Protestantism for, scorning fifteen centuries of tradition, they necessarily recapitulated the history of heresy.'¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, 'at a time when civil discord was regarded as civil commotion, [they]...were especially provocative: they typically denied the state any authority in religious matters...temporal authorities could not tolerate such insubordinate attitudes toward all human authority' especially after they were tainted with the blood of the Munster Kingdom.'¹⁰⁸ Christian mortalism appealed to the more radical and perhaps more vocal fringe 'among those who feared a return of Roman superstition or who were convinced that Holy Scripture contained yet undiscovered truths that must be searched out.'¹⁰⁹

Yet, in England, it was Bullinger's position that was initially adopted by the Anglican Church, possibly because, unlike Calvin's view, it rejected any possibility of papist associations by having no third, interim place of abode post-mortem. Bullinger rejected the idea of a middle state in Abraham's Bosom; as he pointed out Man is entered

¹⁰⁵ Bullinger, *An Holsom Antidotus*, fo.200v.

¹⁰⁶ *Church of England Articles agreed on by the bishoppes, and other learned menne in the synode of London* (London, 1553), No.40, C4r.

¹⁰⁷ Burns, *Christian Mortalism*, p94.

¹⁰⁸ Burns, *Christian Mortalism*, pp95-96.

¹⁰⁹ Burns, *Christian Mortalism*, p34.



Fig.10. Lazarus and Dives and 'Abraham's Bosom' Folio 78 recto from the *Codex Aureus of Echternach*, 11thC. in (Nuremburg National Museum, Hs.156142)
 Top panel: Lazarus at the rich man's door
 Middle panel: Lazarus' soul is carried to Paradise by two angels; Lazarus in Abraham's bosom
 Bottom panel: Dives' soul is carried off by two devils to Hell



Fig.11. Detail from panel of Lazarus in the Bosom of Abraham

‘in to immortal lyfe, & not in to slepe, in to the kyngdome of God, and not in to the bosome of Abraham...we shall entre into euer lastyng lyfe, and into the kingdome of God. For he taketh vs away, when he calleth us from death vnto lyfe.’¹¹⁰

He further mocked

As for the bosome of Abraham, I aske the whether it be, a slepying place, a dormitori, or a receptacle, and place to receyve the lyuyng. A place whervnto, the soules of ye faithfull Christen men, ar gathered together, tyll the day of iudgement. Where is that place, aboue, or benethe. It is vncerteyne to me, God doth know. Nor is is lawfull for vs to enquire. So ye do defend at vncertayne thynges.¹¹¹

However, after Bullinger, it was to escape the taint of popery that some English reformers began to associate Abraham’s Bosom with Heaven, rather than have it as a separate third place. Over the course of the sixteenth century the language of Abraham’s Bosom and that of Heaven become intertwined in a reappropriation of Calvin’s original account. For every one that accepted Calvin’s vision, there were those who blurred its clear definitions in an increasingly complex set of post-mortem doctrines. For example, the Bishop of Durham, James Pilkington talked in 1562 of man being ‘carried vp by Aungels to the bosome of Abraham to ioye without ende.’¹¹² Niels Hemmingsen, the Danish Lutheran, who had studied at Wittenberg under Melanchthon, wrote in a sermon of 1569,

So the godly (after their trauels taken in this life) are after death gathered together in too blisful rest, where they are wel at ease and in happy case vntil the rysing agein of the dead. This bosom of Abraham is called also Paradyse, as in that saying of Christ to the théefe: this day shalt thou be with mee in Paradyse: where (according too the Psalme) is abundance of ioy by beholding of God and euerlasting pleasures in his right hand.¹¹³

Similarly William Fulke in 1573 wrote that the dead ‘do not as yet inioye the full and perfecte ioy of happines (suche as shalbe giuen them after the restoring of bothe bodie and soule) yet they liue & raigne with there head Christ in heauen, inioying happie and blessed tranquillitie, ...but do waite for the restoring of the bodies, and the time of the last iudgment.’¹¹⁴ Here we can see the gradual overlapping and blurring of Calvin’s clear doctrinal distinctions. His middle state, his ‘paradise’ became synonymous with ‘Heaven’. Still, for every blurring of these distinctions there were plenty who accepted a middle state

¹¹⁰ Bullinger, *An Holsome Antidotus*, fo.201r.

¹¹¹ Bullinger, *An Holsome Antidotus*, fo.203r.

¹¹² James Pilkington, *Aggeus and Abdias prophetes the one corrected* (London, 1562), fo.46r.

¹¹³ Niels Hemmingsen, *A Postill, or, Exposition of the Gospels* (London, 1569), fo.196v.

¹¹⁴ William Fulke, *Praelections vpon the sacred and holy Reuelation of S. Iohn* (London, 1573), fo.41v.

of being, as the Anglican clergyman and author on natural history, Edward Topsell put it in 1596,

Oh how doth this comfort vs more than all the world beside, when we knowe the king of glorie beholdeth our nakednes and pouertie, and giueth his angels charge ouer vs, that not the poorest Lazarus may bee lost, but our bodies either eased with reliefe, or parted from life, our soules may ascend to the bosome of Abraham.¹¹⁵

George Downham, the Bishop of Derry, also made Heaven and Abraham's Bosom defined, separate places. In 1604 he wrote that Jesus 'sendeth his holy Angels to conuey our soules into the bosome of *Abraham*.'¹¹⁶

It is of note that both these men were Anglican, yet they had rejected Bullinger's view. Nor were they lone voices. A middle state, despite Anglican orthodoxy, was still being preached from pulpits and published in sermons by these leading Anglican clerics. Furthermore, if a middle state of the soul still existed, then the dead could still, in theory, interact with the living. If the boundaries between the living and the afterlife were still amorphous and fluid amongst the educated and learned of society, then how much more so would they have been among the laity. While Bullinger's view may have been adopted as official eschatology, there is no evidence of an overnight transition from a belief in interaction with the dead to that of scepticism particularly in lay culture. As Scribner wrote

Protestant belief allowed for a whole range of supernatural beings to be active in the world, especially angels, demons and various kinds of spirits, such as those of the reuerent dead. Their activity was accepted as possible not so much because it was experienced but because such beings were mentioned in the Bible...[although] official Protestantism was never quite sure what to make of ghosts.¹¹⁷

It could be argued that Calvin's influential theology, and his perspective of post-mortem life was not very far removed from the Catholic themes of the third place, immortality of the soul, restless torment of the dead versus a beatific peace, justice, reward and punishment, and thus, was more easily absorbed into reformed lay culture, where it got interpreted accordingly.

¹¹⁵ Edward Topsell, *The revvard of religion Deliuered in sundrie lectures vpon the booke of Ruth* (London, 1596), H2v.

¹¹⁶ George Downham (Downame), *Lectures on the XV. Psalme read in the cathedrall church of S. Paule, Vol.I.* (London, 1604), p16.

¹¹⁷ See Robert Scribner, 'The Reformation, Popular magic, and the "Disenchantment of the World"', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, No.23 (1993), pp475-494. p486.

I would also argue that the persistence in interaction with the dead by the living was not due to remnants of Catholicism.¹¹⁸ Haigh had contended that ‘there was very little popular demand for Reformation, so official changes were implemented without enthusiasm and Protestantism spread only slowly...Conscious Catholic commitment remained entrenched in many parts of England, and there was stubborn resistance to some central Protestant tenets.’¹¹⁹ Likewise Duffy argued that the Reformation was a slow and unwanted process and that it was not until the 1570’s that there was ‘a perceptible sense of a changing of the guard.’ Yet, Calvin’s doctrine allowed space for even the most pious of reformers to believe in the possibility of continued interaction between the living and the dead without being papist or heretical. Marshall has argued that it is unconvincing to state that Purgatory was ‘of sufficient resilience and plasticity simply to adapt itself into new forms of expression.’¹²⁰ However, the evidence suggests that the persistence of older pre-Reformation themes, such as intercession, created a new syncretic blend of motifs and explanations, in which one system of belief did not replace another, instead one system of beliefs was absorbed into another and was changed and adapted. Some Protestants, of the hotter sort were, of course, profoundly in opposition to the possibility of a third space of existence between life and death. Catholics also rejected the possibility of this tenuous third state because it was not Purgatory. However, for many the possibility of a middle state of being was welcome, for it ticked many doctrinal boxes and was not heretical in any way. The theology of Calvin and the syncretism of old and new beliefs, plus the possible disjunction between the vulgar and the learned interpretations of new reformed eschatology allowed for continued relations between the living and the dead. As such, despite the refutation and eventual abolition of Purgatory, ‘the border between this world and the afterlife was not firmly and irrevocably closed.’¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Christopher Haigh, *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987), p209.

¹¹⁹ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p586.

¹²⁰ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead* (2002), p103.

¹²¹ Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p18.



Fig. 12. Lazarus in Abraham's Bosom, Bourges Cathedral c.13th C.

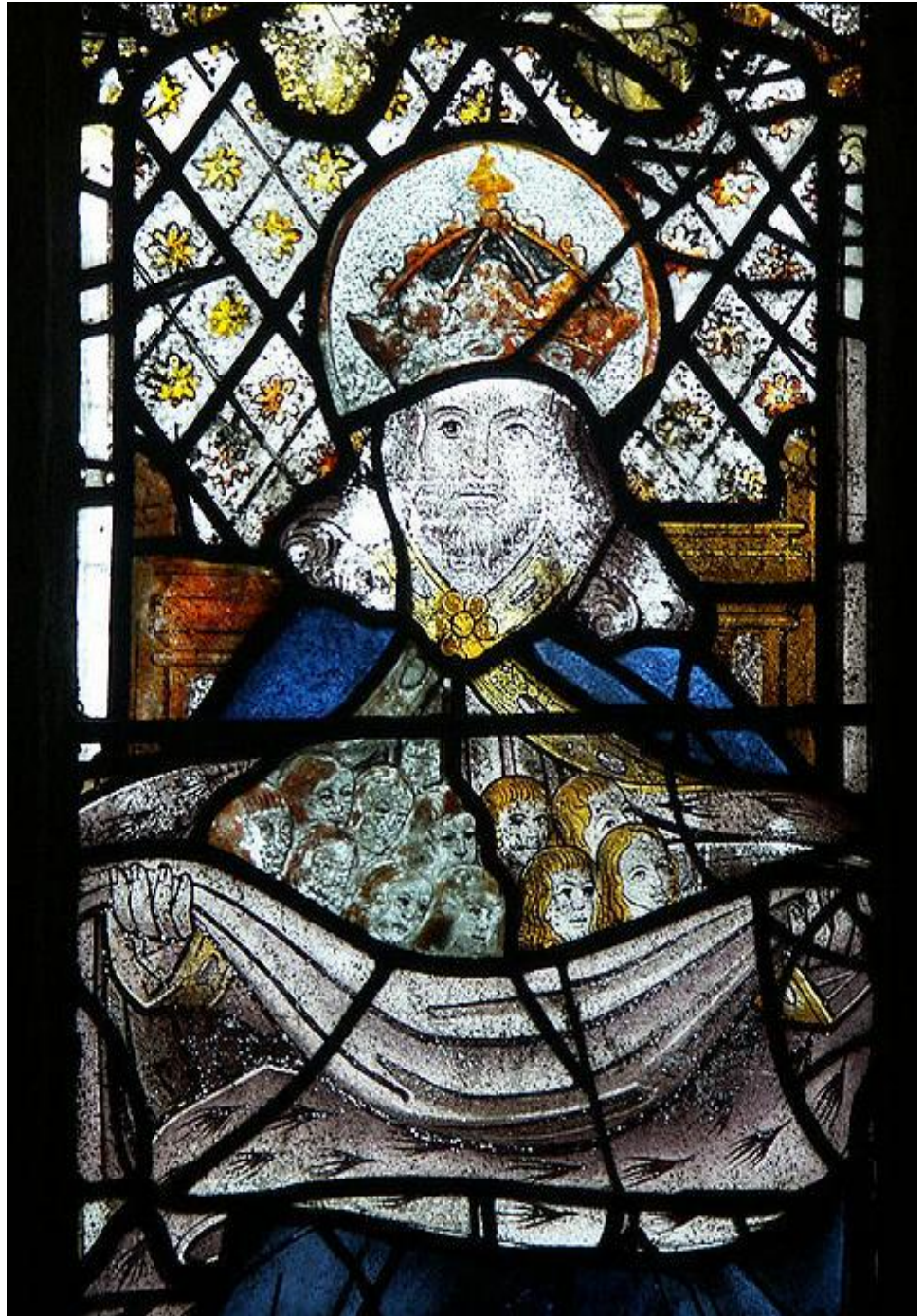


Fig.13. Abraham's Bosom, St.Neots Church, Cornwall, c.16th C.

Chapter Three

Witches, Demons and Poltergeists: the influence of Protestant Eschatologies on the Ghost 1580-1650

So far, in the extant historiography of the ghost, it has been claimed that ghosts disappeared after the Reformation until the middle of the seventeenth century when there was an apparent resurgence of ghost belief after the Restoration. Sasha Handley, for example examines the ‘rehabilitation of ghost stories’ after the Restoration, brought about in part by ‘campaigns to restore confessional harmony, and to reform the spirituality of the lay people’, claiming that prior to this time, to ‘English Calvinists, it seemed increasingly illogical to argue that spirits were the souls of the dear departed.’¹ In a similar vein Owen Davies writes that ‘from the Elizabethan period onwards...the country was not racked by the confessional tensions and intense propaganda battle that permeated the main confessional battlegrounds of Europe. Consequently ghosts had less of a prominent role to play in English theological polemic.’² Stuart Clark also argues that, ghosts were popular on the Elizabethan stage, they were otherwise out of vogue and suffered a ‘long period of absence.’³

Similarly, Keith Thomas has claimed that ghosts presented no problems to reformers. It was, he argued, easy for them to dismiss the ghost as yet another example of the Catholic Church’s exploitation of ‘popular credulity in order to enhance their own wealth and popularity.’⁴ Indeed, many Protestants condemned ghost belief out of hand, as a mark of the superstition of the old church.

Nevertheless, there is plenty of evidence to show that many Protestant writers recognised that ghosts were still apparently active in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and that they presented difficulties in theological terms. In the rest of this chapter, I will argue that the idea of a wandering spirit had become immersed in the witchcraft narrative. Keith Thomas recognised that there was a link between witches, demons and ghosts in contemporary literature, when he said that ghost

¹ Sasha Handley, *Visions of an Unseen World* (London, 2007), pp2, 36.

² Owen Davies, *The Haunted: a social history of ghosts* (London, 2007).

³ Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye* (Oxford, 2007), p211.

⁴ Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, p703.

beliefs ‘were also closely linked with the idea of witchcraft, for a person who was troubled by a poltergeist or spectre might well blame a malevolent neighbour for the intrusion.’⁵ But his treatment of the subject matter is problematic, for while he has documented these contemporary associations, he still keeps the ghost separate from the witch, assigning them to a small chapter shared with fairies, and treating them as a separate, unallied belief to that of witches and demons. While this would be accurate for the earlier part of the sixteenth century and the latter half of the seventeenth, in the crucial years between 1590, and the 1650’s, the boundaries become much less distinct. Furthermore, his use of the term ‘poltergeist’ is anachronistic. This matters because understanding the contemporary lexicography that surrounds words such as ‘spirit’, ‘apparition’, ‘demon’ and ‘ghost’ depicts a more complex perception of early modern Protestant opinion.

Ghosts, particularly in lay culture, were not swept away by the Reformation. As Marshall wrote, ‘more than any other manifestation of popular religious culture, belief in ghosts challenged the Protestant maxims that the dead had no interest in the affairs of the living, and the living no role to play in securing the happiness of the deceased.’⁶ As a result, many elite Protestant commentators felt it was their duty to respond to this continued lay interest in the subject, and to dismiss it as a ‘vulgar error’. The surviving textual evidence, which is examined in this chapter, suggests that there was an active interest in the subject in both elite and lay circles, despite the edicts of the Anglican Church that officially disallowed a post-mortem conscious existence anywhere other than in Heaven or Hell. This new eschatology was supposed to eradicate any belief in the ghost, for such entities were doctrinally no longer possible. Indeed, numerous Protestant writers keenly disputed the idea that the souls of the dead could return to the living.⁷ Yet, the idea of a returning spirit persisted, only now under a different category, that is, that the ghost was in fact a spirit sent by a witch.

The only writer to specifically recognise this contemporary shift in explanation is the folklorist Gillian Bennett. This link between the genres of ghost and witch lore

⁵ Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, p709.

⁶ Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, p234.

⁷ Johann Weyer, *De Praestigiis Dæmonum* (Basel, 1563); Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584); Henry Holland, *A treatise against Witchcraft* (London, 1590); Randall Hutchins, *Tractatus de spectris* (c. 1593); James I, *Dæmonologie* (Edinburgh, 1597); Thomas Cooper, *the mystery of witch-craft Discouered* (London, 1617); Edward Fairfax, *Dæmonologia* (London, 1621).

had been missed, she argued, because both folklorists and historians have kept ‘to certain well defined classes of supernatural creatures and exclude considerations of others for convenience sake’, whereas in the literature of the period, ‘no such clear-cut picture emerges.’⁸ In this point I would suggest that she is correct; nonetheless, I disagree with her assertion that the ghost and the witch ‘were so closely allied that for over a hundred years they constituted virtually a single subject.’ Instead, close examination of contemporary literature indicates that this fusion began in the 1590’s and had begun to separate once more by the 1650’s.

Many Protestant writers were deeply opposed to a belief in ghosts, arguing that they were a central feature of popish deception. Such attacks were often implicated in intra-Protestant controversies. For example, when Samuel Harsnett published *A declaration of egregious Popish Impostures* in 1603 he tackled the issue of ghosts, and took a completely sceptical position. His rebuttal was based on anti-papal sentiment mixed with conventional disdain for common opinion, for he equated ghost belief with Catholicism, declaring that a perceived haunting was in fact a vulgar error of ‘popish ignorants’.⁹ He stated that ‘popish mists had befogged the eyes of our poore people’ and that, spirits, ghosts, witches, and all the other supposed preternatural and supernatural beings were the tricks, delusions and deceptions of the Pope and

those of his holy mission, and commission from Hell their frightful crue, theyr blackguard, with which they work wonders, amongst a faithlesse, senseless generation...making Images to speak, vaults to sound, trunks to carry tales, Churchyards to swarm, houses to rush, rumble, and clatter with chaynes, high-waies, old graues pittes and woods ends to be haunted with lights, owles and poakers; and with these they adred, and gaster sencelesse old women, witlesse children, and melancholike dottrels, out of their wits.¹⁰

He continued;

these Monster-swarms his *Hol.* & his helly crue haue scraped, and raked together out of old doating heathen Historiographers, wisardizing Augurs, imposturizing South-sayers, dreaming Poets, Chimeral conceiters, & coyners of fables...out of these they conceit their monstrous shapes, ugly bug-beares, hydeous apparitions of ghosts...[they] were the forgeries, cozenages, Imposturs, and legerdemaine of craftie priests, and lecherous Friers.¹¹

⁸ Gillian Bennett, ‘Ghost and Witch in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, *Folklore* 97 (1986), pp3-14, p3.

⁹ Samuel Harsnett, *A declaration of egregious Popish Impostures* (London, 1603), p134.

¹⁰ Harsnett, *Egregious Popish Impostures*, p133.

¹¹ Harsnett, *Egregious Popish Impostures*, pp132-135, 137.

He added that in addition to these popish impostures those that were foolish enough to believe them were ‘children, fooles, women, cowards, sick or blacke, melancholike, discomposed wits.’ Furthermore such fancies arose out of ‘two rootes; weaknes of wit, or unstayednes in religion.’¹² His argument fused a sceptical position with that of a decidedly anti-papal one.

Nevertheless, while many Reformed commentators rejected the reality of ghosts, they did allow that the devil could, by legerdemain, trick the percipient into believing they were seeing an actual ghost when in fact, they were seeing a devil who had taken on the guise of dead person. Alternatively, it was commonly thought that one’s vision could be deceived by the devil, so that the percipient was suffering from an optical illusion. Another account held that the ghost was the work of a witch’s familiar. All three explanations had their precedence in the biblical relation of the Witch of Endor.¹³ As Peter Marshall put it, ‘if the one scripturally attested ghost was in fact the Devil, then it followed that subsequent appearances served an explicitly Satanic agenda.’¹⁴ While this was indeed so, he does not explain why this would not be an exclusively Protestant explanation. Pre-Reformation writers and contemporary Catholic commentators also thought that the Devil and his minions played such tricks, and that nocturnal visitors could be the dead or good or bad ‘spirits.’ After all, the adjurations that had featured so prominently in the late medieval ghost story had had the purpose of determining these differences. Still, these adjurations were subsequently mocked by the hotter sort of Protestant commentator as being explicitly symptomatic of the falsely numinous nature of the Catholic faith, and as ignorant vulgar superstition. Many instead chose to interpret all and any apparent manifestation as simply demonic.¹⁵

Those who argued that ghosts were really devils included George Gifford, the Church of England clergyman who stated in 1585 that the ghost of Samuel was ‘not the true, but a false and counterfeit *Samuel*, euen a wicked Deuill.’¹⁶ In 1590, Henry Holland, also an Anglican clergyman, argued that the ‘ghost’ of Samuel was in fact a

¹² Harsnett, *Egregious Popish Impostures*, p137.

¹³ 1 Samuel 28.

¹⁴ Peter Marshall, ‘Deceptive Appearances: Ghosts and Reformers in Elizabethan and Jacobean England’, (Eds.) Helen L. Parish and William G. Naphy, *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe* (Manchester, 2002), pp 189, 194.

¹⁵ See also Randall Hutchins, *Tractatus de spectris* (c.1593); James I, *Dæmonologie* (1597); Edward Fairfax, *Dæmonologia* (1621).

¹⁶ George Gifford, *A discourse of the subtill practices of deuilles by vvitches and sorcerers by which men are and haue bin greatly deluded* (London, 1587), fo.16r.

‘coniured spirit out of hell’.¹⁷ William Perkins, another Anglican minister wrote in 1595 that ghosts were a delusion of Satan. He wrote that it was the opinion of ‘some hereticks, and of the common people; which thinke that dead men walke: and for proof some alleadge the practice of the Witch of Endor...but the truth is, it was not Samuel indeede, but onley a counterfeit of him.’¹⁸ George Hakewill in 1615 was of the view that such apparitions were a ‘delusion of the sight by the subiltie of the divell.’ He added that ‘for the exorcisms of Coniurers, and Necromancers, in raying the dead, that one example of the witch of Endor is sufficient, to prooue them all mere delusions of the sight.’¹⁹

Since it was the Witch of Endor who had conjured up the devil or had created the visual illusion, it was a natural step to conclude that the ghost of Samuel was simply a witch’s familiar. It was this explanation which began the fusion of the ghost genre into that of the witch. In Matthew Parker’s bible of 1568, verse seven of 1 Samuel 28 said that a woman ‘hath a familier spirite at Endor.’²⁰ The devotional writer Thomas Bentley asserted in 1582 that ‘There was a certain woma[n] witch at Endor...yt had a familier spirit.’ Thomas Bilson, the Bishop of Winchester explained in 1599 that ‘it was not Samuel himself which appeared, but the Witches familier spirit in his likenesse; these reasons preuaile with mee.’²¹

These works show that while Protestant writers sought to explain away the ghost within the parameters of the new eschatology, issues such as scriptural exegesis ensured that they still had to be taken seriously. Additionally, while they sought to explain why an apparent haunting could not be a ghost, angels and demons were readily available as explanations. Such beings were very much part of the cosmic order, an integral part of the Great Chain of Being, and both were thought to be active in the early modern world. Both had survived the Reformation as they were integral to Christianity, after all the Bible was littered with references them. Unlike Purgatory, the saints and the Virgin, angels could not easily be rejected due to what Marshall and Walsham term ‘the impeccable biblical credentials of concepts of angelic ministry’.²² Angels had been

¹⁷ Holland, *A treatise against Witchcraft*, fo.11r.

¹⁸ William Perkins, *An Exposition of the Symbole or Creed* (London, 1595), fo.532r.

¹⁹ George Hakewill, *The Vanitie of the eye* (London, 1615), fo.53r, fo.72v.

²⁰ Matthew Parker, *The Holie Bible* (London, 1568), 1 Samuel 28:7. This interpretation is also found in the later King James Bible of 1611. ‘Behold, *there* is a woman that hath a familier spirit at Endor’.

²¹ Thomas Bentley, *The Sixt Lampe of Virginitie* (London, 1582); Thomas Bilson, *The Effect of Certaine Sermons* (London, 1599), fo.204v.

²² Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham, *Angels in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, 2006), p14.

active in the world since the Fall, performing God's ministry, either as messengers or in the role of guardians. After all, as Marshall and Walsham rightly assert, the busy ministry of angels was a sign of God's love and attention to his faithful.²³ They slotted into a providential world view and they could intervene and execute miracles on God's behest.

However, demons or evil angels were more prolific, having been part of the world order since Lucifer's banishment from Heaven, with a third of the angels after his rebellion.²⁴ According to the Bible the earth was their realm. In John 14: 30, Jesus talked of Satan being the 'Prince of this world' and 1 John 3: 8 asserted that the reason Jesus came to earth was, 'that he might destroy the works of the devil.' Since Satan was let loose upon the world with his angels, a good Christian had to be vigilant to avoid their enticements. There were several biblical warnings against him. 1 Peter 5:8 famously warned us to 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' In the the 1581 Bible, Ephesians 6: 11-16 advised believers to

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stande against the assaultes of the devil...for this cause take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to resist in the euil day...and your loins gird about with veritie, and hauing on the brest plate of righteousness...above all, take y shield of faith, wherewith ye may quench all the firie dartes of the wicked.²⁵

By the time the King James edition was printed thirty years later the Devil was trying to attack mankind with his 'deceits' rather than his 'assaultes', and the language was of 'justice' rather than 'righteousnesse'. Many Christians either side of the confessional divide argued that demons roamed the earth seeking to cause mischief and mayhem wherever they could.²⁶ Subsequently, Protestant elites could declare that such a

²³ Marshall and Walsham, *Angels in the Early Modern World*, p15.

²⁴ Ezekiel 28: 11-19, Luke 10:17-20, 'I beheld Satan as lightening fall from Heaven.' Revelation 12: 7-10: verse 9 says 'And the great Dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.' Matthew 25:41 talks of the fire prepared by God for the Devil and all his angels at the end of days as punishment for their wickedness in both Heaven and earth.

²⁵ Ephesians 6: 11-16.

²⁶ Johann Weyer, *De Praestigiis Dæmonum* (1563); Henry Holland, *A treatise against Witchcraft* (1590); Randall Hutchins, *Tractatus de spectris* (c.1593); James I, *Dæmonologie* (1597); Thomas Cooper, *the mystery of witch-craft Discouered* (1617); Edward Fairfax, *Dæmonologia* (1621). See also Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971); Robert Scribner, 'The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the "Disenchantment of the World"', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23 (1993), pp475-494; Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (London, 2003).

supernatural being could be mistaken for a ghost. This view marked a crucial shift in the Protestant handling of the dead.

The ghost was no longer labeled a 'ghost', but an 'apparition' or a 'specter' and it was either a demon, an optical delusion caused by Satan, or a witch's familiar and it was this Protestant reshaping of the ghost that led to its apparent disappearance over the next seventy or so years. When objects were moved or thrown and 'apparitions' wandered the house, all features of the traditional ghost, such activity was increasingly ascribed to witchcraft. The biblical connection between the witch and the ghost meant that when one encountered what one thought was an apparition, it was in reality a spirit sent by a witch, and subsequently an entity to be feared. They could take the form of the known dead or they could be invisible and wreak havoc. It is from this transportation of stock figures from one genre to another by contemporary Protestant writers that we see the emergence of the ghost as a demonic entity, and the formation of the poltergeist in supernatural experience.²⁷

The interaction between the two genres of the witch and the ghost altered ghost lore significantly. This merging of the ghost, demon and the witch was not apparent in works before the 1590's by which time it had become a regular feature of elite discourse and in popular print culture. I contend that this blending of previously disparate narratives explains why the ghost appeared to be quiet between the 1590's and the 1650's.

In the extant historiography the ghost and the witch have been treated as two discrete subjects, but, in contemporary literature, the two genres fed into each other. In order to understand how this collaboration between the witch and the ghost came to be, I will now turn to the first wave of post-Reformation literature on ghosts.

²⁷ The term 'Poltergeist' was first used in Germany in the 1830's.

I

The Demonisation of the Ghost: Catholic and Protestant Discourses

The new demonic interpretation of apparitions was not clearly set along confessional lines, for despite all the Protestant and Catholic sabre-rattling, the approaches of elite writers across the religious divide had much in common. The major Protestant work that dealt explicitly with the ghost was *De Spectris*, by the Calvinist preacher Louis (or Ludwig) Lavater in 1569. He was the son-in-law of Heinrich Bullinger, and his work is hugely important within this field, because it was the first Protestant work of its kind to address these issues after the Reformation. His work is interesting because he tried to acknowledge the possibility of the existence of ghosts in a way that fitted within the Calvinist parameters of doctrine. There were no works by the first wave of reformers on this subject, possibly because the abolition of Purgatory and the adoption by institutions such as the Anglican Church of the doctrine of instant reward and punishment was thought to have eradicated such popish superstition among the laity. The fact that someone from the second generation of reformers in the heartland of Reformation Europe felt the need to pen such a book shows that large numbers of the Protestant faithful continued to believe in ghosts. Moreover, the fact that his work was translated into French, Spanish, Italian, German, with an English edition appearing in 1572 entitled *of Ghostes and Spirites walking by Night*, indicates that there was a substantial interest in the subject of the ghost.²⁸ Indeed, Lavater explicitly wrote his treatise as a response to lay concerns in his parish, originally writing his treatise ‘in the vulgar tong’ before translating it into Latin for a more learned readership. As he put it, ‘Ministers of God’s Church can take nothing more profitable in hande, than to instruct the people of God purely and plainly...to deliuer them from all error and superstition, and bring them out of all wauering and doubt.’²⁹

In his treatise he set about trying to prove that many a ghost sighting was a consequence of vulgar error, papist fraud, melancholy, illness, drunkenness, the imagination, and if no other simple explanation was to be found, then it could be the work of demons. For example, his position on the Witch of Endor was that the ‘ghost’ of

²⁸ See Bruce Gordon, ‘Malevolent ghosts and ministering angels: apparitions and pastoral care in the Swiss Reformation’, Peter Marshall and Bruce Gordon, eds. *The Place of Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2000), pp87-109.

²⁹ Lavater, *De Spectris*, pvii of preface.

Samuel had been in fact ‘some deuelish sprite.’³⁰ His work became the focal point of many subsequent authors, right up until the end of the seventeenth century, especially to those on the other side of the confessional divide, such as Father Pierre Le Loyer who published *Discours des Spectres* or *A Treatise of Specters* in 1586 and Noel Taillepied, the French Capuchin monk, who penned *Psychologie ou Traité de l’apparition de Esprits* or *A Treatise of Ghosts* in 1588.³¹ These works were written as a counter-Reformation rebuttal to Lavater, for Le Loyer and Taillepied both took the traditional Thomist position which argued that the spirits of the dead *could* return from Purgatory, with God’s permission. They did not think the dead were always present, ‘living’ alongside mankind, but they allowed that they could return under the aegis of God and so they constituted a frequently encountered presence. Taillepied stated in his introduction that,

There are verily and indeed Spirits and Phantoms which sometimes appear to men...the Spirits who appear are either Good Angels or bad, or the Souls of the Departed, who may give us timely warnings from God, by Whose Divine Permission only spirits are able to manifest themselves to us.³²

He added, ‘Spirits then can only come and go as God permits...nor can they come back to us when and just as they please, for the apparitions which are enabled to manifest themselves...are wholly under the will of God and the workings of Divine Providence.’³³ Le Loyer also agreed that the dead could return to the living and he created his own definition, saying that ‘A Specter, or Apparition is an Imagination of a substance without a Bodie, the which presenteth it selfe sensibly unto men, against the order and course of nature, and maketh them afraid.’ Furthermore, he warned that we must not confuse the real with the apparant ‘according to the vulgar and common opinion’, for there was a difference between the ‘Specter’ and the ‘Phantosme’; ‘a Phantosme is a thing without life, and without substance: And the Specter hath a substance hidden and concealed’ which appeared to us at will.³⁴

Like Lavater, they were exercised with citing melancholy, illness, drunkenness, the imagination, and demons as the causes behind many perceived supernatural

³⁰ Louis Lavater, *De Spectris* (Paris, 1569), or English Trans. *Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Night* (London, 1572), p127.

³¹ Pierre Le Loyer, *Discours des Spectres* (Paris, 1586), or English Trans. By Zachary Jones, *A Treatise of Specters* (London, 1605); Noel Taillepied, *Psychologie ou Traité de l’apparition de Esprits* (Paris, 1588), Trans. Montague Summers, *Treatise of Ghosts* (London, 1933).

³² Taillepied, *Treatise of Ghosts*, pxix.

³³ Taillepied, *Treatise of Ghosts*, p117.

³⁴ Le Loyer, *Treatise of Specters*, pp1-2.

experiences. These were ready, sceptical, explanatory resources that were open to elites and all three authors employed them. Yet, a cross examination of the texts of Lavater, Le Loyer and Taillepied has revealed more sympathies than differences in attitudes towards the returning dead. Certainly, reformed writers such as Lavater were quick to point out that popish fraud was often involved. However, the evidence indicates that when it came to ghost belief, by the end of the sixteenth century these confessional boundaries were not quite so distinct. Protestant and Catholic commentators seemed to be selective regarding their beliefs in ways that were not always shaped by religious principles, but more by attempts to self fashion an elite identity in contradistinction to the vulgar masses on the subject. This led to a commonality of perception and interpretation.

Lavater's work shows that elite Protestant attempts to change lay perceptions of the returning dead were not as successful as they had anticipated. Protestant elites may have been quick to deny and dismiss the dead, but the laity was not so eager, something counter-Reformation writers such as Le Loyer and Taillepied were quick to exploit. If the laity – and some elites – continued to 'see' ghosts, then there had to be an alternative explanation. The way Protestant writers got around this problem was to literally demonise the ghost. Prior to the emergence of Purgatory the dead could be evil, and they were inextricably bound up with demonic companions, but they were not in and of themselves demons.³⁵ Nor was this new view in the Augustinian tradition that demons and angels could mimic the familiar dead in one's dreams.³⁶ These evil spirits were not nebulous, nor were they the fancy of dreams, but they were real, and they were everywhere.

Lavater assiduously avoided getting bogged down in doctrinal discourse. On one hand he contested many ghost sightings as being due to popish deception and errors of vulgar belief, on the other hand he admitted that the dead did continue to have a role among the living, although he avoided the word 'ghost' in favour of 'spirit'. His writing reveals the concern of a godly Protestant towards the prevalence and persistence of ghost belief in his parish. Bruce Gordon, one of the few historians to write on Lavater, has argued that Protestant elites had to be able 'to articulate a different relationship between the living and the dead in communities which believed in apparitions and

³⁵ Jean Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1998) Trans. T. L. Fagan; Patrick Geary, *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1994).

³⁶ Augustine, *The City of God*, ch.22. ed. Marcus Dods (Lawrence, 2009), pp326-328.

portents.³⁷ New books emerged, written by Protestant thinkers on the matter, and published in the vernacular aimed at an expanding audience of increasingly literate readers. This, according to Gordon, meant the ‘creation of a vocabulary for the supernatural that was at once based on scripture, but at the same time addressed the realities of daily life in the villages.’³⁸

These rhetorical sensitivities were clearly at play in Lavater’s work. As he ran through the four most likely explanations for a ghostly apparition, his tone was by turns hectoring, and then reasonable and cautious as if he were speaking from the pulpit. The explanations for such visions were: papist fraud, the imagination, natural occurrences and devils and angels. A fifth reason is perhaps more surprising, for Lavater allowed, with caution, that when all the other natural explanations could be discounted the dead *could* interact with the living. Still, he was reluctant to agree that an apparent apparition was the returning soul of the dead, for his purpose in writing was to create a two-pronged attack, firstly against papal promulgation of such false ideas and secondly against vulgar belief. As he wrote,

For when they see they haue ben falsly taught, and they were not the soules of men which appeared, but eyther falsehood of monkes, or illusions of deuyls franticke imaginations, or some other friuolous and vaine perswasions, they will thinke it profitable to haue known the trueth.³⁹

Yet, having stated this standard Protestant trope, he went on to contradict himself on two key points. Firstly he stated that God did not allow the souls of the dead to return to visit the living; calling it ‘not that thing which is hard to his power, but that which is contrary to his nature.’⁴⁰ He continued,

ye soules departed, do not again return, & wander on the earth, so that all they which have not yet stopped their eares that the truth might not pierce and enter them, may evidently perceive, that those ancient tymes taught a far better doctrine of those spirits & ghosts, than other later tymes under poperie have condemned and allowed...there is no third place in which soules should be delivered, as it were out of prison, & that soules can neither be reclaimed out of heaven or hell. Hereby it is made eident, that they cannot wander on the earth, & desire aide of me... the scripture is most cleare, that soules immediately upon their departure from their body, are carried unto a certaine place, whence they cannot of themselves returne, but needes must waite there for that terrible day of judgement.⁴¹

³⁷ Gordon, ‘Malevolent ghosts’, p94.

³⁸ Gordon, ‘Malevolent ghosts and ministering angels’, p94.

³⁹ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p2.

⁴⁰ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p118, 125.

⁴¹ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p118- 119.

While he denied a ‘third place’, he did allow for a ‘certaine place’ where souls awaited that ‘terrible day of judgement.’ Though his meaning was not explicit, as a good Calvinist it is probable that he meant Abraham’s Bosom.

Nonetheless, Lavater contradicted himself in adopting a rather heterodox position, for regardless of his scriptural-based explanations and his avowal that departed souls ‘do not again return & wander the earth’, he wrote a curious codicil in which he granted that on exceptional occasions, God did allow the dead to return. Such an occurrence was possible by the power of God only for ‘goode Spirites are not pulled backe into the earth by Magicall Art.’⁴² Necromancers did not have the power to do it, only God. Lavater wrote that, ‘it is most certaine and sure, that all those things which appeare unto men are not alwayes naturall things...spirites do often appeare.’⁴³ He added, ‘God doth suffer spirits to appeare unto his elect, unto a good ende, ...God doth also suffer them to be exercised with haunting of spirites, for this cause; that they be more humble and lowely...he permitteth it, that is, to trie this faithfull, how constant they be, and faithful they would believe in him, if at any time spirits do come.’⁴⁴ The use of the word ‘spirit’ instead of ‘ghost’ not only showed his discomfort with the word, but it also blended in with his discourse on good and bad spirits which created a probably deliberate lack of distinction.

In the period from the 1570’s to the 1650’s Protestants dealt cautiously with the returning dead in their writing on the supernatural. In order to avoid accusations of popery, or of subscribing to ‘vulgar’ belief, excluded the word ‘ghost’ from their commentaries. Protestant writers were clearly wary of applying the word ‘ghost’, using instead the words ‘specter’, ‘apparition’ and ‘spirit’, all of which seem to have been interchangeable.⁴⁵ Sensitivity to these nuances of language exposes Protestant tensions between balancing the need for a discourse on the subject of the returning dead with the necessity of avoiding accusations of crypto-Catholicism. I would argue that in this tract Lavater did not mean ‘spirits’ to be only angels or demons, but also that of the dead, for it would serve no purpose to God to send a counterfeit spirit to do his work. That would

⁴² Lavater, *De Spectris*, p132.

⁴³ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p53.

⁴⁴ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p177.

⁴⁵ Lavater, *De Spectris* (1569. Trans. Eng.1572) ; Johann Weyer, *De Praestigiis Daemonum* (Basel, 1563), bk.1, ch.xxv. bk.3, ch.iii, vii-viii, bk.v, ch.xxxvii ; Randall Hutchins, *Tractatus de spectris* (c.1593).

be deception, something which was the prerogative of the Devil, not God. He wrote that God allowed the return of a soul, 'unto a good ende'. This shift in explanation is important, as it was not based on traditional thought, for now the dead had a purpose which did not always centre around their own salvation. Now they sought such things as a consecrated reburial of bones and others 'haue warned many their friends of diuers matters, and haue disclosed vnto them secrete things...and haue shewed sicke folks good remedies for their diseases' and others 'of suche as haue been slayne, doo oftentimes cruelly molest and trouble the soules of those whiche slewe them.'⁴⁶ These ghosts held a function that now aided the living in a reversal of the traditional role. So while as a good Protestant Lavater had denied that the dead could return from Purgatory, he had allowed that they could return on a divine mission. When Lavater stated that spirits could appear unto 'good endes', he was also writing about tests of faith, something that had a long scriptural tradition in Christianity. Protestants wrote that those who were plagued by strange or violent activity that had no obvious human origin, could declare they were haunted by agents of Satan. This tapped into the tradition of Job, whose faith had been tested by God in many terrible ways. This explanation was easily adopted into a doctrine in which salvation was achieved by faith alone. This marks a crucial shift in the Protestant handling of the dead. The returning dead could thus exist within the parameters of Protestantism without any hint of popery. Furthermore, as a Calvinist they could return from Abraham's Bosom. They had not been banished altogether.

Despite the clearly Protestant interpretation of ghosts as 'spirits', there were parallels between Lavater's work and the Catholic counter-blasts that followed suit. A *Treatise of Specters or Straunge Sights, Visions and Apparitions* by the French Catholic Pierre Le Loyer in 1586 and *A Treatise of Ghosts*, by the Capuchin monk Noel Taillepied in 1588 appear to have been more influenced by Lavater's views than by fellow Catholic opinion, and a clear confessional difference of interpretation and approach was not always readily apparent. In many ways, all three works appear to follow and continue in the late medieval tradition of the writers of *miracula* who wrote for the royal court, using classical, Patristic and renowned men's writings, rather than basing their work on any personal or empirical evidence. Furthermore, their own credit and status as writers of these works often seems to be all the authority that was needed.

⁴⁶ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p76, p79.

Lavater often cited the authority of Scripture, classical authors and the Patristics, 'For such things of thys sorte are to be red in diuers and auncient historiographers: and many men of no small credite, haue affirmed, that they haue seene spirits both in the day and in the night also.'⁴⁷ He added, 'Yee shall reade of many suche lyke in the liues of the auncient fathers, which all are not to be rejected as vaine and fabulous, for some parte of them were written by graue and learned men.'⁴⁸ Lavater also dedicated his book to the Lord Consul of Bern, his patron, and stated in his preface that his role as a minister in conjunction with God's word would 'be a light unto our pathes' so 'that I might purchase credit and authorities vnto this my booke.'⁴⁹ Although Lavater's work was aimed at a non-elite audience, he still sought to confirm his status as a learned man in order to add weight to his treatise.

On the other hand, Le Loyer established his authority in the tradition of the court writer in his dedicatory epistle to Catherine de Medici. Here he claimed that his reason for writing was initially 'to confute certaine auncient Philosophers, Atheists and Libertines, who did hold and maintain this opinion, that there were not any substances in being, but such only as were corporall and having bodies', but he was also further spurred into action by 'certaine perverse spirits and brainsicke persons of our age, who have invented most strange and variable opinions.'⁵⁰

While Le Loyer accepted that ghosts were the returning souls of those in Purgatory, what set his work apart from other extant writings of this period was that he used the tools of the natural philosopher to make his case, arguing that often things in nature, much of which we did not yet know or understand, could be mistaken for the supernatural. He looked for a natural, evidential-based explanation for an apparent supernatural experience, rather than a purely scriptural one, and as I will show, leaned heavily on the evidence of the senses. Thus, his book was not pastoral in the sense that Lavater's was. It was an elite, learned text aimed at the royal court and academics, written specifically not to refute vulgar errors, but to enter into an academic debate. Indeed, the 1605 English edition had a dedication which recommended his work to a reformed English audience and in particular, to James I. Although, in the preface, the reader was warned by the translator Zachary Jones that the author was 'in the court and

⁴⁷ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p53.

⁴⁸ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p65.

⁴⁹ Lavater, *De Spectris*, px of preface.

⁵⁰ Pierre Le Loyer, *Le Discours des Spectres* (Paris, 1586), or English Trans. By Zachary Jones, *A Treatise of Specters or Straunge Sightes, Visions and Apparitions* (London, 1605).

constitutions of Rome, from whence what can we expect but Romish Divinitie', Le Loyer's position on witches was perceived to be in accordance with that of James I. who was famously averse to witchcraft. According to Jones, Le Loyer viewed witches as a 'generation of vipers and the seede of the wicked serpent...[Le Loyer] is ...a professed foe to all these damned artes, and diabolicall illusions of Witches, Sorcerers, and Conjurer.' Furthermore, Jones, who only translated Book One of Le Loyer's work into English, appealed to King James on the basis that it was a scholarly work full of 'sound arguments, & profound knowledge in all kinds of learning and philosophie.'⁵¹

Among elite writers, it was acceptable and indeed common for a writer from one confession to borrow ideas, information and facts from a writer of the other confession. In fact, all three texts share many of the same sources and stories. For example, Lavater and Taillepied both cited a ghost tale from the reformist thinker Phillip Melanchthon's work *De Anima* of 1540 and neither side disputed its veracity. Lavater recounted the tale of a widow, who sat by the fire, when one evening

Two men came into hir house, whereof the one being verie like, saide he was hir husband deceased, the other being very tall, had the shape of a Franciscan Frier. This that seemed to be the husband, came neere the chimney saluting his heaue wife, bidding hir not to be afrayde...and after many wordes...and most heartily desire hir to hire a priest to saye Masse for hys soule...he biddeth hir giue him hir right hande...she giueth hir hande, which albeit it had no hurte, yet did it seeme to be so scortched, that euer it remained blacke.⁵²

Taillepieid cited the same story, with no variation in detail and introduced it with the following lines, 'Philip Melanchthon (whom some rank heretics in their folly and mad presumption would, methinks, sooner believe than the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church themselves) writes that he has with his own eyes seen apparitions.'⁵³ It was a strange tale for each to cite. In Lavater's case, while it was written by a reformer, it had clear papist elements to it, such as the Friar, the suffrage-seeking ghost, and the burning by Purgatorial fire of the percipient on contact. However, Melanchthon was thought to be of such sufficient learning and standing that Lavater did not question it. On the other hand, while it was a story readily suited for a Catholic writer like Taillepied, he chose to accept it as fact despite his codicil of Counter-Reformation rhetoric regarding the heresy

⁵¹ Zachary Jones, *A Treatise of Specters or Straunge Sights, Visions and Apparitions* why he only translated book one and where the rest of it is I have been unable to ascertain.

⁵² Lavater, *De Spectris*, p70.

⁵³ Taillepied, *Of Ghosts*, p61.

of Melanchthon's beliefs. This was not unusual practice for, as I will show in chapter five, such stories were reused and recycled freely amongst writers.

Taillepie, writing in 1588 in defence of the reality of ghosts, took a less critical and a more populist stance than his fellow Catholic Le Loyer. While Taillepie's work was dedicated to the important political and religious figure within Henri IV's court, Monseigneur Groulart, he remarked that his purpose for writing in his capacity as a French Capuchin monk was to protect and defend the Christian religion 'against the assaults of adversaries and foes.'⁵⁴ He also wished,

to resolve the many questions which are daily debated not only among learned men and great Scholars, but also by rustic and simple Folk in the common walk of life...it is very necessary then that such folk should learn to distinguish calmly between natural happenings and ghosts.⁵⁵

Like Lavater, he wrote for a more populist audience, seeking to engage with the lay community, albeit in an erudite manner.

At times, all three writers called upon the same authors for their evidence, drawing from the Patristics, biblical and classical sources, and while they employed a philosophical scepticism regarding many a perceived ghostly encounter, there was little questioning in all three works as to the provenance or authority of these sources. Their tales were gleaned from Antiquity, as well as from all over sixteenth century Europe, but because in many cases they did not acknowledge their sources, the provenance of the tales they use is hard to pinpoint. They all accepted the 'reality' of mythical figures and creatures of legend, alongside ghost tales of a more contemporary origin that were cited without footnotes or bibliographies. This occasionally gave rise to a curious blend of the fantastical and the natural. Le Loyer wrote of 'Lemures', 'Goblins', 'Genii', whom he described as horned men who could take the form of a serpent, 'Satyres' and 'Lamia.'⁵⁶ Taillepie explained that there were such beings as

Unembodied Souls, Lemuses, Fawns, Satyrs, Larvas, Penates, Nymphs, Sprites, Fairies, Goblins, and all sorts of Phantoms which not unseldom appear unto men, by day as well as by night, on the high seas as well as on dry land, in the open country and in houses, making horrid cracks and a vast hurly-burly, often manifesting themselves in the shape of beasts or birds.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Taillepie, *Of Ghosts*, Taillepie declared that 'under the ægis of your Name this Work must be recognized by all men as truly Orthodox, Christian and Catholic.' pxvi.

⁵⁵ Taillepie, *Of Ghosts*. pxvi-xvii.

⁵⁶ Le Loyer, *Of Specters*, chs.i-ii.

⁵⁷ Taillepie, *Of Ghosts*, pxvi.

Lavater also wrote of ‘Syrenes’, ‘Scilla’, ‘Hærpyæ’ and ‘Striges’ (vampiric birds) he explained ‘some are onely fabulous, or false: yet notwithstanding, it may be, that the Divell doth deceive men under the formes of them.’⁵⁸ The ‘fabulous’ could be explained by self-deception or within the strictures of Protestant demonology rather than being dismissed altogether as creatures of mythology.⁵⁹ These tensions between ‘real’ and ‘mythological’ within elite Protestant thought reveal the need to rationalize and explain the supernatural to a non-elite readership whilst remaining within the parameters of reformed thinking. It was this very tension that led to the demonisation of the ghost in Protestant thought.

Generally, it was agreed that spectral occurrences could be ascribed to one of four things, papist fraud, illness, vulgar error – this included drunkenness, the imagination and the misinterpretation of natural occurrences – and more commonly angels or demons. This obvious Protestant fall back, that much could be blamed upon the fraudulent activities of the Catholic Church, does of course separate Lavater’s work from Le Loyer and Taillepied. As a good Protestant Lavater routinely recounted incidents in which monks dressed up in sheets ‘lyke unto a spirite’ and then roamed around cemeteries. He cited an instance of a priest who tied candles to the back of crabs, let them loose in a churchyard and thereby convinced everyone ‘that they were the soules of deade men which desired to be delivered out of their torments by masses & almes deeds.’⁶⁰ In another passage he said ‘it is well knowne to all men, that there have been many magicians, sorcerers, and Conjurers, and those especially Monkes and Priests, who would easily counterfeit visions, and miracles, and familiar talking with soules.’⁶¹ For a godly Protestant, this was the most ready explanation for the living dead, but still, Lavater was disinclined to blame the laity for believing such frauds, for confusion and misinterpretation by the ‘common people’ was the fault of the Catholic Church: ‘if they had not forbidden them to reade the holy scriptures, they would have thought aright’ and not been ‘too credulous’ or believed ‘old wives tales.’⁶²

Despite this, the three works had more similarities than differences in their outlook. Le Loyer and Taillepied, like Lavater, both conceded that fraud was a problem, although Le Loyer did not attribute such activities to ‘papist fraud’ but to ‘jesters’ who

⁵⁸ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p7.

⁵⁹ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons* (Oxford, 1997).

⁶⁰ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p44-45.

⁶¹ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p28.

⁶² Lavater, *De Spectris*, p28.

like to ‘be always deluding of simple and credulous folks’ and that ‘it is a common trickery of vnhappy boyes to make especiall choise of Churchyardes.’ In fact, Le Loyer, in another example of narratival appropriation, recounted the story that Lavater had cited of candles attached to the backs of crabs in the cemetery but attributed it to youthful high jinks rather than papist deception.⁶³

A further example of story borrowing indicates that Taillepie was equally reliant upon Lavater. With regards to fraudulent ghostly activity, in which tricksters ran about the house in sheets, making a racket in order to frighten the residents, Lavater had noted

Many times, pleasant and merrie yong men, disguise themselues like vnto Deuills, or else shroud themselues in white sheetes to make other men afrayde...it is well known to all men, that harlots and whooremongers, haue practiced their wickednesse a long season vnder this cloake of pretence, perswading their family, that walking Spirites haunt the house, least they shoulde be taken with the deede doing, and that they may enioy their desired loue...theeues likewise vnder this couer haue many tymes robbed their neighbours in the night time.⁶⁴

Likewise, Taillepie, in a strikingly similar passage wrote of practical jokers who put horns on their heads like devils or dressed in shrouds or white sheets ‘to frighten simple folk.’⁶⁵ He claimed it was well known

that idle rakeshames and their naughty wenches have often carried on their ballum-rancum under pretence of a house being haunted, for if the servants hear noises at night and steps echo in the corridor they are afraid ever to peep out of their rooms, and so Jack and Gillian come and go as they list about their bawdry.⁶⁶

He declared that thieves and burglars also adopted this method and ‘others again have counterfeited and pretended to be Spirits, creating extraordinary illusions in order to attain their ends and indulge their lusts.’ Not only did Taillepie borrow from Lavater, but both passages relating counterfeit behaviour attributed consistent activities to ghosts. Sheets were pulled from the bed, people dressed in shrouds wailing, there were heavy footsteps, knocking, doors opening and closing and strange lights. These things ticked the boxes of what a ghost normally did, and to stray from these conventions

⁶³ Le Loyer, *Of Specters*, fo.78r. ‘It is a common tricke of vnhappy boyes to make especiall choise of Churchyardes, there to terrifie others; because those are helde to be places most suspected for Ghostes and Spirites to haunt in and inhabite.’ Fo.77v.

⁶⁴ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p21.

⁶⁵ Taillepie, *Of Ghosts*, p32.

⁶⁶ Taillepie, *Of Ghosts*, pp32-33.

would have brought into doubt the matter of whether it was a ghost or something else entirely, be it supernatural or natural.

The other main shared approach was to seek explanations from the natural world. Lavater argued that many a perceived haunting could be blamed on bad eyesight, faulty hearing and drunkenness.⁶⁷ He argued that ignorance caused men to misinterpret natural sounds and sights such as the wind, echoes, glow worms, the reflective eyes of animals at night and the Willo' the Wisp. Similarly Taillepie explained in simple terms 'how natural things may sometimes be mistaken for Spirits' and how 'in good sooth then we must not too easily believe all that we see at night in the dark, nor take every apparition to be a spirit or a soul from purgatory.'⁶⁸ He related his story to the interests of the common reader using imagery and incidents they could understand:

Some folk, when they hear the curious noises made by a rat, a cat or a weasel...and some other small animals, or if at night a horse in the stable stamps and paws heavily with his feet, are all of a tremble believing it a Spirit or ghost...In the old wainscots made of wood one can sometimes hear the mice squeaking or that beetle called the death-watch, and men turn cold with dread.⁶⁹

His choice of place and cast were domestic and identifiable among all levels of society. Le Loyer also pointed out that the reflection of animals' eyes in the dark, glow worms, willo' the wisps and volcanic activity could mislead the ignorant, 'it is a thing most certaine...that many naturall things (because they be a little beyond reason) doe put vs in so great a feare and terroure, as if we had seene before vs some *Spirits* or *Phantomies*.'⁷⁰ Yet, he was not writing from a sceptical position, but rather from a naturalist one. He argued that there were many other things that happened in nature that man might never understand, for example;

In a thicke and obscure ayre, all things do appeare darke and obscure; in a greene meadow all things seeme greene; and neere unto a scarlet... all things do shew to be red of colour. The bodies of any creature being in a wood, doth seeme to be of another sort, then they do being in the open and plaine champaigne. The Sunne being in the east, and in the West, is different from that which is seene being in the South, and the clowdes (which are concrete and bred of moisture) at the rising and the setting of the Sunne, do shew red vnto our eyes...the colours of the Raine-bow are likewise false...By the same reason also we may say, that the colours which passe through a glasse full of water set against the Sunne, are not true colours, and that the sight is deceived in them. And how many things may a man forme by the Art *Optique*, with *Mirrors*, or

⁶⁷ Lavater, *De Spectris*, First Part, Fo.1-88.

⁶⁸ Taillepie, *Of Ghosts*, pp34-35.

⁶⁹ Taillepie, *Of Ghosts*, p36.

⁷⁰ Le Loyer, *Of Specters*, fo.62r.

Steele-glasses. The cloudes sometimes will seeme to be Monsters, Lions, Bulls and Woolves...albeit in truth the same be nothing but a moyst humour mounted in the ayre.⁷¹

The misunderstanding of a natural event or of the things in nature could lead people to erroneous conclusions and could obscure the truth, in this case, the reality of ‘specters’. For example, while he disparaged the argument that spectres could come from the Heavens, i.e. the celestial orbs, because ‘the influence of the Heavens doth worke by the will of God, many things that are strange and admirable; and yet such nevertheless as are naturall’, he also dismissed the sceptical view that ‘when they do at any time shew themselves, it may be attributed vnto Nature’ as a ‘ridiculous’ gloss of the ‘Epicures, the Sadduces and the Peripatetiques.’⁷²

Le Loyer sought a rational explanation for many perceived hauntings, whilst arguing that ghosts exist. This faith-based, rationalist and anti-Pyrrhonist outlook led him in chapter six of his work to contest the Ancient sceptics from Cassius the Epicure to Sextus Empiricus. Pyrrhonism, to Le Loyer was anathema, the recourse of the ‘brain-sicke.’ This position was made clear when he wrote that ‘Pirrhon’ had made ‘an heap of idle Dreames and Fooleries from all the Philosophers his predecessors’ adding a moment of satire into his treatise;

Apostata.- O Pirrhon, art thou dead?

Pirrhon.-Nay, I doubt of that.

A.-What after death still doubt?

P. -Yea, much more, I now rest doubtfull than I did before

A. -Poore man: Tis time thou now leave off thou doubting, And let thy Tombe so ponderous and heavy, Henceforth make cease all doubtfulness within thee.⁷³

The main tactic he employed to impugn these sceptics was to defend sensory data, for, while things in nature might deceive us, this was due to our ignorance, or more specifically, in the eyes of elite writers such as Le Loyer, vulgar error, rather than a deception of the senses.⁷⁴ According to Le Loyer sceptics had challenged the reliability of the senses. As he wrote ‘*Sextus*...assayeth to maintaine the opinion of *Phirron*...that the sight, the hearing, the smelling, and other humane senses are subiect to be deceived, be they never so sound: and that wee doe neither imagine nor take any opinion of any

⁷¹ Le Loyer, *Of Specters*, fo.57v, fo.59r.

⁷² Le Loyer, *Of Specters*, fo.38v, fo.43r-v.

⁷³ Le Loyer, *of Specters*, fo.51r.

⁷⁴ See Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley, 1979), p111.

thing, but falsely and inconsiderately.’⁷⁵ In order to contest this sceptical position, Le Loyer fell back into a standard Aristotelian account, namely that when our senses were operating properly, we were able to perceive true information. Nonetheless, even when our senses were faulty our intellect could still correct our sense reports, and subsequently discover reliable knowledge about the sensible world. Le Loyer’s defence of the reality of specters thus hung on an acceptance of the reliability of the senses. He criticised Phirron and his disciples for being

so obstinate to deny all things though never so manifest, and to impugne the verity of the senses...if the *Sense*, the *Imagination*, and the *Intellect* be false: then that also which we comprehend by them (as the Specters) must needs be false...But to this argument I answere, That albeit the Specters be incomprehensible in their owne nature: yet when they appeare vnto vs, they are comprehensible by the senses, which doe carry them to the Intellect or vnderstanding...[which] judgeth them supernaturally, as of a thing supernaturall.⁷⁶

Despite these assertions, Le Loyer’s position did seem to waver, for his work contained many examples of how sight could deceive. As Stuart Clark correctly observed, Le Loyer’s work was full of examples of ‘the unreliability of visual perception’, but he adds that his ‘opening arguments allow for so many problems with what is supposed to be ‘the most excellent, lively and active’ sense – enthusiastically adding cases of visual deception from his own experience to those of the classical sceptics – that it seems to become altogether the most uncertain one.’⁷⁷

Although Le Loyer was careful to point out that optical illusions did happen and sounds could indeed be misinterpreted, the healthy mind recognised and understood this: ‘The *Eye* ...be sometimes deceived in the qualities of things...yet so is it, that the *Intellect* and *Vnderstanding* of a man...will never be deceived.’⁷⁸ This was an important distinction that separated the elite from the vulgar – the elite would be less likely to fall into such traps of erroneous belief based on the deception of the senses, since their minds had the ability to perceive such mistakes. The intellect was ultimately the judge between veridical and false sense-perceptions. To fall victim to false sense-perceptions was to show a weakness of intellect and judgement. On another level, this argument left room for the reality of spectres, for great minds could not only see through delusions of

⁷⁵ Le Loyer, *Of Specters*, fo.51.r.

⁷⁶ Le Loyer, *Of Specters*, fo.52v.

⁷⁷ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, p216.

⁷⁸ Le Loyer, *Of Specters*, fo.61v.

the senses, but they could also perceive the truth of things. According to Le Loyer, the truth was that the souls of the dead could and did return to the living.

Le Loyer, Taillepied and Lavater all agreed that there were two explanations as to why the senses of man could be deceived. The first was corruption by illness, both physical and mental. Melancholy, in particular, was deemed to be a great distorter of the senses. The second cause was by deception of the Devil. With regards to the first of these, Lavater had averred that madness, melancholy, ill health, fever and the imaginings of the feeble-minded were explanations for many apparently supernatural encounters. Lavater wrote, 'it cannot be denied, but that some men which either by dispositions of nature, or for they have sustained great miserie, are now come heavie and full of melancholy, imagine many times with themselves being alone, miraculous and straunge things.'⁷⁹ Similarly, Le Loyer allowed that imagination, madness, fear and conscience could be deceiving; and that choleric men, old men, unmarried women and children were all susceptible to believing they were seeing ghosts when they were not, as all these 'persons are most commonly subject to receive false Imaginations and Phantasmes, and to have the Braine troubled and distracted.'⁸⁰ Equally, Taillepied stated that 'melancholick men or those who are sick or hyperchondriacal... can imagine all sorts of Visions which are often mere Fancy and Unreal.'⁸¹ All three agreed that women, children, the old and the infirm 'are easily enough persuaded that they see and hear things which are purely imaginary.'⁸²

All these things could deceive the senses in the weaker sort. However, the enchantment of the Devil could also be a crucial factor. The Devil had no actual power over the natural world, but he could deceive the vulnerable, as Rob Iliffe put it, 'he could command the perceptual faculties of the weak and ignorant, having an excellent understanding of the nature of their bodies.'⁸³ Thus, strange sightings were not necessarily the result of one's faulty vision, but the result of a manipulating illusion of the Devil. This was an explanation shared by all three authors for as Stuart Clark put it, 'arguments in this respect stemmed not from cognitive philosophy, epistemology, or

⁷⁹ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p77.

⁸⁰ Le Loyer, *Of Specters*, fo.104r.

⁸¹ Taillepied, *Of Ghosts*, p12.

⁸² Taillepied, *Of Ghosts*, p23.

⁸³ Rob Iliffe, 'Lying Wonders and Juggling Tricks: Religion, Nature, and Imposture in Early Modern England', (Eds.) James E. Force and David s. Katz, *Everything Connects: In Conference with Richard H. Popkin* (Leiden, 1999), pp185-209.

natural magic but from a shared demonology.⁸⁴ There was little in the way of confessional difference in this respect.

Drawing on the biblical story of the Witch of Endor, Lavater argued that the conjured spirit was not Samuel but a counterfeit of his likeness in the imagination, put there by Satan: ‘whether the Divell can represent the likenesse of some faithfull man deceased...we need not doubt at all...neither is it harde for him to bleare and beguile the outward eyes, who can easily darken and dazell the inwarde sighte of the minde.’⁸⁵ Why would a demon bother to appear as the dead when Satan himself could get into your imagination and deceive you in an instant? This was no mere optical illusion, but a false imagining caused by Satan. The appearance of ghosts springing from the imagination was just another weapon in Satan’s armoury of deception, for as Le Loyer wrote, ‘so mischievous is the divell, that he creepeth throughout all the passages of the senses.’⁸⁶ To him, the Devil could ‘cast himself into the inward and interior senses’, in a physical hijacking of the senses.⁸⁷

Le Loyer’s thoughts on optical delusions were strikingly similar to those of his contemporary, the Protestant sceptic Johann Weyer, who had written that many a ‘phantastical body of a blinding spirit’ was a deception that occurred

either when an apparition of Satan’s choice is cunningly imposed upon the optic or visual nerves by the disturbing of the appropriate humours and spirits...strange apparitions may thus be conceived in the imagination and generally shared with the visual humours through the medium of the optic nerve...so that [witches] affirm...that they have seen or done things which have never been seen and have never existed in reality.⁸⁸

In elite, sceptical discourse, writers often had more in common with each other than with the vulgar of whom they were so dismissive, despite their differing religious affiliations. They shared a common pool of sources that were finite, and that were placed into a shared classification system within the natural/supernatural spectrum. This was a system created by and for them, with an understanding that they were amongst the few in society whose intellect was perspicacious enough to see through the deceptions of the Devil. Such thinking thus overcame and overrode confessional differences. The function of many texts, both sceptical and non-sceptical was thus to act

⁸⁴ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, p211.

⁸⁵ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p140-141, P3.

⁸⁶ Le Loyer, *Of Specters*, fo.124v.

⁸⁷ Le Loyer, *Of Specters*, fo.124v.

⁸⁸ Johann Weyer, *De Praestigiis Daemonum* (1563), Trans. George Mora and Benjamin Kohl (New York, 1991), pp173, 186.

as a guide to ordinary Christians, showing them how to discern true from false, and true from evil.

Nevertheless, writers often condemned their counterparts in other confessions as providing a false narrative. Indeed, Le Loyer and Taillepied had written with the specific purpose of refuting Lavater. Taillepied wrote that he would ‘purge’ Lavater’s writing ‘of the poison that infects them’ and stated that ‘all those writers who have drunk of the stinking waters of the Lake Geneva’ were ‘heretics and ignorant ethnic bigots.’⁸⁹ While the rhetoric of confessional difference was readily employed by both factions in order to explain the perceived egregious errors of each side, there were many similarities in interpretative outlook and this shared approach was apparent in their views of angels and demons. As I have already stated, the scriptural evidence for their existence and purpose left little room for the conflicts of religious doctrine. The main difference was that, according to Protestant thought, since the Apostolic era was long gone it was more likely that one would encounter a demon rather than an angel. Lavater wrote: ‘as touching the tyme when spirits appeare, we read in histories that it shall be after a thousand yeares which God hath appoynted...that Sathan should be lette loose...and al kind of mischeefe should abound, & many spirits appeare euery where.’⁹⁰ He concluded that ‘it is no harde or difficulthe matter for the Lorde oure God to send his Angels vnto us...although perchaunce thou thinke thou haste seene a good Angell, yet do not easily and unadvisedly give him credite...if they be wicked, they will endeavour to deceive with lying.’⁹¹ Similarly, Taillepied made a clear distinction between angels, evil spirits/demons and ghosts, and listed the ways to distinguish the good from the bad, i.e. pleasant or noxious odours, and roaring and blaspheming or gentle mellifluous voices and cajoling flattery versus humble oration. He added, ‘the Bible tells us that when Angels appeared under various forms they admonished, encouraged, defended and delivered men from danger, dehorting them from evil, and punishing the wicked.’⁹²

For Le Loyer, the chance of meeting an evil angel/demon was higher than meeting a good angel, not because the Apostolic era had ended but because this world was where the former lived after their banishment from Heaven:

The Angels and Divels are indeed equall as touching their spirituall nature, but in regard of grace and puissance, there is a great difference betweene them. For

⁸⁹ Taillepied, *Of Ghosts*, pp5-6, 80.

⁹⁰ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p89.

⁹¹ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p196.

⁹² Taillepied, *Of Ghosts*, p120.

the Divels are perpetually and for ever exiled and banished from heaven by reason of their transgression: and they are subject to the scourge and vengeance of God.⁹³

It was upon this point that Taillepied turned Protestant arguments regarding the non-existence of ghosts on its head. In a twist of apparently irrefutable logic he noted that

although evil Spirits may present themselves to living men feigning to be the souls of the departed and assuming appropriate shapes...we must not on that account deny that the Spirits of the departed may and do verily return. For if they did not come back, then evil Spirits would not adopt this ruse...the Devil presents himself, indeed, pretending to be a ghost, because he knows ghosts actually appear to men.⁹⁴

Taillepie talked of the existence of ghosts but he downplayed the demonic aspect so prevalent in the Protestant treatise: 'The Bible plainly teaches us that Spirits may and do appear [and it is] agreeable to the Divine Power of God that Spirits should appear to men; it may be good or bad Angels, it may be the Spirits of the dead...the Bible records many supernatural events.'⁹⁵ He then scrutinised examples both biblical and classical, as well as from the Church Fathers and learned men to prove this point.⁹⁶

So, to both sides demons/evil angels could counterfeit the returning dead. In Protestant terms, Lavater had explained that the dead could return in order to test the faith of the Godly. He said that God 'permitteth, that is, to trie his faithfull, how constant they be.'⁹⁷ They also appeared to disprove materialism and mortalism, for as he put it, the 'faithful they would believe in him, if at any time spirits do come.'⁹⁸ They were also prescribed a new role, namely that of doing the work of God. He wrote 'that some after they were dead, haue warned many their friends of diuers matters, and haue disclosed vnto them secrete things...and haue shewed sicke folks good remedies for their diseases.'⁹⁹ They revealed murders, for in the way that a corpse bled near its killer, 'the soules of suche as haue been slayne, doo oftentimes cruelly molest and trouble the soules of those whiche slewe them.'¹⁰⁰ He quoted the Aeneid to substantiate this point,

⁹³ Le Loyer, *Of Specters*, fo.43r.

⁹⁴ Taillepied, *Of Ghosts*, p66.

⁹⁵ Taillepied, *Of Ghosts*, p6.

⁹⁶ He refers to Georgius Agricola, Ficino, Plato, Plutarch, Seneca, the ecstasies of Peter and Paul in the New Testament and 'many another Saint and Holy Father of the Catholic Church.' P xv.

⁹⁷ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p177.

⁹⁸ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p177.

⁹⁹ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p76.

¹⁰⁰ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p76.

‘and when the cold of death is come, and body voyde remains, Eche where my haunting spirite shal pursue thee to thy payns.’¹⁰¹

In addition to having a purpose, these spirits also had a specific locale which they haunted. By referring to these locations, Lavater appropriated the traditional liminal site of the haunting and infused it with a new purpose. This symbolism is treated in more depth in the next chapter, but it is of note that Lavater’s geography of spectral activity again influenced Taillepied’s view. In a section on the location of spirits Lavater argued that they,

are heard or seene in al places, yet are they most especially conuersant in the fieldes where battles haue been fought or in places where slaughters haue ben made: in places of execution: in woods into the which they haue coniured deuills being cast out of men: in Churches, Monasteries, and about Sepulchers, in the boundaries of countries, & butts of lands: in prisons, houses & towers, and sometime also in the ruines and rubbish of Castles.¹⁰²

These places were particular, as they were sites where ‘men haue exercised pride and crueltie.’ Compare this with what Taillepied wrote a few years later;

[the dead] appear in place where in times past there have been horrid deeds, assassinations, riot and rape, or on battlefields, and again on spots where foul midnight murder has been done, by lonely gallows, in woods...near sepulchers and in graveyards, in prisons, old manor houses and castles...[and] in the shadow of stately palaces...God permits that those places where heinous sinners have dwelled in the offence of Heaven should be plagued and haunted by Spirits.’¹⁰³

This placing of the ghost at scenes of past injustice and violence was a particularly Protestant idea. Catholic ghosts in the late Middle Ages had not haunted in this manner because the guilty would have been in Hell. This, it seems, was a Catholic appropriation of the purposeful Protestant ghost. As Taillepied stated, ghosts often manifested ‘wholly under the will of God and the workings of Divine Providence.’¹⁰⁴ It seems that the confessional divide was not so clearly demarcated after all; it was only the theological accounts of the nature of ghosts that varied. Taillepied’s view was not the traditional Catholic position, and he had assimilated the Protestant notions of time, place and justice into his dialogue. The evidence from these widely influential texts suggests that the Protestants created their own interpretation of the supernatural out of traditional

¹⁰¹ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p79.

¹⁰² Lavater, *De Spectris*, p90-91.

¹⁰³ Taillepied, *Of Ghosts*, p99.

¹⁰⁴ Taillepied, *Of Ghosts*, p117.

faith. Counter-Reformation writers then appropriated and absorbed these shifts of interpretation back into their long standing tradition of supernatural belief. As a consequence, confessional boundaries became distinctly blurred. A syncretic blending of ghost belief happened on both sides of the debate to create a fluid yet remarkably homogenous ghost lore.

II

Appropriating the Ghost into the Witchcraft Narrative.

While Lavater, le Loyer and Taillepied produced the first works on the subject of the ghost after the Reformation in the 1570's and 80's, in England it was not until the 1650's that any more literature that explicitly dealt with the ghost alone appeared. The ascendancy of the witch narrative in the mid-to late sixteenth century was to have a significant impact on the ghost by the 1590's. The witch, who hitherto had been a present but peripheral figure in English society, had stepped into the forefront of popular culture to dramatic effect in Elizabeth's reign. Quite why is still a matter of debate, with everything from misogyny, and madness, to ergot-induced hysteria being invoked, much of which has been refuted by James Sharpe on the basis of being too general and reductionist.¹⁰⁵ Instead, Sharpe argues that 'witchcraft, magic and the occult were deeply embedded in European cultural, both popular and elite', after all there were strong classical and antique precedents.¹⁰⁶ Witchcraft did not just appear in a vacuum.

Hugh Trevor-Roper famously posited the view that the hotter Protestants, such as Puritans, were responsible for the surge in alleged witchcraft activity, for they were ready to find Satan in everything, but this was refuted by Keith Thomas and Alan MacFarlane. MacFarlane argued that a multiplicity of social factors, rather than religious ones could perhaps account for the upsurge in witchcraft persecutions from the mid-sixteenth century. Factors such as economic hardship, famine, disease, a market economy, increased social mobility, 'a less collectivist religion', as well as broader intellectual changes, alongside more specific legal ones, all created the conditions for persecution and prosecution.¹⁰⁷ With regards to Trevor-Roper's synopsis, Thomas claimed that 'a simple equation of strong Protestantism with a strong desire for witch-

¹⁰⁵ James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness* (Harmondsworth, 1997), p10; for further details read his introduction.

¹⁰⁶ Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p15.

¹⁰⁷ Alan MacFarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1970), pp200-206.

persecution will not work.’¹⁰⁸ Yet he did allow that it was the Reformation that precipitated the bloody turn of events. He argued that the religious changes eliminated ‘the protective ecclesiastical magic which had kept the threat of sorcery under control...In medieval England a man need not be hurt by witches, so long as he observed the prescriptions of the Church.’¹⁰⁹ With the eradication of this thaumaturgy, perceived susceptibility to witches increased.

Still, the figures do not necessarily support this argument. In predominantly Catholic France, the death toll of accused witches from 1500 to 1650 was 5,000, but in Catholic Spain, where the Inquisition was active in rooting out such heresies, the death toll was only 100 for the same period. Also, the death toll in Catholic France should be contrasted with that of Protestant England which was about 1,000 deaths and Scotland which was about 1,300.¹¹⁰ Yet, despite the higher numbers, witchcraft was abolished as a crime in France in 1682, while in England it was repealed in 1736, although very little in the way of executions had happened after Matthew Hopkins’ efforts in Essex in the 1640’s. The figures suggest that a narrative is required that takes into account more than simple confessional motivation. Furthermore, in the English context, the witch was accused of *maleficium* rather than heresy, an important distinction which formed the basis of the *Witchcraft Act* of 1563, and later of James I’s infamous *Witchcraft Act* of 1604.¹¹¹ Malcolm Gaskill argues, that within a year of the Act, executions and trials were frequent, and in Essex alone, in the last two decades of Elizabeth’s reign there were over 200 indictments. Although ‘as few as one in six of those indicted were executed, no Elizabethan man, woman or child a day’s ride from Chelmsford need have missed the excitement of a witch hanging at some point in their lives.’¹¹² In addition, as Gaskill notes, accounts were spread by broadside literature and pamphlets as well as by word of mouth.¹¹³

It is apparent that the witch and her familiars, by the end of the sixteenth century were very much part of the world view, both Protestant and Catholic. The witch was an

¹⁰⁸ Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, p595.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, p594.

¹¹⁰ numbers sourced with thanks from Naomi Tadmor.

¹¹¹ James I, *Act Against Conjurat[i]on, Witchcraft, and Dealing with Evil and Wicked Spirits* (London, 1604), 1.Jac.I, C12.

¹¹² Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchfinders* (London, 2005), p28.

¹¹³ Gaskill, *Witchfinders*, p28. See also Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons* (Oxford, 1997), pp 173-178. and Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Harlow, 2001), Ch. 2.

actively malevolent figure and amongst her crimes of *maleficium* – such as hurting people, animals and property – the witch’s curse of sending a demon to torment or possess their victim was considered to be a common one. It was this diabolical aspect of witchcraft – the conjuration of spirits and the possession of their victims with demons – which led to the arrogation of the ghost into the genre. The ‘spirits’ sent by witches still acted in a way that was remarkably consistent with the late medieval ghost, only the interpretation of the phenomenon had significantly changed. As discussed in chapter one, the main reason the dead would contact the living was to request suffrages, but not all these souls were visible or received the attention they felt they deserved. Certain activity was then ascribed to such a ghost, for example, the Ghast of Gy in fourteenth century France knocked repeatedly on walls and doors causing much alarm, until his wife paid attention to him. Gervase of Tilbury in the later twelfth century wrote of ghosts who ‘empty of barrels, peer into the baskets, pots and containers, throw infant children out of their cradles, light the lamps and sometimes importune the sleeping inhabitants...by rearranging their posture, moving little children from one place to another.’¹¹⁴ A woman was apparently beaten to death by her long dead husband when she remarried, and another tale has a ghost ripping clothes, throwing stones and shrieking and howling.¹¹⁵ Andrew Joynes, who comments on these tales, has noted that the ‘unquiet spirit takes on a number of guises, writhing into different physical manifestations as though trying to thrust its way through the barrier between the worlds of the dead and the living.’¹¹⁶

Compare this type of aggressive activity to a tale from Kirkcudbright, in Calvinist Scotland in 1595, where similar activity was re-interpreted within the rubric of Protestantism. The pamphlet that related the event claimed it did so ‘to give occasion, to all who read this, To Bless the Lord’ and to remind those who had neglected God that he could ‘let Satan loose to haunt their persons and Goods’ and an admonition to ‘put on the whole Armour of God.’¹¹⁷ It was a lengthy relation by Mr. Alexander Telfair, the minister of the parish. He recounted the violent disturbances that affected Andrew Macke, who ‘when he was under the Trouble of that evil Spirit, did pray to the great satisfaction of many.’ In the tale beasts were harried, stones thrown, bedclothes pulled

¹¹⁴ *Gast of Gy* (14thC) Trans. Foster (2004); Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, part iii, ch. LXXXV ed. Joynes (2001)

¹¹⁵ The Monk of Byland, (14th C), ed. Joynes (2001), p166.

¹¹⁶ Joynes, p120.

¹¹⁷ Alexander Telfair, *a true relation of an apparition* (Edinburgh, 1696).

off sleeping children, and clothes were torn and shredded as if by a knife. The family was beaten by staves which flew through the air and eventually the home was destroyed by what were described as ‘fire balls’, which were thrown at the occupants within the house. The more the family fasted and prayed the more violent the activity became. Church ministers from various local parishes, as well as other godly members of the community came to the house to fast and pray, and they were assaulted with large stones which cut and bruised them. It was noted that ‘it only disturbed them in time of prayer...there were none in the House that Night escaped from some of its fury and cruelty...while I was at prayer, it threw great Stones which Hitt me.’ The activity also doubled in fury upon each Sabbath until the place was eventually burnt down by the entity. The torment lasted for about a month and as suddenly as it had begun, it stopped. The only explanation given was the scriptural citation from 1 Peter 5:8,9; ‘Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lyon walketh about seeking whom he may devour: Whome resist steadfast in the Faith.’ This passage encapsulated the essence of Protestant doctrine regarding faith.

While much of the activity of the spirit remained the same, any elements that smacked of Catholicism had been eradicated from the interpretation by the percipients and the author. For example, they prayed to God for deliverance from their torments, but there was no suggestion at any point of an attempted exorcism of the house. Yet, while the spirits had been allowed to run amok amongst the family and its local community, as a test of its faith, God was still perceived to have cast strictures over the limit of its activity. In his *De Praestigiis Daemonum*, first published in Basel in 1563, Johann Weyer argued that God, in accordance with his plans, allowed ‘the demon to practice his mocking deceptions and tyranny over men of every social rank’, but because he was a merciful deity, he did not allow Satan and his minions ‘infinite license, constrained by no limits.’ According to Weyer, ‘God never grants him even the slightest power over men-except to test them, if they are good, or chastise and punish them if they are sinners, with boundary markers previously set in place, beyond which He [Satan] is not allowed to go.’¹¹⁸ While all apparent apparitions were deceptions of Satan, they were nonetheless acting with God’s permission.

In 1617, Thomas Cooper, another Calvinist clergyman, wrote in his work, *The Mystery of Witch-craft* that the ‘walking of dead men’ was not a lie of the corrupt

¹¹⁸ Weyer, *De Praestigiis Daemonum*, Bk I; Ch. XXIV, Trans. George Mora (New York, 1991), p81.

Church of Rome but that it was ‘the delusion of Satan, and not the finger of God’.¹¹⁹ He continued: ‘it is the policie of Sathan to worke by degrees, and so by shaking our faith, and distracting or hindering vs in holy duties, to disquiet or feare vs...bringing vs thereby to neglect of holy means...therefore hath he vsed to haunt and molest our dwelling places, with *Apparitions* and strange annoyances of noise &c.’¹²⁰ In Protestant eyes these tests had to be borne with steadfast prayer and stoicism, for, as one anonymous writer expressed it in 1618,

the Diuell is the mere seruant of God, to prosecute whatsoever hee shall command rather then giue him leave vnto...[for] God hath punishments, *ad correctionem* ...chasticements of the godly...For the very iust shall be tried like gold...when it pleaseth him to strike or punish vs...[and] there is no murmuring nor repining against God, but quietly to tolerate his inflictions, whensoever they chance.¹²¹

So, not only could it be a trial of faith, it could also be seen as punishment of the ungodly. God allowed the demons loose to torment the sinner on his behalf as an act of divine justice and retribution. As Weyer asserted, Satan ‘is God’s minister for vengeance, the executor (and executioner) of His justice.’¹²² Lavater wrote that ‘unto the reprobate they appeare as a punishment’.¹²³ This was a position with which Henry Holland in his *A treatise against Witchcraft* of 1590 agreed. Holland said that people’s houses are full of ‘fearefull and straunge apparitions’, sent by the Devil, but allowed by God as the consequence of the defilement of sin, explaining that ‘the greater sinnes defile any place, the greater libertie is giuen Sathan.’¹²⁴

The behavioural gestures of the ghost had been incorporated into demonic narratives. However, catholic writers did not accept this fusion. Taillepie talked of evil spirits sent to torment us, he made a clear distinction between a ghost and a spirit when he wrote:

A ghost will naturally, if it is possible, appear to the person he has most loved on earth, since this person will be readiest to carry out any behest or fulfil any wish then communicated by the departed. But if it be an evil Spirit ... “*who forms a thousand ills ten thousand ways*” yea, truly he has a thousand subtle fetches and foul tricks...This evil Spirit goeth about seeking whom he may devour...and he

¹¹⁹ Thomas Cooper, *The Mystery of Witch-craft Discouered* (London, 1617), p153.

¹²⁰ Cooper, *Mystery of witch-craft*, p290.

¹²¹ Anon, *The Wonderful discouerie of the witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower* (London, 1619), G2v.

¹²² Johann Weyer, *De Praestigiis Dæmonum*, Bk.I,Ch.XXIV, ed. Mora (1991), p85.

¹²³ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p53.

¹²⁴ Holland, *against Witchcraft*, p30.

will tempt the poor wretch to the depths of misery and depression, even it may be deny God and curse his Creator.¹²⁵

Yet, despite this explanation of their different nature and purpose, Taillepie's 'spirits' behaved in a manner that late medieval Catholic spirits rarely did. While demons had always been inflictors of torment, their activities were mainly restricted to the confines of Hell or Purgatory. They did not wander the earth deliberately torturing people, yet Taillepie's vision of demonic behaviour depicted them behaving in a much more aggressive manner than before. To him, these spirits 'appear to men in order to terrify and alarm them, and especially do they thus upbraid and urge evil-doers and the guilty.'¹²⁶ The punishment now no longer awaited us in the afterlife, it could happen in the here and now, to the living. This suggests the influence of Protestant Providentialism in his thinking. His description of such spirits did not seem designed to allay terror:

Some... of a particularly evil kind can wreak terrible hurt and harm, for they strike those who see them with a blast of pestilential wind, and then these unfortunate folk find that their lips crack and swell, their faces puff out all flabber and bloated...they often contrive to render a man's nights sick and sleepless by their malice...[they] will upset furniture; bastinado, nip, thump and baton persons, throwing stones and tiles at them; holding doors and jamming them so fast that it is impossible to open them; marauding high and low throughout the whole house, endamaging property and perilously molesting men and women, even sometimes (if so God permits) endangering life and limb.¹²⁷

These abuses were allowed by God as punishment for wickedness, as acts of Divine Providence and retribution.

For Lavater, the fact that such visitations were demonic was further supported by the fact they appeared at night: 'for he who is the author of these things, is called in the holye scriptures the prince of darknesse, and therefore he shunneth the light of Gods word.' Lavater added detail to his claim by pointing out that,

spirites oftentimes awake men from their sleepe, and cause many to forsake their owne houses...sometimes they overthrow somewhat or strike men, or cast stones at them, and hurt them either in their bodies or their goods...spirits also trouble cattell in the night time, in the pastures...sathan rangeth everywhere, in houses, fieldes, water and fire.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Taillepie, *Of Ghosts*, p95.

¹²⁶ Taillepie, *Of Ghosts*, p119.

¹²⁷ Taillepie, *Of ghosts*, p106.

¹²⁸ Lavater, *De Spectris*, pp96, 193.

To Lavater these ‘spirits’ were not ghosts but were the ubiquitous agents of Satan. This demonizing of the ghost in Protestant polemics found its ultimate expression in the writing of the Anglican clergyman Randall Hutchins who wrote *Tractatus de Spectris* c.1593. This work was originally composed in Latin, and was not translated into English or published until 1947. His work reflected the new Protestant mood and he was familiar with those who engaged in the learned discourse on the subject; indeed, he mentioned Lavater on occasion.¹²⁹ The fact that he was a clergyman in West Tilbury in Essex suggests that he would have expounded some of his views from the pulpit. Like Lavater he sought to clarify the Protestant position on ghosts in a response to continued credulity among the people. Although his work was dedicated to Thomas Egerton, Queen Elizabeth’s Attorney General and was written in Latin, it was written to refute vulgar errors. He claimed he wrote his treatise because ‘It was the subject of specters, which the unskilled multitude, entangled in a labyrinth of errors and involved in the greatest fickleness and blind ignorance of truth, have considered to be persons who have died.’¹³⁰ What the ‘vulgar’ would have thought of his polemic can only be guessed at, but his explanation for any perceived haunting was in no way reassuring. Hutchins was of the opinion ‘that the devil not only impiously fabricated that whole doctrine of the wandering of the ghosts of the dead, but also impiously augmented it...demons frequently pretend they are the souls of the dead, to confirm the error of the Gentiles.’¹³¹ So far this was standard anti-papist rhetoric, but there was more; Hutchins’ view was a particularly radical form of Protestantism which saw a world infested with spirits, both good and bad, that lurked in every stream, byway and home and who enjoyed nothing better than ‘seducing the minds of simple folk and wretchedly perverting mankind.’¹³² His was a supernatural world view in which all four Aristotelian elements were comprised of spirits that were particular to each, after all ‘demons are very extensive, since almost no avenue of approach is barred to them.’¹³³ To him, Lavater’s talk of melancholic visions was limited, for spirits,

¹²⁹ Randall Hutchins, *Tractatus de Spectris* (London, 1593), p412.

¹³⁰ Hutchins, *Tractatus*, p410.

¹³¹ Hutchins, *Tractatus*, p426.

¹³² Hutchins, *Tractatus*, p419.

¹³³ Hutchins, *Tractatus*, p421.

Are wont to attend not only those suffering from melancholy or smitten with fear, but those possessing excellent bodily health and endowed with great mentality. The mind swells with examples! Obviously Lavater abounds and revels in these, a man otherwise gifted but to be censured in this respect.¹³⁴

To Hutchins, ghosts were spirits who were able to ‘fashion with wondrous art, appearances similar to created things...spirits have the power of altering the imagination and of disturbing the humours and vital spirits of the body...demons have been seen about streams, about fountains, in the guise of women.’¹³⁵ He talked of ‘spirits in fire’, ‘aerial spirits’, ‘spirits immersed in mists, lakes and pools...and those who are inhabitants of the lands, it must now be told how many malign spirits there are, distinguished from one another in fixed gradations, according to a system of locations in which they busy themselves. For there is not the same appearance in all.’¹³⁶ He continued, ‘they do not retain one form, but take on various forms, and change these according to the manifold variety of attitudes they encounter, when either evoked by the incantations of witches or impelled by seditious influences to do harm.’¹³⁷ These spirits were the elementals of the world, both good and bad.¹³⁸

By the time John Cotta, the physician, wrote his treatise *The Infallible and Assured Witch* of 1625, this fusion of witches, devils and demons was well established: ‘all Spirits...are euill Spirits, and therefore Diuels...or soules of men after death, separated from their bodies.’¹³⁹ He clarified his position on the dead further, writing ‘that the supposed apparitions which the Diuell doth offer of dead men, may be esteemed and reckoned among such supernaturall workes of diuels and Sorcerers...it is likewise written and vulgarly received that Witches are oft-times seene bodily to haunt places, fields, houses, graues, and sepulchers, in an vnusuall and miraculous manner and wondred fashion.’¹⁴⁰ The discourse of witchcraft had entered the ghost story. Not only was a night visitor possibly a demon, but Protestants would refer to the Witch of Endor as substantiation of this belief. Ghosts were accordingly seen to be a manifestation caused by a witch, and thus the work of the devil. In learned Protestant thought the

¹³⁴ Hutchins, *Tractatus*, p412.

¹³⁵ Hutchins, *Tractatus*, pp413, 417.

¹³⁶ Hutchins, *Tractatus*, pp419-421.

¹³⁷ Hutchins, *Tractatus*, p421.

¹³⁸ He conceded that there were angels who ‘take on bodies very frequently according to a certain divine dispensation.’ Angels afterall, were part of the Great Chain of Being, or what he called, ‘that Golden Chain.’ pp148, 411.

¹³⁹ John Cotta, *The Infallible and Assured Witch* (London, 1625), p23r.

¹⁴⁰ Cotta, *Infallible and Assured Witch*, p41.

‘ghost’ of late medieval thought had become a ‘spirit’, a ‘demon’ and an ‘apparition’, all of which had the characteristics of the traditional ghost.

Contemporary print culture, both elite and popular, reflected this shift in interpretation. In a pamphlet from 1579 relating the trial of three witches, one of the accusations centred on a baby being suddenly taken sick in its cradle. Alarmed, the mother picked up the child and noted with horror that the cradle began to rock by itself. This occurred in the presence of a gentleman who ‘seying it stabbed his dagger three or fower tymes into the cradle ere it staied: Merily iestyng and saying, that he would kill the Devill, if he would bee rocked there.’¹⁴¹ There was the sense that while this particular entity was not visible, harm could still be done to it. In this tale we have the first recorded incident, taken as fact in a witch trial, where the elements of both genres – that of the ghost and the witch – were intertwined. There was classic ghostly activity in the inanimate object moving, as well as the suggestion of the *lemure* or *Lamia*, the female entity of classical tradition who rocked cradles and harmed children, and finally the curse of the witch and the devil himself, whose actions were stayed by the hand of decisive masculine action.

While Lavater had expounded on the demonic, he had not at any point suggested the possibility of witchcraft. However, this tale from a decade later shows the start of the blending of the ghost and witch narratives. This was a marked sea change in explanation, and it was the start of the progression of the demonic aspect into ghost lore by Protestants. In a society where witches were coming to the fore in societies’ consciousness, it was a logical progression in the explanation of the strange. The witch became a useful tool for explaining almost everything that was out of the ordinary. Thus, the language of the ‘spirit’ and the ‘ghost’ became interchangeable. The ‘ghost’ or rather now, the ‘spirit’, was now incorporated into the idea that a spirit of ill intent could be sent by a witch to cause harm. These spirits could take three forms. The first was as a Familiar, usually in animal form, birds, cats, and dogs.¹⁴² For example, Edward Fairfax, wrote a discourse on the bewitchment of his family in 1621 called *Dæmonologia*, in which he related that his daughter was visited on several occasions by a cat. In the tale the daughter cried out, ‘a white cat has been upon me, and drawn my

¹⁴¹ Anon, *A detection of damnable driftes, practised by three witches* (London, 1579).

¹⁴² Anon, *The Apprehension and confession of three notorious Witches* (London, 1589), in this notorious witchcraft trial, the familiars listed were two black frogs, Jack and Jill, a ferret called Bidd, a mole and a toad.

breath, and hath left in my mouth and throat so filthy a smell, that it doth poison me.’¹⁴³
Animal transfiguration was also a skill of the witch, who could take the form of a hare, often of ‘incredible bignesse.’¹⁴⁴

The second type of spirit was invisible but caused violent and malevolent activity, usually at the behest of a witch. Hutchins stated that,

these [demons] are those spirits which, in assuming bodies in the houses of many...are observed to strike on iron, move fetters, roll their eyes around, produce crashing noises, rattle chains, be audible, now at the threshold, now outside the threshold, throw out of order objects set in order, and as it were, scatter the leaves of the sibyl throughout houses.¹⁴⁵

In a pamphlet of 1612 recording the trial of three witches in Northampton, an attached treatise declared that,

Diuels can appeere both in a bodily shape, and vse speech and conference with men...It followeth therefore that whensoever they appeare in visible form, it is no more but an apparition and counterfeit shew of a body, vnlesse a body be at any time lent them.¹⁴⁶

In another example, the *Strange and fearfull newes from Plaisto* related the tale of Paul Fox, a silk weaver whose house ‘hath beene haunted with a Spirit’ in which his sword flew about the room, a cane hopped up the stairs and then danced with the sword on a table, and then loud tapping and knocks were heard. It ripped up their loom and threw tiles, ‘brick-bats, oyster-shells, peeces of bread’ smashed windows and threw stones some as big as ‘halfe a hundred weight.’ Fox and his men were physically attacked. They were punched, their hair was pulled, and they were pinched in their sleep and pulled out of their beds. Books were thrown, work destroyed and doors mysteriously locked and unlocked. Fox declared that he ‘thought it to be an evill Spirit’ and wished ‘it to returne to Hell Gates.’¹⁴⁷ The events became so famous that up to a hundred people at any one time would witness them and the story recounted that ‘many ministers, gentlemen and great Scholars have come purposely to see these things.’ Furthermore, opinion was divided as to the reason and cause. The author remarked that ‘some thinkes it is to reveale something that is past’ i.e. a murder and ‘others are of an

¹⁴³ Edward Fairfax, *Dæmonologia* (London, 1621), p38. The demon as an animal was by no means a new idea, that the devil or a demon would take the form of a black dog, was an image common in folklore throughout Europe.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Bromhall, *An History of Apparitions* (London, 1658), p40.

¹⁴⁵ Hutchins, *Tractatus*, p423.

¹⁴⁶ Anon, *The Witches of Northamptonshire* (London, 1612).

¹⁴⁷ Anon, *Strange and fearfull newes from Plaisto* (London, 1645), p4.

opinion that it for-shews some things to come' i.e. end of days or punishment for a wicked, godless society. It was noted that his Bible was hurled across the room, as was his copy of '*practice of piety*.' While Fox believed it was an evil spirit, the author of the pamphlet was more categorical for he wrote, 'let me put you in mind what strange thinges have been acted by Witches...by which confederancy with the Devill do not onely cast away their soules and bodies, but make spoyle and havock of their neighbours goods.'¹⁴⁸

Writing on the various aspects of witchcraft in 1619, Thomas Cooper observed that one of the crimes of witches, among many, was 'to haunt men and places with *spirits*, and so by a kinde of obsession to vexe and torment them.'¹⁴⁹ While he was referring to spirits controlled by witches, nonetheless the language of the 'haunting', the location and that of 'ghost' and 'spirit' was still used and it had become interchangeable with the lexicography of witchcraft.

The third form a witch's spirit could take was in the guise of a human. In Fairfax's tale of his daughter's bewitchment several 'ghosts' played key roles. In the first incident he recalled that his daughter 'saw a black dog by her bedside, and after a little sleep, she had an apparition of one like a young gentleman, very brave; and a hat with a gold band and ruff in fashion...[and] told her he came to be a suitor unto her.' He refused to respond to the girl's adjuration, and so she declared to the apparition: 'you are the devil and art but a shadow.'¹⁵⁰ He reappeared several times more, offering her a knife and then a rope with which to kill herself, and then he tried to lure her into the well. Again and again he returned and tried to tempt her into committing suicide, until a mysterious man called Mr Cooke also appeared, telling her to trust in God. The identity of Cooke was a mystery to all involved and Fairfax speculated that, if he was 'an evil spirit, – then Sathan is against himself, and so his kingdom is divided. If a good one, it must be a good angel appointed for her particular guard.'¹⁵¹ This battle between the witch and the forces of good continued and several more apparitions appeared; two boys, an old man and a woman, all of whom attempted to lure her to her death. Sundry other apparitions feature prominently in the tale, about ten in total, or as Fairfax put it, 'she had some apparitions in the shape of such persons as she well knew' and all

¹⁴⁸ Anon, *Strange and fearfull newes from Plaisto*, p5.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas Cooper, *the Mystery of Witchcraft*, p260.

¹⁵⁰ Fairfax, *Dæmonologia*, p1.

¹⁵¹ Fairfax, *Dæmonologia*, p40.

behaved in the way that ghosts traditionally did, such as floating through walls and lurking about in corridors and behind curtains. One even appeared in the guise of God himself, but the percipients were persuaded ‘that these were illusions or lies from the devil, or some witches.’¹⁵² What would previously have been labelled as ghostly activity was now explained by witchcraft. The geography of bewitchment was even similar to that of the ghost, not just around the house as mentioned, but ‘upon the stile in Bland Fields’ and over ‘Rowton Bridge.’

III

The Separation of the Witch and the Ghost

This blending of the witch, the ghost and the demon was short lived however. Such beliefs became gradually untenable as the intellectual climate of the seventeenth century changed and the reality of witchcraft was questioned. Such scepticism was not new, for elites had always contested supernatural explanations. Lavater had written in the 1560’s that we should seek rational and natural explanations for a strange event before we chose a supernatural one. Aside from papist fraud, he blamed medicinal balms, drink, illness, superstition, ignorance, and fraud for much of what were perceived to be ghosts/demons. A decade earlier, Johann Weyer had argued that while Satan deceived many into believing in witchcraft and ghosts, much of what people interpreted as supernatural did in fact have a medical or natural explanation. He pointed out the physical difficulty and dangers involved in vomiting pins, and that the drugs that caused hallucinations and convulsions also rendered the taker insensate to pain. He talked of melancholic delusions and madness, and the physical impossibilities of effectual curses and congress with the Devil. In 1584, Reginald Scot said much the same thing, commenting that ‘these bugs [spirits] speciallie are spied and feared of sicke folke, children, women, and cowards, which through weaknesse of mind and bodie, are shaken with vaine dreame and continuall feare.’¹⁵³ Later still, Edward Jorden famously

¹⁵² Fairfax, *Dæmonologia*, p46.

¹⁵³ Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584), Book vii, Ch xv, p86.

ascribed Mary Glover's apparent bewitchment to the suffocation of the Mother, i.e. hysteria.¹⁵⁴

George Gifford, who wrote *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes* in 1593, took the view 'That I say God alone, and not witches, giveth power unto the devils to plague and torment.' The reason for this was to try the godly, in the manner of Job. He wrote 'the Lord doth use Satan to afflict them in their bodies and in their goodes, for to trie their faith and patience: as the example of holie Job doeth testifie in ample matter...overcome the devil, and thou overcomest all.'¹⁵⁵ He added that 'people are set in a wonderfull maze and astonishment, as if witches could plague men in their wrath by sending their spirits, because they confess they did it, when their spirits do lie and had no power, but the tormentes came by naturall causes.'¹⁵⁶ Scot quoted 1 John 4:1 which said, 'Beleeve not euerie spirit, but trie the spirits, whether they are of God; for many false prophets are gone out into the world.'¹⁵⁷ He openly contested the reality of witchcraft and famously stated that,

The fables of witchcraft have taken so fast hold and deepe root in the heart of man, that fewe or none can (nowadaies) with patience indure the hand and correction of God. For if any adversitie, greefe, sicknesse, losse of children, corne, cattell, or libertie happen unto them; by & by they exclaime upon witches. As though there were no God...that ordereth all things to his will; punishing both just and unjust with greefe, plagues, and afflictions in maner and forme as he thinketh good.¹⁵⁸

Likewise, his position on ghosts was clear. He averred that the raising of Samuel by the Witch of Endor 'was an illusion or cousange practiced by the witch. For the soules of the righteous are in the hands of God...Soules are in a certeine place expecting judgement, and cannot remove from thence. Neither is it God's will, that the living should be taught by the dead.'¹⁵⁹ That 'certeine place' sounds like Abraham's Bosom, but for Scot there was no possibility of interaction with the dead. Yet, it must be noted that these elite texts were not representative of lay or elite thought at large and at times voicing scepticism could be perilous.

¹⁵⁴ Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called Suffocation of the Mother* (London, 1603); see also Michael MacDonald, *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London* (London, 1991).

¹⁵⁵ George Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes* (London, 1593).

¹⁵⁶ Gifford, *Dialogue Concerning Witches*, D3r.

¹⁵⁷ Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, frontispiece.

¹⁵⁸ Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, p1.

¹⁵⁹ Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, p79.

This is illustrated in a case of demonic possession in 1598, in Nottingham. The author, only given as G. Co., related ‘how strangelie this William Sommers came to be possessed by meanes of a witch...who sent a wicked spirit unto him, which he called Lucie.’¹⁶⁰ This case of possession by bewitchment involved both the Archbishops of York and Canterbury, as well as the Bishop of London. Many witnesses described how the possession manifested itself and how initially natural causes were hypothesised by the onlookers. A preacher from Nottingham tried to prove that William was

troubled with melancholies, or temptations, to crie out some naturall cause...but after manie aunsweres of his touching convulsions, falling sickness, and such others, he could conceive none that might leade him to the finding of a naturall cause...giving out words, that it was no disease, but the Devill.¹⁶¹

What is particularly interesting in this case is that William, at one point, came to and confessed that he made it all up, ‘that he was but a counterfeyt’, before undergoing another bout of convulsions. The central motivation of the author relating this case was to prove that William was *not* faking, for by confessing to fraud he had laid himself open to accusations of blaspheming against God. The penalty for such a blasphemy was death and so the author argued that it had been the Devil who ‘had advised him to saie, that he was but a counterfeyt’. In turn William and his defendants were accused by various Protestant elites, such as the Archbishops that believing in the reality of a possession ‘is Poperie...and it is heresy to maintaine that the Deuill maie nowe be cast out by praier and fasting.’ It was an accusation that was roundly refuted by the author by the use of biblical examples of possession, the writings of the Patristics, and the then James VI of Scotland. This demonstrates a divide between elite Protestant thought and the laity. To seek a rational explanation was not necessarily always construed as good Protestantism, for in seeking a natural explanation one could be blinded to the Devil’s deceit.

It seems that Fairfax was aware of this when he wrote *Dæmonologia*. He initially stated that he had written his account ‘to answer the superstitious ignorant that the actors in this be no walking ghosts, nor dancing fairies, and to stop the mouths of the incredulous (who deny witches), for in this appeareth the work of Sathan.’¹⁶² He was wary because, as he wrote initially ‘we had no suspicion that this should be witchcraft’,

¹⁶⁰ G.Co. *a briefe narration of the possession, dispossession, and, repossession of William Sommers* (London, 1598), Aii2.

¹⁶¹ G.Co., *a briefe narration*, Ciiir.

¹⁶² Fairfax, *Dæmonologia*, p31.

but after various trances, vomiting and the finding of a penny in the house that had been left by a neighbour, ‘the fame of the woman that did bring it to the house gave cause to us to surmise that it might be the action of some witch...but we were yet slow to believe.’¹⁶³ What eventually confirmed their suspicions was the sight of two hares fighting outside the house so ‘cruelly, that they drew blood one of another.’¹⁶⁴ This was interpreted as a fight between two witches. It was concluded that all the sufferings of the family had been perpetrated by witchcraft, and importantly, that God had allowed it as a trial of faith in the manner of Job.¹⁶⁵ To have been unaware of this was to jeopardise the soul, for Fairfax warned of how the Devil, in taking the form of apparitions, tried to seduce and lure his daughter to her death and trick her into believing he was God himself. To have succumbed to any of these temptations would have made her guilty of blasphemy and suicide which would have excluded her from Heaven. Fortunately, in Fairfax’s view, because they were finally aware of what was happening, they were able to resist and defend themselves against Satan’s tricks.

The supernatural as an explanation for the inexplicable was thus always available as a fall back position. In the *most strange and admirable discoverie of the three witches of Warboys*, a celebrated witch trial in 1593, in which the accused witches were eventually hanged, the initial explanation for the sudden strange behaviour of some bewitched young girls was medical. It was thought that ‘it might proceede of lightnes in the childs braine by reason of her great neeing [sneezing] and want of sleepe.’¹⁶⁶ When the child became no better, her urine was sent to a doctor in Cambridge, an eminent physicke, who said it might be worms. Medicine was taken, but the child still had convulsions, so the falling sickness was suspected and then discounted. The doctor was consulted a third time and he, ‘perceiving the childs body to be in good temper...demaunded whether there was no sorcerie or witchcraft suspected in the child: answer was no. Then sayd he...it is not possible that the childs bodie should be distempered by any naturall cause.’ A witch was subsequently sought and found in the local community upon whom to pin the crime. The doctor, unable to determine a cause hid his failure by recourse to a ready supernatural explanation.

¹⁶³ Fairfax, *Dæmonologia*, pp44-45.

¹⁶⁴ Fairfax, *Dæmonologia*, p47.

¹⁶⁵ Fairfax, *Dæmonologia*, p62.

¹⁶⁶ Anon, *the most strange and admirable discoverie of the three witches of Warboys* (London, 1593).

However, from the mid-seventeenth century this logic gets turned on its head. The supernatural was still considered to be a reasonable explanation, but that it could be witchcraft gradually became untenable from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. This gradual shift in thought, in which the witch starts to be omitted as an explanation, can be seen in *the Daemon of Burton* published in 1671.¹⁶⁷ This pamphlet relates a tale in which batches of baked bread, cheese and meat went missing from a locked pantry, and cabbages from the garden were pulled up. Theft was suspected and in order to help identify the culprit, a practical solution was offered. Ashes were placed by the owner of these possessions at the entrance to the locations, but after yet another bout of mischief, no footsteps were found imprinted in the ash. It was only at this point that a supernatural explanation was sought. Like the Kirkcudbright story, random fires break out and stop as suddenly as they begin, stored grain was spoiled and the hay burnt, all by a mysterious force. Windows were smashed, stones were thrown and animals ran amok. Again this story ticked all the boxes of what constituted demonic activity and witchcraft, but doubts surrounding this explanation were beginning to be expressed, for as the author of the pamphlet concluded, ‘there is as yet no discovery what *FIEND* tis that has acted these Vilanies’. The author had hedged their bets however for the subtitle of the pamphlet was that it was a true relation of *Strange Witchcraft*.¹⁶⁸

Compare this with a similar story from three years later. A case from 1674 told of a house, inhabited by a ‘gentle-woman of good credit’ who was ‘miserably disturb’d’ because ‘Bedding, Linnen, apparel, and Houshold-stuff of great Value, have at several Times, both in Day and Night, been Cut to Pieces by Invisible means; Knives removed out of a Drawer in the Kitchen, and Scattered in the Chambers and Garret.’¹⁶⁹ It is of note that once again, rational explanations were sought, and her five year old son was blamed, before it was supposed that ‘some envious person might have got up privately.’ Still, despite vigilance from the gentlewoman the activity not only continued, but increased in frequency and malevolence. The explanation then finally tendered was not that it was witchcraft but a demonic entity. This, after all rational explanations had been discounted seemed to be the next logical step. As a result, the afflicted woman got the parish minister to pray at the house. It was then related that when ‘the Minister of the Parish, and several other worthy Persons, being at Prayer...the Cloaths of a Child in the

¹⁶⁷ Anon, *The daemon of Burton* (London, 1671)

¹⁶⁸ Anon, *The daemon of Burton* (London, 1671)

¹⁶⁹ Anon, *Strange and Wonderful News from London-Wall* (London, 1674)

Room with them, were on a Sudden taken off Invisibly to their great Amazement.¹⁷⁰ The minister then gave them God's words 'to strengthen their Faith, to resist the Tempter, and to pray earnestly to be delivered from his snares and delusions.' It was recorded that thereafter nothing happened again, thus proving the final interpretation to be the correct one after all. It is significant that witchcraft was not the explanation finally settled upon. This illustrates that by the 1670's the witch had begun to be redacted from the narrative, yet the evil spirit remained. This was a new interpretation of the phenomena, and so it is thus we see what we would now describe as poltergeist activity. The poltergeist had emerged as an entity in its own right.

There was another incident from 1674, which showed this new absence of bewitchment, but the continuation of things that go bump in the night. In a house in London, objects were hurled around the house, windows smashed and doors were found nailed shut. Along side this story printed bold on the pamphlet was the image of a crucifix and the quote "they shall be not afraid of all the Enemies for God hath made them dismayed through the Holy Cross of Christ...and given them into our hands to be vanquished."¹⁷¹ The cross acted in as a talisman offering the reader protection from the evil spirit. The activity was exactly the same as that described a decade before in the cases of witchcraft only now that component of the tale is missing. Now it was just a malevolent spirit sent to test the godly.

In a remarkable turnaround, in George Sinclair's *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* of 1685, he told of a case where the ghost of a witch returned from the dead to wreak havoc upon her previous neighbours by 'the cutting of their cloaths, the throwing of Piets, the pulling down of Turff and Feal from the Roof , and the Walls of the house and the stealing of their Cloaths, and the Pricking of their Flesh, and Skin with Pins.'¹⁷² The pricking of their skins by pins was a common act of witchcraft and so they deduce that their torment was from the 'Witches of Glenluce...one of them was dead long ago...but her Spirit is living with us in the World.'¹⁷³ No longer was their torment the consequence of witchcraft, but from the ghost of a witch who declared somewhat audaciously "I have my Commission from Christ to tarry and vex this Family."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Anon, *Strange and Wonderful News from London-Wall* (London, 1674).

¹⁷¹ Anon, *news from puddle-dock in London* (London, 1674). See image on page 154.

¹⁷² George Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (Edinburgh, 1685), p78.

¹⁷³ Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World*, p80.

¹⁷⁴ Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World*, p81.

While the witch was still considered as an explanation, it was increasingly rejected in favour of alternative supernatural causes over the century. This reflected a growing trend in which the questioned reality of witches began to filter through more sections of society. Thomas argued that the growth of natural philosophy and the subsequent increased cynicism of the learned accounted for much of this shift. He wrote that it was ‘the changed attitude of the educated classes who provided judges, lawyers, Grand Jurymen and Petty Jurymen, whose collective resistance brought the trial to an end.’ In a shifting intellectual climate they had come to think ‘it increasingly improbable that God could ever have allowed witches to exercise any supernatural power’; to think otherwise was to allow a ‘conception of nature which now seemed inherently absurd.’¹⁷⁵

Alan McFarlane cited social and economic change and stated that it was not due to the growth of scientific knowledge, but the establishment of poor relief. This meant that the refusal of charity, so integral to many of the tales, was either eliminated or rendered guilt free. This, he argued, eradicated many of the tensions within the local community.¹⁷⁶

A few decades later, James Sharpe agreed with Thomas, citing the growing disbelief of various judges and that ‘their increasing practice of subjecting proofs offered by accusers and witnesses in witchcraft cases to careful scrutiny in the court and the tenor of their summing up must have had a cumulative effect of encouraging a wider scepticism.’¹⁷⁷ In addition, the changing religious climate, which saw increasing atheism, scepticism, and the refutation that miracles and magic could happen, also had its influences. Conversely to this, Protestants argued that to ‘attribute too much power to Satan was to make a mockery of God’s justice, while to assign vast powers to the witch, and hence elevate the creature’s powers to those of the creator was worse...[thus] the theoretical ability of witches to do harm became very questionable.’¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, pp 681, 689, 694.

¹⁷⁶ Alan McFarlane, *Witchcraft* (London, 1970).

¹⁷⁷ James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness* (1997), p227; Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Harlow, 2001), Ch. 2.

¹⁷⁸ Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p240.

[6]

Three Ends or Corners of this Cross was clef, and in each clef there was stuck a Paper printed on both sides as you have it here *verbatim*.

Right against this Cross and Papers by the Table side was placed a Chair, as if some one had sat there viewvng them over.

This night, *March 16* Mr. *Pitts* intends to have some people to sit up, that may speak to any thing that shall appear, and to demand in the name of the Father, *what are you?*

do hastily cast the Cross from them.

4. But the Travellers that give no regard unto their own counsel or opinion, shall not fear the danger of sustaining damage, but shall continue of good courage, for it is all nothing and vanity, whatsoever meeteth them upon the way. It is all to be overcome by patience, for thereby it consumeth it self like unto smoak and there is nothing.

6. But truly those that do now charge, condemn, and with their venomous Serpents Tongues, sharply reprehend, or maliciously speak evil of us, and persecute us, have not spoken Evil of, and condemned us only, but also God himself, who is our true Master-builder of his house of Love, and have judged his holy Service of Love, through the



at all found that is any what, or that remaineth over but the good Land, with his holy Inhabitants & Godly Riches.

5. Therefore let more travel thorow boldly with faith and firm hope, and not doubt nor grow wavering: then is it nothing that can endamage them.

F I N I S.

Fig.14. Anon, *news from puddle-dock in London* (London, 1674). The cross on the pamphlet was supposed to act as a talisman for the reader.

Stuart Clark also cites the new legal rigours along with the ‘epistemological uncertainty and crisis of confidence’ that eventually overtook some of the communities that had experienced numerous witchcraft persecutions.¹⁷⁹ He noted that at some point a critical mass of accusations could be reached, in which everyone could be potentially guilty, a perspective which could be unsustainable in a small community without total disintegration. Furthermore, the notion inherent within demonology that one is deceived by the Devil and his minions ultimately made legal proceedings impossible, for who was deceived and who was not? Uncovering the truth within the parameters of such an outlook became almost impossible.

Malcolm Gaskill argued that the new demands of empirical evidence in court were responsible and that establishing proof became increasingly untenable under the new requirements. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the eye-witness and oral testimony, previously given so much legal weight in court in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, began to be insufficient evidence in a witch trial and physical evidence – an early form of empirical evidence – began to be sought. For example, the physical proof that the witch suckled her familiar or the devil himself was said to be found in the presence of ‘teats’ on the body.¹⁸⁰ Yet, this new approach proved ultimately to be the means by which witch trials became unstuck. While witchcraft was possible in theory, it became impossible to prove when the rigour of empirical evidence was called upon, over and above oral testimony. Through this new approach the reality of the witch became increasingly untenable.

This had important repercussions for the ghost. Since claims of bewitchment were increasingly treated with far more scepticism, the ghost was able to reassert its identity. It is clear that while the ghost had become absorbed into the witchcraft narrative, this was only possible while witchcraft was credible. When witchcraft as an explanation for strange occurrences began to lack credence, the ghost was once again looked to in order to provide a set of explanations. Also, the reason ghosts survived the demise of the witchcraft narrative was because of one crucial thing; the re-emergence of the mortalist heresies. As I will argue, they re-emerged, more defined and more comprehensibly Protestant than before. Indeed, two new categories of spirit materialized

¹⁷⁹ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons* (Oxford, 1997), pp 173- 178.

¹⁸⁰ Malcolm Gaskill, ‘Witchcraft and Evidence in Early Modern England’ in *Past and Present* 198 (2008), pp 33-70. p57.

as result of the ghost's appropriation into the genre of the witch. The first was as a demonic entity, which became what we would now call the poltergeist. The second type was not just a weapon of necessity against the resurgence of mortalism in the 1640's, it also acted as a providential agent of God in the battle between morality and crime. So, the ghost remained a presence in society, largely due to a new Protestant appropriation. For in contradiction to everything the orthodox Anglican Church asserted, Protestant writers found the ghost to be a very useful social tool. The ghost had been radically transformed. How and why this came to be will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Mortalism, Sadducism and the Dead: The resurgence of mortalist arguments 1641-1659

The gradual decline in the belief in witchcraft from the 1650's onwards had a direct effect on the ghost for while the witch was gradually rejected, the notion of a visiting spirit was not, and the ghost was once again free to re-emerge as an entity in its own right. This return can be seen to happen in elite circles in the 1650's, resurrected by Henry More and Thomas Bromhall, but their writing on the subject differed from the works of Lavater et al from the 1570's and 80's in one crucial aspect. Where Lavater had written in response to perceived popish falsehoods and vulgar errors, More and Bromhall had written in reaction to elite heretical ideas of atheism, Socinianism, materialism, and scepticism in general. The focus was no longer on the nature of these nocturnal visitors, nor was it shaped by a dialogue of a perceived confessional divide. Now, the ghost became a key resource for countering the dangerous mortalist and materialist heresies that the orthodox saw around them. The ghost was an exceptionally useful polemical tool, for not only could its existence uphold and illustrate notions of Providence, vengeance and mercy, but it could also provide evidence of the immortality of the soul and, ultimately, in God. For it was in the mid-seventeenth century, out of the ashes of the Civil War and the sectarianism of 1640's that mortalism and materialism once again appeared, reignited by Richard Overton's incendiary work *Man's Mortalitie*, in 1643.

The lifting of the censorship of the press in the 1641, allowed writing in favour of mortalist positions to reappear without fear of reprisal. The following Civil War and Interregnum created conditions which allowed radical views to flourish. Yet, in an environment where a plethora of radical sects flourished, *Man's Mortalitie* still managed to create a furore in intellectual and religious elite circles. For many, it was a heresy too far. Norman Burns asserted that this was in part because Overton's writing failed to show traditional opinions due respect, and that those who held convictions contrary to his own

were assumed by him to be ‘deceivers, fools and blasphemers.’¹ Indeed, Overton pointed out no less than seventy-six absurdities in the immortalist position, and according to Burns, wrote with ‘a thinly veiled hostility to dogmatic religion.’²

In initial responses to his work in the 1640’s, some outraged commentators such as Guy Holland and Thomas Hooker used the tools of Natural Reason and Scripture to prove their point of view and expose the false and heretical nature of Overton’s claims. As John Henry argues, there was a ‘major philosophical effort to prove the immortality of the soul and reality of life after death on purely rational or common sense grounds.’³ By the 1650’s, Henry More had decided their approach was futile. As he pointed out, scholastic methods and scripture were ‘so well and so ordinarily known’ that they fell on deaf ears. More argued that another approach was necessary because ‘I know the *Atheist* will boggle more at whatever is fetch’d from establish’d Religion, and fly away from it.’⁴ In the battle between faith and scepticism he had realised that traditional scholastic arguments that employed arguments drawn from Scripture and Natural Reason could not work, for what use were such tools against an unbeliever? He sought another means to refute scepticism regarding the immortality of the human soul, and in his *The Immortality of the Soul*, in 1659, his surprising weapon of choice was the returning dead. This chapter seeks initially to demonstrate how the controversy reasserted itself and what the response to it was. In doing this, I will show how and why the ghost eventually became a useful tool in the polemics against these heresies, especially mortalism. By the late 1650’s, the ghost had become a feature in the discourse on the nature of man’s soul in intellectual controversy, while in other, less erudite literature, it was still intertwined with the witch narrative.

After the initial appearances of mortalism in the first half of the sixteenth-century, mortalism in England seems to have been absent from English discourse in the century following the Edwardine Articles of the 1540’s. Although men such as Walter Raleigh, Christopher Marlowe and numerous others were accused of atheism and/or mortalism, no texts have surfaced reflecting views of mortalists themselves (if such existed) at the turn of

¹ Norman Burns, *Christian Mortalism* (1972), p158. See also Bryan W Ball, *Christian Mortalism from Wycliffe to Priestley* (Cambridge, 2008), ch.s3-4; B.J.Gibbons, ‘Fear, Myth and Furore: Reappraising the “Ranters”’, *Past and Present*, 140 (1993), pp155-194.

² Burns, *Christian Mortalism*, p159.

³ John Henry, ‘A Cambridge Platonist’s Materialism: Henry More and the Concept of the Soul’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986), pp172-195, p172.

the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the doctrine was the target of criticism by men such as Thomas Beard, who dedicated a whole chapter to the dangers of atheism and mortalism in his *The Theatre of God's Judgements* of 1597. In this text, he fumed that 'many places' were 'infected with such a contagious pestilence' of that 'abominable sin.'⁵ The publication of Overton's work revitalised efforts to combat such heresies, and Thomas Edwards' *Gangraena* of 1646, is perhaps the best known of these works. It is the major heresiology of the early modern period and contained an extensive 'Catalogue of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies' in which 176 erroneous beliefs were listed. Number eighty three listed Thnetopsychism: 'That the soul of man is mortall as the soul of a beast, and dies with the body', only to be resurrected and reunited by Divine Grace after the Last Judgement. Point number eighty-four decried Psychopannychism: 'That the souls of the faithfull after death, do sleep til the day of judgement, and are not in a capacity of acting any thing for God, but 'tis with them as 'tis with a man that is in some pleasing dreame.' Finally, number eighty-nine denounced the hideous doctrine of Annihilationism which was defined as the belief that 'There is no resurrection at all of the bodies of men after this life, nor no Heaven nor hell after this life, nor no devils.'⁶

While Mortalism and Atheism were not widespread in themselves, fear of them certainly was.⁷ Texts such as those by Beard and Edwards, which concentrated on these heresies, reveal this contemporary concern. Certainly, those who were concerned with asserting the orthodoxy of the Anglican Church were very much concerned with the twin heresies. Still, paradoxically, as with discourses on libertinism and atheism, the debates on the subject may actually have caused it to come into being. Publishing such heresies gave people access to ideas that they may not have encountered before.

Mortalism and atheism had long been intertwined in their opponents' minds, for to deny the immortality of the soul was equivalent to denying the existence of Heaven and Hell and consequently, of God himself. Those who subscribed to mortalist beliefs, be it Psychopannychism, Thnetopsychism or Annihilationism (or Sadducism) laid themselves open to accusations of Atheism, even though, as I pointed out earlier, it was notoriously

⁴ Henry More, *An Antidote Against Atheisme* (London, 1653).

⁵ Thomas Beard, *The Theatre of God's Judgements* (London, 1597), pp88, 93.

⁶ Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena* (London, 1646), 3rd edition, pp22, 23.

⁷ Philip Almond, *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England* (Cambridge, 1994).

difficult to find any explicit Scriptural warrant for the soul's immortality. The two views were spoken of in the same breath by their opponents and became interchangeably blurred, not just with each other, but with other heretical positions. For example, Francis Cheynell, an orthodox vicar and a Professor at Oxford, spent his adult life trying to weed out the erroneous influences of Arminianism and Socinianism. The latter sect in particular became the focus of his 1643 work *The rise, growth, and danger of Socinianisme*, in which he raged; 'a pestilent heresy ...*Socinianisme* is (which corrupts the very vitalls of Church and State).'⁸ He claimed that Socinians 'set open a wide gap to Atheisme, by denying that the soule of man can possibly so subsist by it selfe after this life, as to be capable of joy or torment, of reward or punishment; they may when they please speak plain English, and say, that there is neither Heaven nor Hell.'⁹

Atheism itself is a word the historian has to treat with caution in this period, for its meaning shifted and changed over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was not until the late seventeenth century that we see the word being used in its modern sense, that is, 'disbelief in, or denial of, the existence of God.' Lucien Febvre has argued, (with particular emphasis on sixteenth century France) that in this period there were no real atheists. Early modern society was one in which religion 'coloured the universe.' 'Christianity was the very air one breathed...it was the atmosphere in which a man lived out his entire life', adding 'today we make a choice to be Christian or not. There was no choice in the sixteenth century. One was a Christian in fact.' It was a religious society and the term atheist was used as term of abuse, both by each side of the confessional divide at each other, and by one Protestant sect to another, as well for those who denied the immortality of the soul.¹⁰ In 1962, Samuel Mintz wrote that in the seventeenth century, 'atheism' was a 'hydra-headed term.'¹¹ It was a term that was flexible and it was used as a term of abuse against many different non-orthodox doctrines, many of which were quite disparate, but which often led to the same conclusion, what he termed 'the disavowal of the

⁸ Francis Cheynell, *The rise, growth, and danger of Socinianisme* (London, 1643), p3.

⁹ Cheynell, *The rise, growth, and danger of Socinianisme*, p26.

¹⁰ Lucien Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century* (Harvard, 1982), Trans: B. Gottlieb, see p137.

¹¹ Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan* (Cambridge, 1962), p39. These disparate doctrines he identified as scepticism, naturalism, atomism (Epicureanism), blasphemy, heresy and cynicism as well as 'general irreverence'.

deity'.¹² This standard view was revised and redefined in the mid 1980's by Michael Hunter and David Wootton, who argued that the term 'atheism' was a loose expression that was applied to those who practised criminal, sinful or immoral behaviour and that it was a general word of censorship used for the badly behaved.¹³ It was also a term used by Protestants against Catholics for not practising the true faith, and by Catholics against Protestants, because they rejected the long standing truth and authority of the Catholic Church.¹⁴ Wootton claims that the word was first used in the 1540's, but that it was not until the 1680's that its current meaning was consistently applied. In addition, it was a term deployed solely by those in opposition to perceived 'atheists'; it was never a term utilised by the accused about themselves, many of whom still clearly perceived themselves to be godly men. Furthermore, as Febvre put it, 'it was 'a device of lawyers or controversialists.'¹⁵

Those who denied the conscious and immortal state of the soul post-mortem included Richard Overton, Thomas Hobbes, John Milton and later John Locke and Isaac Newton. Despite accusations by their opponents, these men did not deny God; they denied the immortality of the soul. Those who opposed these views included the Cambridge Platonists Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, George Rust and their associates Joseph Glanvill, Walter Charleton and John Aubrey. In addition, there was Thomas Hooker, Thomas Bromhall, Thomas Wadsworth, Richard Baxter, Richard Bovet, Nathaniel Crouch and George Sinclair.

When Overton's work reignited the mortalist debate, it proved to be a major focus for those who claimed that such views led to scepticism of God's very existence. Subsequently, Overton's work was quickly repudiated by the established church. In *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, drafted in 1646, during the Civil War and in the wake of

¹² Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan*, p39.

¹³ Michael Hunter, 'The Problem of 'Atheism' in Early Modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 35 (1985), pp.135-157.

¹⁴ This is a position David Wootton agrees with, arguing that Atheism was linked to immorality, specifically Epicurism and Machiavellianism, that was, as Wootton defines it, the pursuit of pleasure and power without fear of divine retribution. He also argued that the Reformation itself created the conditions for unbelief. When the religious practices of a lifetime were swept away, many people, rather than accepting the new faith, simply turned from the church, preferring to abstain rather than commit the heresy of practising the new faith. In the absence of continued church practice, accusations of atheism could be levelled. David Wootton, 'Unbelief in Early Modern Europe', *History Workshop* 20 (1985), pp.82-100.

¹⁵ Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief*, p142.

the Laudian crisis, the church's position on the afterlife was unequivocally restated. Based on the famous biblical passage of Luke 23:43, when Christ on the cross promised the thief that 'today shalt thou be with me in Paradise', the Anglican Church restated its Bullingerian position, saying;

The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls (which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous...are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God...and the souls of the wicked are cast into Hell...besides these two place for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.¹⁶

Despite this unequivocal assertion of Bullingerian orthodoxy, the voices of dissent of those endorsing mortalism could still be heard. William Spellman has argued that the notion 'that the disembodied soul in Heaven experienced a conscious existence was the bedrock upon which all orthodox critics of seventeenth-century Christian mortalism built their picture of Heaven.'¹⁷ Anglicans were not alone in their criticism of mortalism, for non-conformists were equally vocal in their denial of this heresy. Yet, as I will show, all the writers involved were much more flexible and amorphous in their views than their religious allegiances would suggest. This was a wholly new approach to the subject of the apparition. Long gone was the traditional ghost who sought suffrages; gone also in these texts was the violent spirit sent by the witch. They had been replaced by the ghost who provided proof of the immortality of the soul.

I

Mortalism, Sadducism and the Dead : the resurgence of mortalist arguments in the 1640's

As I demonstrated in chapter two, a multiplicity of new eschatological positions were forged during the Reformation. Over the course of time, the traditional Hebraic and Patristic perception of Abraham's Bosom as an interim Paradise became blurred with the concept of Heaven. Yet, full post-mortem felicity was not necessarily guaranteed in either

¹⁶ *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (London, 1646).

¹⁷ William M. Spellman, 'Between Death and Judgement: Conflicting Images of the Afterlife in Late Seventeenth- Century English Eulogies', *The Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994), pp49-65.

locale. Calvin had asserted that the absence of God in Abraham's Bosom deprived the faithful of full and perfect rest.¹⁸ This would only be resolved after the Last Judgement, when the souls of the righteous would reunite with their corporeal bodies (albeit new and perfect examples) and enter 'the land of promise' where they would live with God for eternity. A century later, in a corruption of Calvin's view, many writers held the view that full happiness in Heaven was not possible until the soul was reunited with the body at the Final Resurrection.¹⁹ Spellman termed such a notion 'a bifurcated vision of heaven' where the states of souls prior to the General Resurrection 'were distinctly unlike those' after the great event.²⁰ This was an awkward and inconsistent explanation, for, surely, how could the soul not be in a state of total felicity in Heaven?

The Psychopannychistic heresy, so decried by Calvin, not only continued in the seventeenth century, but there was also a resurgence of the similar heresy of Thnetopsychism, and of its more extreme cousin, Sadducism. Thomas Browne admitted in *Religio Medici* in 1643, that he had in his 'greener studies' believed that 'the souls of men perished with their bodies, but should yet be raised again at the last day.' This Thnetopsychism was later rejected in favour of Psychopannychism, as he said 'surely it is but the merits of our unworthy Natures, if we sleep in darkness until the last alarm.'²¹ Browne did not say explicitly where or how he first came across Thnetopsychism, or why he eventually rejected it, other than putting it down to the folly of youth, although he did spend many years on the continent studying and so it is likely he came across the heresy there.²²

In England, apart from Browne's oblique reference, the first explicitly mortalist view to be expressed since Tyndale was found in Overton's *Mans Mortalitie* in 1643, a text that went through four reprints by 1675.²³ Overton is an intangible and colourful figure, best known for his pamphleteering and his active participation in the Leveller cause, for

¹⁸ Calvin, *Psychopannychia* (1534), pp437, 466-467.

¹⁹ Edward Stillingfleet, *An answer to Mr Cressy's Epistle* (London, 1675), p128; see also Spellman, 'Between Death and Judgement' (1995), p55.

²⁰ Spellman, 'Between Death and Judgement', p59.

²¹ Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* (London, 1643), pp12-13.

²² He studied in Montpellier, Padua and Leiden. R.H. Robbins, 'Browne, Sir Thomas (1605-1682)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

²³ Jurgen Overhoff, *Hobbes' Theory of the Will* (Lanham, 2000). Overhoff argues that Overton's defence of Mortalism, the first to be published since Tyndale, influenced Hobbes, and claims that Hobbes' most important ideas had already been expressed by Overton.

which he penned many tracts. He is also infamous for his several incarcerations in Newgate in 1646-47, and again in 1649 for debt, contempt – i.e. the publications of incendiary, anti-state tracts – and later for treason, after he had argued for the removal of Charles I. Although his political sympathies were clear, his religious affiliations are elusive, for alongside his anti-Laudian and anti-papist tracts, he penned several strongly satirical treatises against the Presbyterian cause under the pseudonym Martin Mar-Priest.²⁴

B. J. Gibbons has argued that in his later life, Overton converted to General Baptism, a group of Protestants who also held Thnetopsychnic beliefs, but the evidence for this is ambiguous.²⁵ Overton was highly critical of the religious changes implemented by Laud in the Anglican Church and was contemptuous of the political and economic policies, of both Charles I and Wentworth, the Earl of Strafford. Overton is thus distinguished from the other writers on this subject in this period as something of an intermediate figure. Despite some evidence that he matriculated at Cambridge and that he was evidently an educated man, he was not of the elite ‘Establishment’ in the way that other Thnetopsychnists, such as John Milton and Thomas Hobbes were.²⁶

Overton’s treatise demonstrated his Thnetopsychnist beliefs, that is, his commitment to the conditional immortality of man’s soul, for he still believed in the resurrection. In his treatise, he refuted both the Bullingerian position adopted by the Church of England and the conscious middle state put forward by Calvin. To Overton, both positions negated the point of the Last Judgement and General Resurrection, and as a result he concluded that there was no interim state. He argued his case using scriptural evidence and natural reason, the latter being clear from his title which stated that,

²⁴ Martin Mar-Priest, *Divine observations upon the London-ministers letter against toleration* (London, 1645); Mar-Priest, *A sacred decretal, or Hue and cry* (London, 1645); Mar-Priest, *Martin's eccho: or A remonstrance, from His Holinesse reverend young Martin Mar-Priest* (London, 1645). See also Richard Overton, *Articles of high treason exhibited at Cheap-side crosse* (London, 1642); Overton, *New Lambeth fayre newly consecrated and presented by the Pope himself* (1642) for anti-Laudian and anti-papist views.

²⁵ B. J. Gibbons, ‘Overton, Richard (fl. 1640–1663)’, *ODNB*.

²⁶ B. J. Gibbons, *ODNB*.

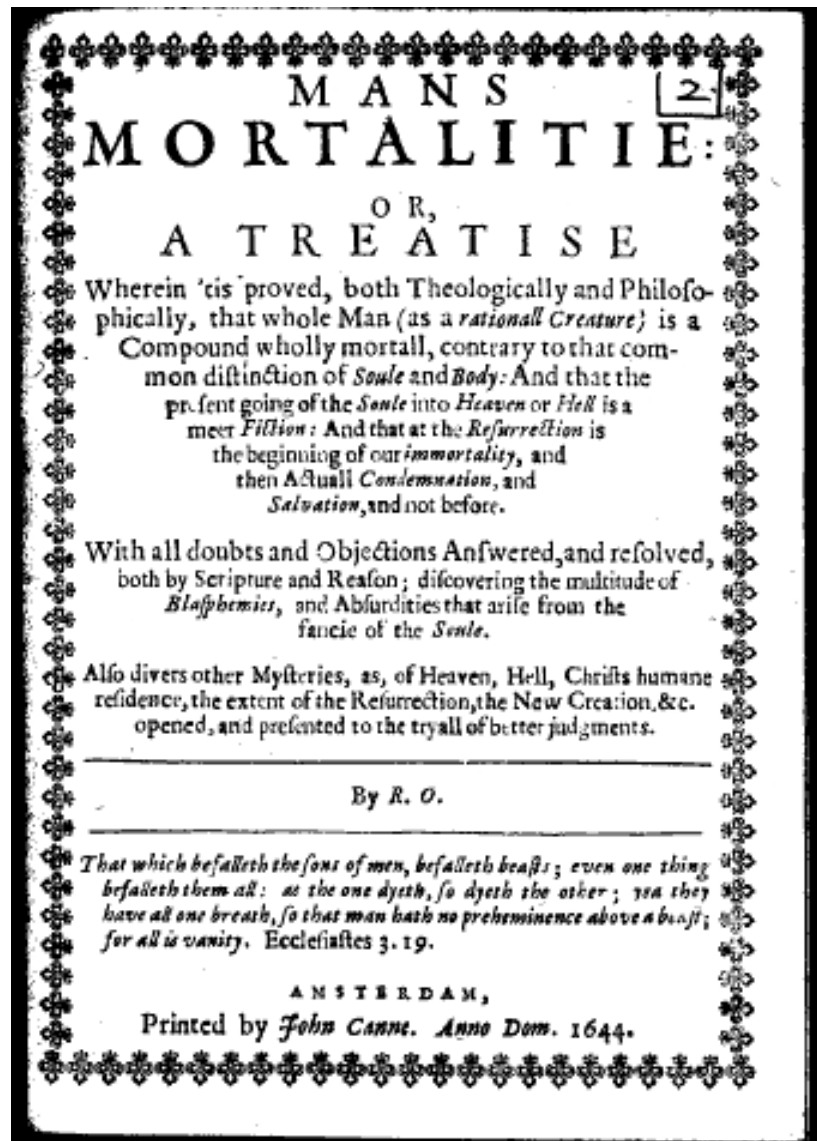


Fig.15.Richard Overton, *Mans Mortalitie* (London, 1644) Frontispiece.

Whole Man (as a rationall Creature) is a compound wholly mortall, contrary to that common distinction of Soule and Body: And that the present going of the Soule into Heaven or Hell is a meer Fiction: And that the Resurrection is the beginning of our Immortality, and then Actuell Condemnation, and Salvation, and not before.²⁷

He further added ‘that none ever entered into Heaven since the Creation...during his Death Man is voyd of actuall being.’²⁸ To Overton, this was the logical corollary of his belief that Heaven was a future place, not yet accessible to mankind. Citing paragraph after paragraph of biblical quotes, many of which were from the Old Testament, he turned not to the Church Fathers as previous Protestant writers had done, but to the Hebraic tradition.²⁹ This study of the Old Testament led him to conclude that all these Old Testament passages ‘declare mans totall death.’ He then added some New Testament texts from Acts 23 which, he stated ‘most clearly shew that all hope of future life and Being in the Resurrection.’³⁰ To Overton, the doctrine of instant punishment and reward was akin to having the execution before Judgement, ‘which...would be a ridiculous injustice, as to first hang men, and then judge them. At the day of judgement we all must receive our reward according to out deeds good or bad ...and not before *THEN*: for it cannot be twice received.’³¹ In accordance with this doctrine, until the Second Coming, there was no Heaven for mankind to go to, for it did not yet exist, ‘that place of Glory for the dead Saints is not yet: nor shall *Be* till the dissolution of the Heavens and this earth.’³² In support of this he quoted the promise in Isaiah 65:17 ‘For behold I create New Heavens and a New Earth.’³³

He also rejected Calvin’s revival of the doctrine of Abraham’s Bosom saying that ‘there was never such a man as *Dives* or *Lazarus*, or ever such a thing happened...but was a parable.’³⁴ He denied the literal meaning of the tale, saying of Dives that ‘he cryed for *Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger to coole his tongue*; which in the literall sence thus

²⁷ Richard Overton, *Mans Mortalitie* (Amsterdam, 1644), Frontispiece, ed. Harold Fisch (Liverpool, 1968).

²⁸ Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, p15.

²⁹ For example he quotes Job 14:10-12: ‘But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters faile from the sea, and the flood decayeth and dryeth up: So man lyeth downe and riseth not, till the Heavens be no more, they shall not awake out of their sleep’; Job 34:15: ‘All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turne again unto dust’; Isaiah 51:12 ‘He shall die, and the Son of man shall be made as grasse’; 1 Kings 2:2, ‘David saith to Solomon, I go all the way of all the earth’; ‘Eccl.4: 1.2.3. doth shew, that the living suffer oppression, but to the dead is none: and cap.9.4.5. *they know not any thing.*’

³⁰ Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, ed. Fisch (1968), p17.

³¹ Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, *Ibid.* p37.

³² Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, ed. Fisch (1968), p42.

³³ Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, *Ibid.* p42.

³⁴ Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, *Ibid.*, p56.

applicated, must needs be contradictory, unless his *eyes, tongue, and Lazarus finger* was not buried, or their souls had corporeall corpulent members, to which conceit is ridiculous.³⁵ To Overton, all doctrines that asserted the immortality of the soul were wrong for they fell victim to a mistaken conceit – that Man was better than the animals. He argued that since Man fell from God’s grace, he was no longer above the beasts, but equal to them. The Fall changed our souls from being immortal to mortal, and ‘what of Adam was immortall through Innocency, was to be mortalised by Trangression.’³⁶ Original sin caused our souls to be changed to a mortal status ‘so that Death reduceth this production *Entis ex non-ente ad Non-entem*, returnes Man to what he was before he was; that is, not to Be.’ He continued: ‘if the wages of sin be death, the Soule was under the divine Malediction as well as the Body: so that it...lost its supernaturality and immortality, as well as the Body.’³⁷ Much of his evidence came from Psalms 115:17 which asserted that ‘the dead praise not the Lord, neither they that go into silence.’ Having lost our ‘supernaturality’, we are thus no higher than animals in the Chain of Being. This central strand of argument was based on Ecclesiastes 3:19, which stated: ‘That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as one dyeth, so dyeth the other; yea they have all one breath, so man hath no preheminance above a beast; for all is vanity.’³⁸ This key text was a central plank in his mortalist position,

As Fish, Birds, and Beasts each in their kind without any transcendancy of nature:
So man in his kind begets man, corruptible man begets nothing but what is
corruptible, not halfe mortall, halfe immortall, halfe Angel, halfe man; but compleat
man totally mortall: for through mortall organs immortality cannot be conveyed, or
therein possibly resisde.³⁹

Thus Overton points out that, ‘All the Faculties of Man ...are all, and each of them mortall; as well those that are peculiar to man, as those that are common to *Beasts*...all elementary compositions or Temperatures are mortall and transitory...Mans Faculites *a minore ad majus* are Temperatures: *ergo* Mortall.’⁴⁰ He continued

³⁵ Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, *Ibid.* p56.

³⁶ Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, *Ibid.* p8.

³⁷ Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, *Ibid.* p30.

³⁸ Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, frontispiece. (Amsterdam, 1644)

³⁹ Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, ed. Fisch (1968), p65.

⁴⁰ Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, *Ibid.* p21.

If all of Man that goeth to his Manhood be mortall, where then, or what is this immortall thing the Soule they talke of? We have examined all his parts and faculties, and even find all mortall...what Reason is there now, that *Mans Faculties* in a higher degree, should be an immortall spirit, more then a Beasts in a lower degree? But both [are] elementary and finite.⁴¹

Overton's position meant that he saw man as a reasoning and scientific animal. Since we were animal rather than divine in being, understanding the truth of our real nature would therefore always remain elusive.⁴² Yet, he did not agree with the Sadducees' position of complete physical and spiritual death, for he clearly believed in the resurrection, and the revitalisation of the soul upon God's will, that is, conditional immortality.

Overton's heretical position was refuted with passion. The first salvo to be fired was *The Prerogative of Man*, printed anonymously in 1645. Norman Burns has attributed this to the Jesuit Guy Holland, who was attached to the royalist camp in Oxford during the Civil War. The work is not notably Catholic in nature, but is more of an impassioned response to the dangers of such heretical beliefs. Holland claimed that he was defending 'the immortality of humane soules' against 'the vaine cavils of a late worthlesse Pamphleter' and argued that Overton's heresy imperilled immortal selves.⁴³ Those that advocated such heresies were 'treacherous assailants' who had 'betrayed human nature' by stealing our souls. He added 'those theeves amongst us...be farre more cruell, for they would kill us outright both in soule and body.'⁴⁴ Those such as Overton, 'we must conclude...[were] guilty not onley of folly but also of heinous malice and temerity against the rights and prerogatives of man.'⁴⁵

The author's tactic was to go through each of Overton's chapters in turn and dismantle the argument contained in each. He maintained that Overton had taken his scriptural evidence out of context, and to avoid this trap, his own argument would not be based on scripture as Overton's was, but nor did it look back to Antiquity, as so many other authors did in this period. Instead, he contended that the immortality of the soul could be proved by Natural Reason alone. It was Natural Reason that linked us with the philosophers

⁴¹ Overton, *Mans Mortalitie*, *Ibid.* p27.

⁴² For further reading on this aspect of Overton's work see Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: humans and beasts in Early Modern Culture* (New York, 1999), p170.

⁴³ Anon, *The Prerogative of Man* (Oxford, 1645), p1.

⁴⁴ Anon, *The Prerogative of Man*, pp2-3.

⁴⁵ Anon, *The Prerogative of Man*, p3.

of Antiquity: ‘how could so many Heathen Philosophers have acknowledged unanimously this doctrine of immortality otherwise then by the light of nature and common reason? Out of which it is plaine, that Naturall Reason doth teach us this verity.’⁴⁶ By employing Natural Reason, we were able to understand that there was a world of difference between the ‘corruption’ and the ‘annihilation’ of the soul. He argued,

Death did not reduce *Adam* to *non ens*, but to *non Adam*; it did not cause him absolutely not to be, but onely not to be a man, or *Adam* any longer...his body was not *annihilated*, but corrupted; and to dye, is not wholly to be destroyed, but partially only...Death and Corruption is nothing but the disunion or dissolution of them, and in no wise the annihilation, according as this wise Author would tell us.⁴⁷

So where then did the soul reside if it was immortal? The author took a position which was not in accordance with either the Calvinist or Bullinger/Anglican position, but which agreed with the wholly unorthodox (and probably formally heretical) view originally espoused by Aurelius, namely that

soules [are] carried up into the aire, after they have been there sometime, whither kindled or liquefied, are conjoined to ...the originall mind, or great soule of the world. Thus...the spirit returnes to God that made it, for the great soule of the universe, or the originalle minde of all, is nothing else.⁴⁸

He added that, ‘the Soules of the just be in the hands of God, and the torment of Death shall not touch them. To the eyes of the foolish they seemed to die, but they remain in peace.’⁴⁹ That he rejected the Bullingerian position provides further evidence that it was not a doctrine which everyone accepted, and that in fact, it raised some serious doctrinal issues.

In the same year, 1645, another anti-mortalist treatise was published. This work, *The Immortality of Mans Soule*, has been attributed to Thomas Hooker, a prominent non-conformist minister whose ministry took him from Essex to New England, although again, the author’s name is absent from the document.⁵⁰ That he wrote it in New England and published it in England a year after Overton’s work was printed, shows how ideas were disseminated quickly back and forth over the Atlantic. Like the previous treatise, it

⁴⁶ Anon, *The Prerogative of Man*, p26.

⁴⁷ Anon, *The Prerogative of Man*, p7.

⁴⁸ Anon, *The Prerogative of Man*, p13.

⁴⁹ Anon, *The Prerogative of Man*, p45.

⁵⁰ This attribution of authorship has been put forward by EEBO and DNB, although authorship is absent from the document itself.

vigorously contested Overton's heresy, and sought to contradict Overton through the use of 'solid reason' and 'rationall prooffe of a point.'⁵¹ The author cited some Classical thinkers such as Plato and Pythagoras, but he dealt with them briefly, saying 'it were endlesse to recite all the words of ancients about this subject, confirming this truth...these and thousands more confirme the point that man consists of two parts, viz. a body and a reasonable and immortall soule.'⁵² His central premise was Cartesian, for he asserted that Man was dualistic in nature: 'the Soule is not the body, nor any part of it, but Soule and body two very different things.'⁵³ Furthermore,

Unlesse man have in him a soul...that is immortall, there can be no resurrection: this I shall prove by solid reason, though R.O. hail in the contrary, to make up the number of his absurdities: for if the soule dye with the body, or if there be no soule at all, and man all body, and so reduced to the *prima material*, how can there be a resurrection? There may be a new Creation...that gives him life againe, but the whole current of Scripture, hold forth a Resurrection and therefore man hath something in him immortall.'⁵⁴

In contradistinction to Overton's position, our souls were immortal. He wrote, 'even death it selfe which dispatcheth our life cannot be contrary to the life of the soule; for the soule seeketh life by death.'⁵⁵ It was this which elevated us above the beasts, along with the soul's capacity for rationality and reason.

The appeal to reason as characteristic of supramortality, was not by any means a new or original idea, but the author expressed it succinctly. Man's soul was 'the reasonable soule, and it is the thing that maketh man to be man, and not a plant or a bruite beast.'⁵⁶ To clarify his position, he used arguments grounded in our physicality, the evidence of our senses, rather than scripture or the Patristics to make his case, saying,

The inward man hath a quickening power like the plant hath, a sensitive power as a beast hath, a power of understanding whereby he is a man...he hath...but one soule, that like as in a brute beast the sensitive soul comprehends the quickening soul, so in man the reasonable soule comprehends both sensitive, and quickening, and executeth the offices of then all three, all at one & the same time, it both heareth, seeth, smelleth, reasoneth, at one & the same time.'⁵⁷

⁵¹ Anon [Thomas Hooker], *The Immortality of Mans Soule* (London, 1645), pp7, 9.

⁵² [Hooker], *The Immortality of Mans Soule*, pp12-13.

⁵³ [Hooker], *The Immortality of Mans Soule*, pp3-4.

⁵⁴ [Hooker], *The Immortality of Mans Soule*, pp7, 9.

⁵⁵ [Hooker], *The Immortality of Mans Soule*, p25.

⁵⁶ [Hooker], *The Immortality of Mans Soule*, p14.

⁵⁷ [Hooker], *The Immortality of Mans Soule*, p14.

Mankind, unlike the animals, had the capacity to ‘tend his own household affairs, the affairs of the common-wealth, & heavenly things all at once’ because he has a ‘reasonable’ soul.⁵⁸ Individual humans were able to do something brute beasts could not, that is to engage in introspection. The very fact that Man could do this suggests that his reasonable soul was of divine origin. He charged Overton, therefore, to do exactly that, to

take a little notice, of the dementions and parts thereof, let him tell me the reason of the continuall motion of the heart, the breathing of the lungues, & not the effects of it, but the motive cause of it, if he cannot, then let him confesse that he hath something in himselfe, which farre transcends himselfe, and the weaknesse of his capacity, which out of ignorance hee reasons against, although he know not what it is, & therefore I reject all his arguments.⁵⁹

The soul was the life-force of the body, and its absence rendered our physical body mortal. This use of physical evidence marked a shift in approach from the previous discourses on the soul, which in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, had followed a scholastic model. Physical evidence of a sort was being utilised to support his arguments, instead of the traditional approach, which employed Scripture and the Patristics. This, in turn, as we shall see, influenced the debate on the reality of the ghost.

II

Hobbes and Milton in the 1650’s: Thnetopsychism Reasserted

The most famous mortalist text of the seventeenth century was Thomas Hobbe’s *Leviathan* of 1651. Hobbes reasserted Overton’s position that the mortality of man’s soul was brought into being by the Fall – ‘Adam lost Eternall Life by his sin.’⁶⁰ His materialist position was deeply threatening, not just to godly men, but his critics argued, to society as a whole. As Mintz points out, ‘it was not merely philosophical; it was a matter of faith and public morals. Materialism was a dangerous doctrine as well as an invalid one, because it

⁵⁸ [Hooker], *The Immortality of Mans Soule*, p14.

⁵⁹ [Hooker], *The Immortality of Mans Soule*, p33.

⁶⁰ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London, 1651), p240, ed. R. Tuck (Cambridge, 1991).

undermined the spiritual basis of belief.⁶¹ To give credence to mortalism was to give credence to determinism. In turn, determinism made a mockery of moral responsibility, for if man was deprived of moral choice, the system of punishment and reward was rendered redundant and the ultimate conclusion of this progression was the collapse of religion, and thus of moral society.⁶²

Although Hobbes' critics accused him of both overt and crypto-atheism, his theism is quite obviously apparent, albeit unquestionably unorthodox. Like Overton, he was a Thnetopsychist who despite accusations of 'infidelity' to God, adopted a deeply religious perspective, fastidiously supported by Scripture. He wrote of Man, that 'he die a natural death, and remaine dead for a time; namely until the Resurrection.'⁶³ Hobbes also straightforwardly rejected the Bullingerian / Anglican position of instant reward or punishment for the soul, citing the biblical quote from John 3:13, that 'no man hath ascended to Heaven.'⁶⁴ Like Overton, Hobbes argued that man's immortality was conditional upon Divine Grace, and 'not by a property consequent to the essence, and nature of mankind; but by the will of God.'⁶⁵ He added that the notion that 'the Soul of man is in its own nature Eternall, and a living Creature independent on the body; or that any meer man is Immortall, otherwise than by the Resurrection in the last day, (except *Enos* and *Elias*) is a doctrine not apparent in Scripture.'⁶⁶

Hobbes argued that we did not go to our immediate reward or punishment because Heaven, as a place for the saved, did not yet exist; after all 'the Kingdom of God is to be on Earth...the Kingdome of God by Christ beginneth at the day of Judgement: That in that day, the Faithfull shall rise again, with glorious and spirituall Bodies, and bee his subjects in that his Kingdome, which shall be Eternall.'⁶⁷ Consequently, Hell did not exist either and the term claimed that 'Hell Fire, is spoken metaphorically.'⁶⁸ The damned were not to suffer eternal torment but 'a second Death. For though the Scripture bee clear for a

⁶¹ Mintz, *Hunting the Leviathan*, p153.

⁶² Mintz *Hunting the Leviathan*, p153.

⁶³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p240.

⁶⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p240.

⁶⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p240-241. See J.G.A. Pocock, 'Time, History and Eschatology in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes', ch.5 in Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago, 1971). p174-178, 180.

⁶⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Tuck (1991), p241.

⁶⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *Ibid.* p241, 345.

⁶⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *Ibid.* p243.

universal Resurrection; yet wee do not read, that to any of the Reprobate is promised Eternall life', to the contrary they are promised 'an Everlasting Death, which is the Second Death.'⁶⁹ To suffer eternally the torments of Hell was to confer immortal status on the damned, something Hobbes denied was possible. This second death was to occur at the Day of Judgement, when the sinner, like the saved was also resurrected, 'to receive punishments for their sins' i.e. the second death, after which 'hee shall die no more.'⁷⁰ While his was a heretical position, it was still one in which God demonstrated his mercy against the sinful.

This cycle of resurrection and death at the end of days did not allow for a middle conscious state of the soul. Although Heaven or Hell did not yet exist, he still rejected the possibility of a middle state in a third place and so like Overton, his solution to this problem was that the soul perished post-mortem. He averred that there were three worlds mentioned in Scripture, 'the *Old World*, the *Present World*, and the *World to come*.'⁷¹ The first was ante-diluvian, the second was the present, post-diluvian world in which Christ had lived, and the third was the New Heaven and the New Earth, after the Second Coming and Day of Judgement. To believe anything else was to invite 'Spiritual Darknesse from Misinterpretation of Scripture.'⁷² To Hobbes, it was this spiritual darkness that caused erroneous 'Phantasms of the Braine...such as are dead men's Ghosts, and Fairies, and other matter of old Wives tales.'⁷³ In addition, he blamed such views on the influence of Aristotelian thought, namely the 'vain and erroneous Philosophy of the Greeks', mingled with other 'false or uncertain Traditions, and fained, or uncertain History', which led us to believe in Spirits and Demonology.⁷⁴ He contended that the perceived existence of the returning dead was a direct consequence of the 'Dark Doctrine' of Purgatory, which in itself he pointed out, was a result of the 'contagion of the Dæmonology of the Greeks.'⁷⁵

Hobbes' Thnetopsychism and his vision of the afterlife was also shared by John Milton, although his major work on Christian belief was not published until the early nineteenth century. In his *De Doctrina Christiana*, written at some point in the 1650's, Milton laid out his personal vision of post-mortem destination, and, again like Hobbes, it

⁶⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *Ibid.* p244.

⁷⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *Ibid.* p245, 345.

⁷¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *Ibid.* p247-248.

⁷² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *Ibid.* p333.

⁷³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p334. See also Pocock, 'Time, History and Eschatology', p199.

⁷⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p334.

was supported by reams of biblical quotations. Paragraph after paragraph of biblical text was laid out with few linking words in between, and Milton clearly believed that the biblical passages were sufficient evidence in themselves of the doctrine he was supporting. Surrounding these strings of biblical quotations, he made his argument with careful and methodical clarity. He argued that, while God created mankind *ex deo*, he did not make Man's soul immortal. He disagreed with Overton and Hobbes, saying instead that Man did not lose his immortal soul at the Fall because it was never made immortal in the first place. At creation,

It was not the body alone that was then made, but the soul of man also (in which our likeness to God principally consists); which precluded us from attributing pre-existence to the soul which was then formed...when God infused the breath of life into man, what man thereby received was not a portion of God's essence, or a participation of the divine nature, but that measure of the divine virtue or influence, which was commensurate to the capabilities of the recipient.⁷⁶

Man was created weak and mortal, and this frailty meant he did not have the capacity to have, and was not worthy of having an immortal soul, unless of course one earned immortality and it was later bestowed by God's Grace at the resurrection. Man's nature was consequently monist rather than dualist, for

the whole man is soul, and the soul man, that is to say, a body, or substance individual, animated, sensitive and rational; and that the breath of life was neither a part of divine essence, nor the soul itself...that the soul of man should be separate from the body, so as to have a perfect and intelligent existence independently of it, is nowhere said in Scripture, and the doctrine is evidently at variance both with nature and reason.⁷⁷

Like Overton, Milton suggested that Man was, like the animals, just another of God's creations. Milton asserted that 'the word *soul* is also applied to every kind of living being; Gen.i.30. "to every beast of earth"...yet it is never inferred from these expressions that the soul exists separate from the body in any of the brute creation.'⁷⁸ Milton was also a Traducianist, believing that after God's initial creation 'God ceased from his work...it would seem therefore, that the human soul is not created daily by an immediate act of God,

⁷⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p340.

⁷⁶ John Milton 'De Doctrina Christiana', *The Prose Works of John Milton Vol. IV*, ed. Charles R Sumner (London, 1853), p187.

⁷⁷ Milton, 'De Doctrina', ed. Sumner (1853), pp188-189.

but propagated from father to son in a natural order.’⁷⁹ Adam was the only person whose soul had been directly created by God. Milton thus divested the soul of any divine essence at all. In addition, his vision of God was that of a somewhat less than omnipotent, perhaps even indolent God;

God would in fact have left his creation imperfect, and a vast, not to say a servile task would yet remain to be performed, without even allowing time for rest on each successive Sabbath, if he still continued to create as many souls daily as there are bodies multiplied throughout the whole world, at the bidding of what is not seldom the flagitious wantonness of man... Thus it was from one of the ribs of the man that God made the mother of all mankind, without the necessity of infusing the breath of life a second time.⁸⁰

If mankind had a soul, it had been passed down from the father to the child through conception and ‘is produced by the power of matter’, and so it was mortal in essence.⁸¹ This materialist perspective explained the innate sinfulness of mankind. Our souls could not be from God, for God would not create anything that was impure and sinful and, as Milton declared ‘it is from the soul that all sin in the first instance proceeds.’⁸² To support this position, he quoted John 3: 6, ‘that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’⁸³ In accordance with this philosophy, at the time of death, the soul and body, which are indivisible, die ‘in conformity with its origin...there seems therefore no reason, why the soul of man should be made an exception to the general law of creation.’⁸⁴ He added that ‘every part returns at dissolution to its elementary principle.’⁸⁵

Milton did allow that the soul of Christ was immortal, for ‘its generation was supernatural’, but conversely, man’s soul was anything but supernatural and so could not be immortal. Crucially, Milton’s monism did not allow for the continuation of the soul after death:

the whole man is uniformly said to consist of body, spirit and soul...I shall shew that the whole man dies, and, secondly, that each component suffers a privation of life...for what could be more just, than that he who had sinned in his whole person,

⁷⁸ Milton, ‘De Doctrina’, *Ibid.* p189.

⁷⁹ Milton, ‘De Doctrina’, *Ibid.* p189.

⁸⁰ Milton, ‘De Doctrina’, *Ibid.* pp190-191.

⁸¹ Milton, ‘De Doctrina’, *Ibid.* p193.

⁸² Milton, ‘De Doctrina’, *Ibid.* p192.

⁸³ Milton, ‘De Doctrina’, ed. Sumner (1853), p194.

⁸⁴ Milton, ‘De Doctrina’, *Ibid.* pp194-195.

⁸⁵ Milton, ‘De Doctrina’, *Ibid.* p279.

should die in his whole person?...what could be more absurd than that the mind, which is the part principally offending, should escape the threatened death?⁸⁶

He also argued that in the Old Testament, Job, David, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Peter and Paul believed in the death of the soul and added that there were, 'only two states, the mortal and the immortal, death and resurrection; not a word is said of any intermediate condition. Nay Paul himself affirms that the crown of righteousness which was laid up for him was not to be received before the last day...whence it follows, that previous to the resurrection they are not admitted to the heavenly world.'⁸⁷ For Milton, like Hobbes, Heaven did not yet exist, and Abraham's Bosom was a metaphor: 'I should suppose Lazarus to have been lying, if it were asked whither his soul betook itself during those four days of death. For I cannot believe that it would have been called back from Heaven to suffer again the inconveniences of the body.'⁸⁸ The soul absolutely died with the body, and he argued that 'no one supposes that the souls of men are occupied from the time of death to that of the resurrection in endeavours to render themselves acceptable to God in Heaven...there is consequently no recompense of good or bad after death.'⁸⁹ This statement was not only an attack on Catholicism but to those who believed in a continuance of the conscious state post-mortem. In summary, Milton explained that the dead were 'devoid of all vital existence.'⁹⁰

III

The Counter-Attack on the Mortalist Heresy in the 1650's: The Resurrection of the Ghost by Henry More

The core positions of these heretical works of the 1640's and 50's (Milton's was the exception in remaining unpublished) were of course hotly disputed. Holland and Hooker were not lone voices, Walter Charleton, the physician and natural philosopher, soon joined the fray against mortalism, firstly in 1652 with *The Darknes of Atheism Dispelled by the Light of Nature*, and again in 1657 with his work *The Immortality of the Human Soul*.

⁸⁶ Milton, 'De Doctrina', *Ibid.* p271.

⁸⁷ Milton, 'De Doctrina', *Ibid.* p273.

⁸⁸ Milton, 'De Doctrina', *Ibid.* p277.

⁸⁹ Milton, 'De Doctrina', *Ibid.* p283.

Seeking to prove the soul's immortality by 'pure and sincere reason', he was one of the first writers to use a naturalist argument against mortalism and materialism.⁹¹ He acknowledged that there were 'Curious Wits of our Age' who sought to prove the immortality of the soul through 'Demonstrations Geometrical', and 'by solid and physical arguments' although he did not say who they were.⁹² He argued that this approach was unsuccessful since 'their arguments are not rigorously Convincing' and he concluded that they 'constrain assent as inevitably as *Mathematical Demonstrations*.' To him the power of a well reasoned polemic was much more appropriate than 'Geometrical Demonstrations' for proving the immateriality of the soul, so he framed his argument within the form of the classical dialogue. As he argued, 'how much better we may judge the truth of any theorem, when we have heard as well the principal Reasons that impugne, as those that assert it, is obvious to common observation.'⁹³

For Charleton, belief in one's immortality was the underpinning of all Christian thought, 'like the Key, or middlestone in an arch.'⁹⁴ Without this essential belief, 'to what purpose doth all Piety and Religion serve?... why should we worship God at all? Nay, more, why should we consider whether there be a God or no?' Furthermore he argued, 'As for future expectations after death, there could be none at all; For, absolute Dissolution imports absolute Insensibility; and what is not, cannot be capable of Reward or Punishment, of Felicity or Misery.'⁹⁵ As to where the soul went post-mortem, Charleton did not elucidate, not least because such discussion involved complex theological issues with which he was unfamiliar.

By far the most significant attack on Hobbes, and arguably the most radical in approach, came from Henry More, the prominent philosopher and theologian, who became more famously known as one of the Cambridge Platonists.⁹⁶ He wrote two key works in the 1650's, *An Antidote Against Atheisme* (1653) and *Immortality of the Soul* (1659) that had the express purpose of refuting the twin heresies of mortalism and atheism. In his

⁹⁰ Milton, 'De Doctrina', p279.

⁹¹ Walter Charleton, *The Immortality of the Human Soul* (London, 1657), p1.

⁹² Charleton, *Immortality of the Human Soul*, p60.

⁹³ Charleton, *Immortality of the Human Soul*, Epistle Dedicatory.

⁹⁴ Charleton, *Immortality of the Human Soul*, p58.

⁹⁵ Charleton, *Immortality of the Human Soul*, p598r.

Immortality of the Soul in particular, he focused on the mortalism of Hobbes, and each chapter was dedicated to disproving his views point by point. For More, Hobbism posed a significant danger to Christianity and to religion in general. Moved to anger, he railed in *An Antidote Against Atheisme* against Enthusiasts and Atheists who thought that ‘the whole businesse of religion & notion of a God is nothing but a troublesome fit of overcurious Melancholy.’⁹⁷

Since it was so hard to find unambiguous scriptural proof of the immortality of the soul, like Hooker, Holland and Charleton before him, More sought to prove the soul’s immaterial nature through the use of reason and the senses. The new experimental science employed the senses as a form of evidence, and More argued that this new approach could strongly corroborate the immortality of the soul. As he explained in *An Antidote Against Atheisme*, he did not approach the subject of materialism in the traditional way because the religious arguments were ‘so well and so ordinarily known...but mainly because I know the *Atheist* will boggle more at whatever is fethch’d from establish’d Religion, and fly away from it...I appeare now in the plaine shape of a mere *Naturalist*, that I might vanquish *Atheism*.’⁹⁸

So, speaking as a ‘Naturalist’, More invoked evidence derived from the senses; ‘Spirits do act really upon the Senses, by acting upon Matter that affects the Senses [but] they cannot be rationally attributed to the Matter alone, Reason by the information of the Senses concludes, that there is some other more noble Principle distinct from the Matter.’⁹⁹ He was of the opinion, not unlike Hooker, that matter in itself had ‘no connate Ideas in it’ and it was the senses, or ‘Perception’ that allowed us to know that we had a soul, and that it was immortal. This Cartesian self-consciousness of the inner ‘perception’ or ‘sense’ was shaped by our physical senses:

there is *something in us Immateriall or Incorporeall*. For we finde in our selves, that one and the same thing both heares, and sees, and tastes, and, to be short, perceives all the variety of Objects that Nature manifests unto us. Wherefore Sense being nothing but the impress of corporeall motion from Objects without, that part of

⁹⁶ He made no mention of Milton, almost certainly because Milton’s *De Doctrina Christiana* was unpublished and remained in manuscript form until the 1820’s. He makes no overt reference to Overton either, though he does defend the matter of man’s superiority to ‘dumb brutes’ in chapter 8 of *Immortality of the Soul*.

⁹⁷ Henry More, *An Antidote Against Atheisme* (London, 1653), A1v-2r.

⁹⁸ More, *An Antidote Against Atheisme*, B3v-4r.

⁹⁹ More, *Immortality of the Soul* (London, 1659), p69.

Matter which must be the common *Sensorium*, must of necessity receive all that diversity of impulsions from Objects; it must likewise Imagine, Remember, Reason, and be the fountain of spontaneous Motion...[we are] endued with such Cognitive faculties as we are conscious to our selves of.¹⁰⁰

Man's understanding of the external world, and indeed, his very ability to function and exist was not possible without the presence of the internal 'Immaterial' soul. Having apparently refuted the idea that human souls were mortal, More's next problem was to decide the soul's post-mortem destination. More's view reveals his idiosyncratic blend of Cartesian Dualism and Platonism. He maintained that after death, the soul became an 'aerial or aetherial body' which 'will naturally glide out of the Body into the free Aire, as how the Fire will ascend upwards, or a Stone fall downwards...into this vast Ocean life.'¹⁰¹ Once free from the corporeal body, the soul 'united with Aire, cannot miss of being able, in a manner in the twinkling of an eye, to exercise all *Perceptive functions* again, if there was ever any intercession of them in the astonishments of Death.'¹⁰² However, he was vague regarding the destination of the soul after its liberty from the corporeal flesh, saying only that

the Soule may live and act in an *aëreal* Vehicle as well as in the *aethereal*; and that there are very few that arrive to that high happiness, as to acquire a *Cælestial* Vehicle immediatly upon their quitting the *terrestrial* one: that *heavenly Chariot* necessarily carrying us in triumph to the greatest happiness the Soule of man is capable of: which would arrive to all men indifferently, good and bad, if the parting with this earthly Body would suddainly mount us into the heavenly.¹⁰³

According to More soul's must

take their first station in the Aire, because that *Vital Congruity* that fits an *Ærial Vehicle* does of order awaken immediately upon the quitting of the *Earthly Body*. Wherefore the Soul being thus vitally united with a *Body* or *Vehicle* of Aire, it is impossible that she should drive out of those Regions: because her motions are onely according to the capacity of her Vehicle, she being not able to alter the consistency thereof into any more subtile or purer temper then the Aire will admit of, keeping still its own Species.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ More, *Immortality of the Soul*, pp125-126.

¹⁰¹ More, *Immortality of the Soul*, p275.

¹⁰² More, *Immortality of the Soul*, p277.

¹⁰³ More, *Immortality of the Soul*, p261.

¹⁰⁴ More, *Immortality of the Soul*, pp352-3.

In other words, the soul journeyed into the aether where it remained until Judgement Day. Within this sphere of existence were three dimensions – an upper, lower and middle region, where souls dwelt in a hierarchy of virtue and vice, the most saintly of men being nearer the top, and the more sinful nearer the Earth, an idea that retained notions of the levels of Purgatory. Furthermore, a felicitous state was not achieved by all, for, in further echoes of Calvin's account of Abraham's Bosom, the souls of the deceased could be subject to severe mental anguish. More wrote,

It will not be hard to conceive how the condition of the Soul after this life depends on her *Moral* deportment here. For *Memory* ceasing not, *Conscience* may very likely awake more furiously then ever; the Mind becoming a more clear Judge of evil Actions past, then she could be in the Flesh, being now stript of all those circumstances and concurrences of things that kept her off from the opportunity of calling her self to account, or of perceiving the ugliness of her own ways... the after ill success of their wicked enterprises and unreasonable transactions may arm their tormenting Conscience with new whips and stings, when they shall either hear, or see with their eyes, what they have unjustly built up, to run with shame to ruine, and behold all their designs come to nought, and their fame blasted upon Earth.¹⁰⁵

These souls inhabited the lower dimension of the aether, and it was their proximity to the world of the living that allowed them to visit the latter more easily than those of a higher realm. This was the crucial factor that was so radical about More's work. Not only did he espouse a post-mortem existence, but the soul could and did return to make contact with the living. He contested the Bullingerian/Anglican position of instant reward and punishment, believing it to be misguided for it did not allow for the possibility of the returning dead. Of those who accepted the Anglican position, he wrote 'That the Soul when she departs this life, is suddenly either twitched up into the *Cælum Empyrean*, or hurried down headlong toward the Centre of the Earth, makes the Apparitions of the Ghosts of men altogether incredible to them; they always substituting in their place some Angel or Devil which must present their persons.' He argued that this was a 'Misconceit and Prejudice' for it was clear that 'these Stories that are so frequent every where and in all Ages concerning the Ghosts of men appearing be but true, that it is true also that it is their Ghosts, and that therefore the Souls of men subsist and act after they have left their earthly bodies.'¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ More, *Immortality of the Soul*, p438.

¹⁰⁶ More, *Immortality of the Soul*, pp295- 296.

After almost three hundred pages of point-by-point, reasoned argument against Hobbes, in which he tried to marshal the senses, self-evident truths, and natural phenomena to his cause, he resorted finally to the ghost to prove his point. Numerous, well attested stories confirmed the existence of ghosts – that is the returning dead. In turn, the existence of the ghost proved that the soul was immortal. This was an extraordinary and radical claim to make and his position was clear: ‘The examples of the other sort, viz of the *appearing of the ghost to men after death*, are so numerous and frequent in all men’s mouths that it may seem superfluous to particularize in any.’¹⁰⁷ Note that More used the word ‘ghost’ and not ‘spirit’ and ‘apparition’. With the publication of More’s *Immortality of the Soul* and Thomas Bromhall’s *An History of Apparitions* in 1658 (to be examined in the next chapter), the ghost had re-entered Protestant parlance after a seventy year absence.

More then set about trying to collate the evidence, for although he was a Platonist, he participated in attempts to attract spirit testimonies because they were coherent with his belief that the spirit world and the mundane world we inhabit, co-existed. So, in a letter to the writer Samuel Hartlib he asked if he could ‘procure me as much of the true history of spirits as you can, and in particular, if you could have intelligence from any that have been ey witnesses of the late prodigies in Gremanie England or other parts...it will gratify me in [a] double designe that I have in hand.’¹⁰⁸ In another letter he acknowledged the ridicule he would come up against in his quest for this evidence. He wrote that there were many tales which were counted as nothing but ‘old wives fables, and idle dreams of a dry summer.’ Consequently, many will not ‘admitt the existence of any such thinges, and therefore thinke it foolery to search into the nature of that, which they are so carelessly secure, has no being in the world.’ He added circumspectly that his sole purpose in inquiring was to understand ‘the maner of their operation upon the soul of man.’¹⁰⁹

It was this belief in the returning dead that so radically set him up in opposition to Hobbes and indeed to the vast majority of his Protestant colleagues, and he demonstrated a pronounced awareness of this. More quoted many passages of Hobbes, in extenso, in particular the latter’s assertion that ‘men not knowing that...Apparitions are nothing else but creatures of the Fancy, think to be reall and external Substances, and therefore call them

¹⁰⁷ More, *Immortality of the Soul*, p286.

¹⁰⁸ A letter from Henry More to Samuel Hartlib, (1649), University of Sheffield, Hartlib Papers, 18/1/42A.

¹⁰⁹ A letter from Henry More to Samuel Hartlib, (1649) HP, 18/1/9A.

Ghosts.¹¹⁰ More scoffed that Hobbes said that Man was nothing more than ‘an Aggregate of Bodyes.’ He added ‘when he has proved that, we will acknowledge the sequel; till then he has proved nothing, and therefore this first argumentation must pass for nought.’¹¹¹ More went on to cite Hobbes’ crystal clear condemnation of the supposed reality of imagined beings: ‘*That which has its originall meerly from Dreames, Feares and Superstitious Fancies, has no reall existence in the world. But Incorporeall Substances have no other Originall.*’ More’s response to this was that Hobbes had illegitimately drawn conclusions about the reality of apparitions from the experience of diseased or credulous people:

when he sayes, they have no other Originall then that of our own Fancy, he must be understood to affirme that there is no other principle of the knowledge of their Existence then that we vainly imagine them to be; which is grossly false. For it is not the Dreams and Feares of Melancholick and Superstitious persons, from which Philosophers and Christians have argued the Existence of Spirits and Immaterial Substances, but from the evidence of Externall Objects of Sense, that is, the ordinary *Phaenomena* of *Nature*... To which you may adde what usually they call *Apparitions*, which are so far from being meerly the Dreams and Fancies of the Superstitious, that they are acknowledged by such as cannot but be deemed by most men over Atheisticall.¹¹²

Thus, on the grounds that ghosts were perceived through the ordinary working of the senses, they were both natural and supernatural beings. More scoffed that Hobbes was ‘very copious in jearing and making ridiculous the opinion of *Ghosts* and *Daemons*’ and that his arguments were ‘near to profound Nonsense.’¹¹³ To More this was a serious subject, that made absolute sense, and that he somehow managed to fit into his central system of beliefs despite being considered an Anglican. Furthermore, apart from a few attacks from deeply conservative Anglicans, there were few texts that criticized his position on ghosts, even though to believe in them contravened the central eschatology of orthodox Anglicanism.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ More, *Immortality of the Soul*, p60.

¹¹¹ More, *Immortality of the Soul*, p64.

¹¹² More, *Immortality of the Soul*, pp65-66.

¹¹³ More, *Immortality of the Soul*, pp72-73.

¹¹⁴ See Joseph Beaumont, *Some observations upon the apologie of Dr. Henry More* (London, 1665). Beaumont, the royal chaplain and master of Jesus College, Cambridge called More’s eschatology ‘ridiculous’, ‘insolent’ and ‘repugnant’, p2, and that he was guilty of ‘gross and dangerous errors.’ He added that ‘even *ex plebe*, but will loudly and justly laugh at him: For ask the plainest Peasant.’ p7. He clearly accused More of holding vulgar errors. See also Samuel Parker, *A free and impartial censure of the Platonick philosophie*

Even after the chaos of the Civil War, and the unrest engendered by the following political and religious upheavals, some writers were prepared to be flexible in their eschatological perspectives. In order to close down the more dangerous heresies that emerged from this period, and reassert religious stability, someone such as More, could be tolerated for a short period. He could get away with his wilder hypotheses, for he had employed them in the righteous cause of battling pernicious and persistent heresies. So, the purpose of the ghost had now shifted and changed. The ghost was no longer evidence of a purgatorial system; it provided evidence of the immortality of the soul, and as such it was an invaluable polemic tool.

Nonetheless, despite assertions that ghosts were the souls of dead people, this idea had to be reworked by Protestant writers for it had now veered uncomfortably close to the Catholic ghost. The ghost had to be Protestantised, and in accordance with this, the ghost had to serve an instructive purpose. This aspiration neatly circumvented the problematic impact that Bullingerian/ Anglican thought had on the reality of ghosts. In what was a radical departure, in the mid-to late seventeenth century, the ghost lost its identity as a demonic agent of Satan; it now became an agent of God. The dead acted under the aegis of God to become another player, not just in refuting mortalist heresies, but also in God's great scheme of Providence.

Providentialism was a view which saw an active, involved God, rather than a passive or absent God. To say otherwise, that God did not intervene in the lives of men, could leave oneself open to accusations of Deism. Such a stance, according to Calvin was the 'frigid and jejune' view of heathens.¹¹⁵ Since God was the creator of all things one 'should immediately conclude that he is also their perpetual governor and preserver' whose active Providence is 'sustaining, nourishing and providing for every thing which he has made.'¹¹⁶ Calvin concluded that God 'governs Heaven and Earth by his Providence, and regulates all things in such a manner that nothing happens but according to his counsel.'¹¹⁷

(London, 1666). Parker was the Bishop of Oxford and he was of the view that Platonists' views were 'prodigiously silly and ridiculous' and 'senseless insignificant jargon', p43. Yet it is important to note that while they criticised his religious doctrine, they did not explicitly condemn his belief in ghosts.

¹¹⁵ Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 1, Ch. 16, ed. Beveridge (1989), p182.

¹¹⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, Bk1, Ch 16, p183.

¹¹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, Bk1, Ch 16, p183.

Alexandra Walsham has argued that Providentialism ‘was not a marginal feature of the religious culture...but part of the mainstream, a cluster of presuppositions which enjoyed near universal acceptance.’¹¹⁸ This acceptance, she claims, crossed all economic, confessional and social boundaries, in part because the concept itself was fluid and adaptable and could be drawn upon ‘eclectically and with little sense of latent contradiction.’¹¹⁹ This view of a still active God was shared by many members of society, both high and low. Indeed, it must have been difficult to hold the opposite view of an absent God in the face of such an effective ideology, for Providence provided a ready answer for strange, inexplicable or terrible events. Conversely, in an age when miracles were said to be past, it provided an explanation for all things wondrous.

Additionally, it provided a template for justice, in which God intervened in a judicial capacity. In this role he was supposed to act with equal measures of Old and New Testament values of vengeance and mercy. That said, in the popular pamphlets, the many tales of the terrible instant retributive punishment that was dished out by God upon sinners seems to testify that vengeance was more likely, for after all, mankind inherently sinful in nature due to the Fall. Thus, it is important to recognize that Henry More was not a lone, eccentric figure on the matter, for two more genres of ghost literature emerged from the 1650’s onwards, and reached a much wider audience. The first was the publication of collections of ‘real’ ghostly encounters, by learned men, aimed at a broadly educated audience. In fact, by the time this genre peaked in the 1670’s and 80’s, the ghost had become a standard weapon for those seeking to prove God’s continued interaction with the world. The second was the plethora of broadsheet pamphlets of hauntings, mass produced for a wider ‘vulgar’ audience. These will be examined in the last chapter. These ghost stories grew increasingly prevalent until they formed a whole genre of literature that still survives today. The origins of how this happened will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

¹¹⁸ Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p2.

¹¹⁹ Walsham, *Providence*, p3.

Chapter Five

“Matters of fact well proved, ought not to be denied”; New Discourses on the Protestant ghost, 1660-1700.

The fate of the dead underwent a transformation in Protestant thought in the mid-seventeenth century. As we have seen in the previous chapter, there was a shift in attitudes towards the ghost, as Protestant men such as Henry More realised that it was a powerful tool against mortalist and atheist heresies. Although More was among the first to realise their usefulness in the 1650's, he was by no means an isolated figure. For the first time, some Protestant thinkers acknowledged that ghosts could be the souls of the dead returning to communicate with the living. Not only did they assert this point, they then endeavoured to prove it, through two separate but related techniques.

The first technique, which will form the basis of section I of this chapter, centres on the new shift to empiricist epistemology in spheres such as law and science. This new approach, divorced from the scholasticism of previous authors on the subject such as Le Loyer, was shaped by developments in Natural Philosophy, and more directly by the epistemology semi-officially endorsed by the Royal Society. The techniques the Protestants employed to prove the existence of the supernatural illuminates the changing attitudes towards the nature of evidence in the much wider field of Natural Philosophy.

The second of these techniques was the collation and rendition of credible incidents of haunting, among the first of which was Thomas Bromhall's *An History of Apparitions* in 1658, published a year before More's *Immortality of the Soul*.¹ His work was the first of a whole new genre of text, that is, the presentation of vast collections of ghostly encounters from Antiquity to contemporary Europe, published with little or no narrative. Collections containing reams of ghostly encounters were published on the premise that the more stories there were of ghosts, the more probable it was that they existed. Mortalism and atheism could be defeated through the sheer quantity of these histories and it is this new form of

¹ Thomas Bromhall, *An History of Apparitions* (London, 1658).

exempla, collected by those such as Bromhall, Increase Mather (influenced by Matthew Poole), Nathaniel Crouch and George Sinclair, that will be studied in section II of this chapter. In order to prove that ghosts existed, numerous writers and contributors called for the collection of narratives detailing empirical evidence and credible witness testimony. From the early 1660's, tales of ghostly events were fleshed out with the names of witnesses and places, and more precise times and dates were also added. So, the history of efforts to prove that the dead could return to the living also indirectly includes the history of the new men of science and the Royal Society, for the men that collated these collections were copying their techniques.

This chapter will deal with these two, new intertwined approaches to the collation of data and empiricism, and then show that, despite their best efforts to prove the reality of the returning dead, their methods had an unintended consequence, that is, the emergence of the ghost narrative as a genre of fiction. The more these men sought to prove the existence of the immortal soul through the reality of such tales, the more evidence was required; as old forms of proof became increasingly outdated, so the stories became more detailed and coloured. The more detailed they became, the more the boundaries between fact and fiction became obfuscated.

By the late 1650's and the 1660's, there was an increasing demand for external evidence of the supernatural. Instead of using 'reason' or Scriptural sources, the reality of supernatural beings, from ghosts to angels and demons, could best be proved by examples of encounters with such beings, which could then be collected and published.² This external evidence could not only refute the heresies of mortalism and atheism, but could also counter the dangerous tendencies of Enthusiasm, the umbrella term for a variety of beliefs which held that religious certainty came from internal inspiration direct from God. This inspiration could have external, physical manifestations in the form of convulsions, ecstasies, raptures and shouting, all of which implied a serious challenge to mainstream reformed theologians, for to claim direct spiritual inspiration bypassed not just the Holy

² Barbara Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth Century England* (Princeton, 1983), p84. This approach can also be seen in the publication of witchcraft prosecutions such as Anon, *The Witches of Northampton-Shire* (London, 1612); Anon, *The Arraignment and Triall of Iennet Preston* (London, 1612); see also Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons* (Oxford, 1997), ch.20 and James Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Harlow, 2001), pp 18-21.

Bible, but those emissaries of God himself – the clergy. Furthermore, to claim direct spiritual revelation from God usurped Christ's role as mediator between God and Mankind. Enthusiasm placed the individual in opposition to the Church's authority, and it was therefore linked to 'anarchy, disorder and licentiousness.'³ External evidence was seen as an antidote to the vagaries and inherent dangers of such internal revelation. So, a collation of many incidents of the returning dead was seen as the antidote to three dangerous ideas and the ghost was, so to speak, resurrected.

Building upon Henry More's rejection of arguments of scripture and reason in favour of two forms of external evidence – eyewitness accounts and the evidence of the senses – this new movement borrowed from the new approaches of the Natural Philosophers. Those involved were Joseph Glanvill, Thomas Bromhall, Matthew Poole and Robert Boyle, who published their works in the 1650's and 60's; Thomas Wadsworth in the 1670's, and later in the 1680's and 90's, George Sinclair, Richard Bovet, Nathaniel Crouch, John Aubrey and Richard Baxter.⁴ Some of these men were Cambridge Platonists, others were members of the Royal Society (More was both) and all were Protestants. These compilers of spirit testimonies and histories came from different Protestant denominations, but they were united by what they felt to be a higher issue, which was forming an arsenal against atheism and mortalism. What emerged were some extraordinary alliances that crossed the religious and political boundaries of the Civil War, the Interregnum and the Restoration. Some men, no matter what their social status, were automatically deemed unreliable, obviously Enthusiasts, religious radicals or 'outright mechanists.'⁵ They were disqualified because the first obligation to this community was that of veracity, and those who held such radical beliefs were deemed as corrupters of the truth.

³ Michael Heyd, *"Be Sober and Reasonable": The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 1995), p41.

⁴ Thomas Bromhall, *An History of Apparitions* (London, 1658); Joseph Glanvill, *A Philosophical Endeavour towards the Defense of the being of Witches and Apparitions* (1666); Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (London: 1668); Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus: or, Full and Plain Evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions. In Two Parts. The First Treating their Possibility; The Second of their Real Existence* (London, 1681); Thomas Wadsworth, *Antipsychothanasia, or the Immortality of the Soul Explained* (1670); Richard Bovet, *Pandæmonium, or the Devil's Cloyster* (London, 1684); George Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (Edinburgh, 1685); Richard Baxter, *Certainty of the World of Spirits* (London, 1691); John Aubrey, *Miscellanies upon the following subjects* (London, 1696).

⁵ Schaffer 'Making Certain' in *Social Studies of Science* Vol.14, (1984), pp.137-152, p141.

These men set about collecting data and empirical evidence to support their beliefs, whether scientific or theological. Not all of them categorically believed that ghosts were the returning dead, but they did hold the view that various supernatural phenomena existed which involved spirits, many of which resembled ghostly accounts. This new approach is clearly visible in the gradual increase of collections of ghostly phenomena that appear from the 1660's onwards. The discussion of metaphysical principles, so dominant in the previous literature, had been replaced by a more evidential approach.

The evidence collated came in several forms. Firstly, many of the books of ghostly encounters published were simply large collections of events with little or no narrative, indicating that the sheer volume of these occurrences constituted evidence of its own kind. Secondly, they took the form of detailed witness testimonies, and thirdly they deployed sensory evidence. Any one, or even better, a combination of these forms of proof could provide a 'matter of fact' which could then lead to the conviction that what was revealed in the pages was in fact the 'truth'.⁶ This multiplicity of evidence could prove that ghosts existed and, as a consequence, that the soul was immortal and ultimately that God existed.

Shapiro convincingly argues that witnesses did not necessarily have to be from the elite to be believed. Low social status did not necessarily equate to untrustworthiness and that 'moral status and reputation' were not the same as 'social and economic status', for one could be poor but 'pious and honest.'⁷ This stemmed from the judicial processes, which centred on the establishment of the 'fact'. In the sixteenth century, the word was originally part of the legal system. In its initial inception 'fact' did 'not mean an established truth but an alleged act.'⁸ The events surrounding this 'fact' were in court referred to as 'before' and 'after' the 'fact' and it was the jury's role to decide whether the perpetrator of this 'fact' was guilty or not guilty.

These legal frameworks of credibility were directly transferred to the new experimental philosophy, for in trying to establish the veracity of certain facts, they too relied on eye-witness testimony. Legalism and empiricism go together, for 'like legal facts,

⁶ Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty* (1983); Simon Schaffer 'Making Certain', *Social Studies of Science* Vol.14, (1984), pp.137-152.

⁷ Shapiro, *Culture of Fact*, p17.

⁸ Shapiro, *Culture of Fact*, p11.

“scientific facts” were established primarily by witnesses whose testimony would be evaluated on the basis of a set of legally derived criteria of credibility.’⁹ What Shapiro termed ‘criteria of reliability’ was founded on ‘expertise, experience...number, disinterest and impartiality.’¹⁰ These qualities were not naturally inherited with status, they were earned and Shapiro argues that these attributes, just like in the courts, ‘played a greater role in the creation of the model of the scientific investigator than birth.’¹¹

Influenced by the Baconian model of evidence gathering, the collectors of these spirit testimonies sought to establish the truth of certain knowledge, i.e. that the soul was immortal; though they were also aware that ‘certain proof’ was elusive. The best they could hope to attain was either a high degree of ‘probability’ or what came to be termed as ‘moral certainty.’¹² For, in the early phases of this new approach in the late 1650’s and the 1660’s, it was generally acknowledged that sensory evidence could not be relied on alone, and sight in particular was treated with caution. If there was a lone witness, accusations that they were mistaken or deceived could be levelled against them and it was far better to have phenomena seen by a number of individuals. Robert Boyle was of the view that absolute certainty was elusive and that all evidence should be questioned. As he put it, ‘in matters of fact, which I deliver as having tried or seen them, I am very willing you should think, that I may have had the weakness to be mistaken, but not an intention to deceive you.’¹³

When individuals gave their warrant to an experience, sensory information then became evidence in a multiplied, social and legislative setting. Shapiro argues that the act of witnessing and, therefore, the sense of sight was ‘favoured over all others’, although individual experiences were potentially liable to sceptical critiques. Defenders of spirit accounts overcame this by bringing reason to bear on sensory experience, for it was thought

⁹ Shapiro, *Culture of Fact*, p112.

¹⁰ Shapiro, *Culture of Fact*, p40.

¹¹ Shapiro, *Culture of Fact*, p166.

¹² Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty* (1983). Moral Certainty became the ultimate goal, and within this new epistemological approach Shapiro has identified three different levels of knowledge that could be achieved, running from ‘mere probability’ through to ‘high probability’ and ultimately to ‘moral certainty’. p17. It was the new apotheosis of knowledge attainment. If something had ‘moral certainty’, it could then be termed as a ‘fact’. As Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer define it in *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* (Princeton, 1985), p25, ‘matters of fact were the outcome of the process of having an empirical experience, warranting it to oneself, and assuring others that grounds for their belief were adequate.’ The matter of fact was in consequence the foundation of proper knowledge.

¹³ Robert Boyle, *The Works of the Honorable Robert Boyle* (London, 1744) (Ed. Thomas Birch), p225.

by Walter Charleton, Boyle and others that this could help eliminate error.¹⁴ It was also important that testimony was not contradictory, and also that, as required in common law, more than one witness was adduced. As Boyle wrote,

When I am satisfied of the abilities and circumspection of a writer, delivering a matter of fact as upon his own knowledge; I do not presently reject his observation as untrue, much less condemn the person as a liar, whensoever I find, that it seems to be contradicted by a contrary and more undoubted observation...but rather try [to] reconcile them unless I can imagine something or other, which might probably lead him to mistake.¹⁵

Otherwise, smell, touch, and sound were considered more reliable and this type of evidence is featured heavily in early supernatural relations, particularly in the infamous *Drummer of Tedworth* case with which Joseph Glanvill was so involved from 1662.¹⁶

Bromhall, Crouch, Bovet, Glanvill and other compilers certainly considered that credible eye-witness accounts from ‘prudent and truthful men’, was valid.¹⁷ Trust in the eye-witness was paramount, since the credibility of the relator was intimately bound up with the plausibility of the event narrated. Shapin has argued that perceived competence was related to social status, for one might accept the report of supernatural phenomenon from a source of esteemed social status and reject plausible claims from sources lacking in that creditworthiness.¹⁸ In a society defined by its patriarchal hierarchy, it was the gentleman and those above that status who were ordained with this credibility. A gentleman was a man of his word, a man of honour and moral discipline, and relations from them were considered, if not morally certain, then at least, highly probable.¹⁹

The new methodological approach to the ghost was thus formed out of a confluence of ideas: the rejection of scholasticism in favour of the new empiricism, attempts to refute mortalist and atheist heresies, and the rigorous epistemological format that was drawn from legal practice. It should be noted that the collections of ghost stories that begin to appear in

¹⁴ Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty*, (1983), pp22,23.

¹⁵ Boyle, *Works*, p225.

¹⁶ Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (1668); Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (1681).

¹⁷ Dear, ‘From Truth’, p623.

¹⁸ Steven Shapin, ‘The House of Experiment in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Isis*, Vol.79, No.3, (1988), pp.373-404, p375. See also Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago, 1994), p201.

¹⁹ Shapin, ‘House of Experiment’, p397.

the late seventeenth century already had a precedent in Renaissance notions of *exempla*, in works such as Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563), Thomas Beard's *Theatre of God's Judgement* (1597) and *Gangraena* (1646) by Thomas Edwards – all of which were essentially catalogues of events, rather than arguments formed in the scholastic tradition. However, these new volumes of ghost stories by Bromhall, Crouch, Bovet, and Sinclair were very different from the previous works on ghosts by Lavater, Taillepied and Le Loyer, for these collections were not published with the specific goal of debating the nature of the ghost, as they had been a century before. Nor were they confessional in nature. Instead, the aim of the text was now to provide evidence of the immateriality of the soul through establishing the ghost as a 'matter of fact'. This evidence was sought through sensory testimony and credible eyewitness accounts by people of good social credit. When it came to evidence that was historical, as long as they were sourced from generally acknowledged and trustworthy persons, then it could be deemed credible. Canonical authors could play this role, and often the provenance of a ghost tale was cited as being from Herodotus, Pythagoras or Cicero who fulfilled the role of the credible witness. If it was a more contemporary account, the heavy-weight Protestant names such as Philipp Melancthon, Luther and Erasmus were used. Failing an esteemed source, sheer numbers of witnesses could suffice, no matter what their social status was.

It is of central importance that the lexicography shifts once again, for in the 1650's, and certainly by the 1670's, the word 'ghost' re-entered the parlance of Protestant commentators such as More and Crouch for the first time since the late sixteenth century. Earlier commentators had been very cautious about using the term 'ghost' because it was so indelibly linked with the Roman Catholic returning dead. So they used 'spirit', 'apparition', 'spectre' and occasionally 'phantasm'. Anything, but 'ghost'. This revival of the word was deliberate, for More knew that when he used the term 'ghost', he was unequivocally referring to the returning soul of the dead, not a spirit or demon. In his fight against mortalism, this reclaiming of the traditional word and using it in a Protestant dialogue was a necessary tactic. This demonstrates that the term 'ghost' still had resonant and explicit meaning in the mid-seventeenth century. These aspects will be looked at further in the third part of this chapter. First though, look at Glanvill's account of the *Drummer of Tedworth*,

for his approach to the subject matter was to influence the compilers of the ghost collections.

I

Palpable Experience: Joseph Glanvill and the New Empiricism

Henry More's close associate, Joseph Glanvill, attempted to continue what More had started. More had acknowledged the existence of the ghost, and had noted that they could be useful in anti-heresy polemics, but he had not gone into detail with specific cases. Nor did he provide anything other than vague relations. Although Crouch, Bromhall and others had sought to collect enormous collections of irrefutable data, their stories were by and large either drawn from Antiquity or from other scholars. What they lacked were first hand contemporary accounts that could provide solid evidence of the immortality of the soul. Glanvill, who like More, was unorthodox in his approach despite being a Church of England clergyman, sought to rectify this.

Glanvill wrote *A Philosophical Endeavour towards the Defense of the being of Witches and Apparitions* (1666), and *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (1667) which was later reworked to become *Saducismus Triumphatus: or, Full and Plain Evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions* in 1681, on the subject of the supernatural. He worked closely with More, (whose work is now seen as much more significant) and together they devoted much energy in combating these heresies.²⁰ Glanvill's *Saducismus Triumphatus* was posthumously published in 1681, a year after his death with added material by More. In essence it was a reworking of his earlier works on witchcraft and spirits. The first half contains an extract of More's work *Enchiridion Metaphysicum* and was densely metaphysical. The second part of the book was a printed letter of Glanvill's views on witchcraft. In his first major work on witches and apparitions, *A Philosophical Endeavour*

²⁰ Joseph Glanvill, *A Philosophical Endeavour towards the Defense of the being of Witches and Apparitions* (1666); Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (1667); Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus: or, Full and Plain Evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions* (London, 1681, expanded 1682 with addition by More).

of 1666, he had set out his intentions in his introduction saying that he wished to prove that supernatural beings were a ‘matter of fact’ and that no one could doubt this as

All *Histories* are full of the exploits of those *Instruments* of darkness, and the *testimony* of all *Ages*, not onely of the *rude* and *barbarous*, but of the most *civilz’d* and *polish’d* world, brings tidings of their strange performances. We have *attestations* of thousands of eye and ear-witnesses.²¹

Like Bromhall, the sheer volume of experience and weight of history should attest to the reality of these supernatural beings. Importantly, he further argued that to deny the existence of witches and apparitions was foolish as there were yet many things in the world which man did not understand. He argued,

We cannot conceive of how the *faetus* is *form’d* in the womb, nor as much how a *Plant* springs from the *Earth* we tread on...and if we are *ignorant* of the most obvious things about us...’tis then no wonder that we know not the *constitution* and *powers* of the *creatures*, to whom we are such strangers...the *matters of fact* well proved ought not to be *denied*.²²

He talked of using the ‘Phœnomena of our senses’, and this approach became increasingly evident as his work progressed, as is no more apparent than in his work on the *Drummer of Tedworth*.²³ His way of recounting this famous event changed over time and in turn reflected the demand for more rigorous evidence than vague accounts or merely lists of *exempla* such as those provided by Bromhall. The incidents that occurred over the winter 1662/3 became a celebrated case that has been variously recorded as witchcraft and/or poltergeist activity. Michael Hunter, calls it ‘one of the most famous episodes in the history of witchcraft.’²⁴

It was Glanvill’s approach to the case, over the following decade that illuminates the shift and change in contemporary approaches to the supernatural, for he altered from a tone of wry wit in his original account in 1668, to laboured seriousness by 1681.

²¹ Joseph Glanvill, *A Philosophical Endeavour towards the Defense of the being of Witches and Apparitions* (1666), pp5-6.

²² Glanvill, *A Philosophical Endeavour*, pp12-13.

²³ Glanvill, *A Philosophical Endeavour*, p23.

²⁴ Michael Hunter, ‘New light on the “Drummer of Tedworth”: conflicting narratives of witchcraft in Restoration England’, *Historical Research* 78 (2005), pp311-353, p311.

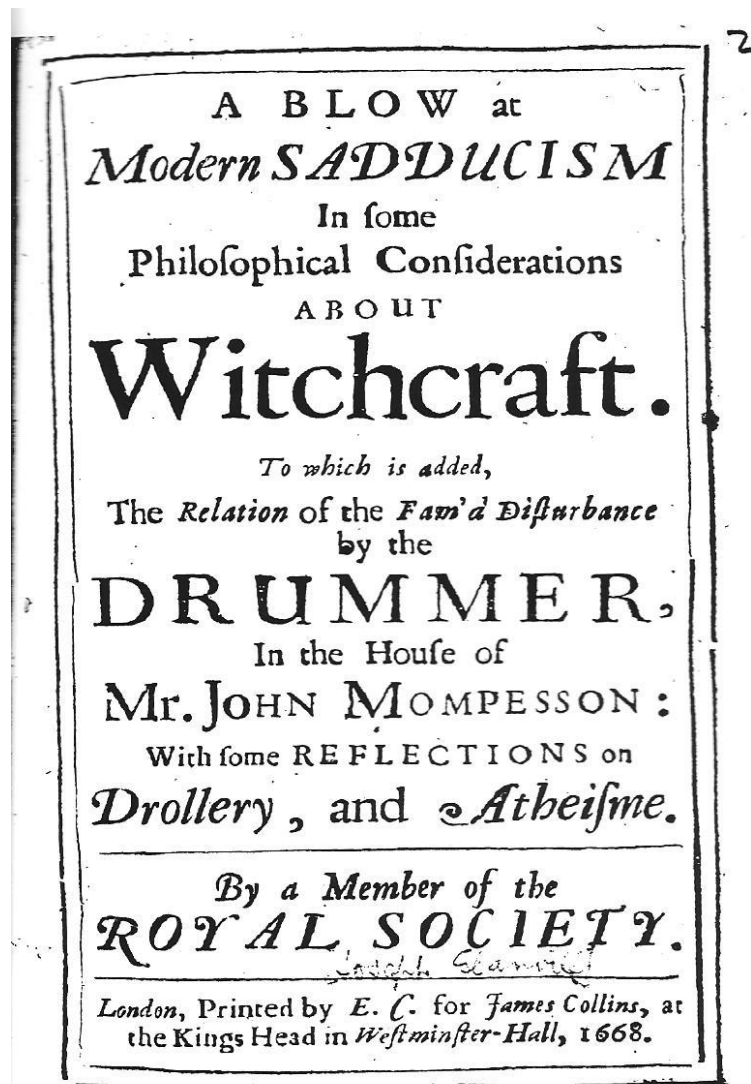


Fig.16. Joseph Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (London, 1668).

He incorporated elements of the new Royal Society's approach to empirical evidence in a variety of ways. Firstly, he sought to establish multiple and credible witnesses and collected and published letters from those involved in the case. He then performed interactive knocking experiments with the entity and subsequently tried to establish a case that would hold weight in a court of law. As he wrote in the introduction to *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* in 1668, 'I believe we should have other kinde of *Metaphysicks*, than those are taught by men that love to write great Volumns, and to be *subtil* about *nothing*. For we know not anything of the world we live in, but by *experiment*, and the *Phenomena*...' ²⁵

The incidents associated with the appearance of the Tedworth drummer occurred in the winter 1662/63, in which the eponymous drummer was seen by commentators as a malicious entity. John Mompesson, a local judge, had come across a boy who had played a drum without having a license. Mompesson had subsequently confiscated the drum, and the boy was said to be so angered by this action, that he had sent a malicious entity into Mompesson's home to wreak revenge. Thereafter, the house and family of Mompesson was tormented by noise of a beating drum and by what we would now call 'poltergeist' activity, involving objects and furniture being thrown, people being scratched, strange noises and smells. This was, as I have shown in chapter three, activity that had over the past century been ascribed to both witchcraft and demons, either together or as separate causal factors. It is interesting that Glanvill and his colleagues still argued in favour of witchcraft, rather than a demonic entity for as I previously stated, it was not until the 1670's that the witch and the ghost/poltergeist had become extricated from each other's narratives, as is evident in this case. Glanvill did state in *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (1668) that apparitions existed, but he was not explicit in his meaning and nor did he use the term 'ghost', unlike More and Bromhall. Yet, while his work is not directly concerned with ghosts, it is of great importance, for his attempts to prove that this supernatural event had actually happened greatly influenced subsequent approaches by authors seeking to prove the existence of ghosts. As I have mentioned already, George Sinclair, in his *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (1685) a work mainly devoted to ghosts, took not only Glanvill's approach to his subject but also his final 1681 account of the *Drummer of Tedworth*, and copied it wholesale.

²⁵ Joseph Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (London, 1668), p94.

Michael Hunter has closely examined the epistemology of the tale in text – that is, its genesis and transformation in its different printed editions, from its first appearance in 1668 in *A Blow to Modern Sadducism*. He notes that by the time the revised version came out in 1681, it had altered, revealing a cultural shift, and ‘mirroring the way in which informed opinion on the case developed.’²⁶ He found that in the later editions, Glanvill had strengthened the detail on ‘matters of fact’ regarding witnesses, such as giving their names and including other non-related accounts of ghostly visitations or witchcraft to bolster the case. Glanvill had moved on from simply providing lists of stories to incorporating the standard epistemological apparatus of the Royal Society. He actually printed the letters from those involved to add authority to his relation of the tale. In addition, Glanvill’s own personal experience with the poltergeist of Tedworth was missing from earlier recounts of the tale and in his initial account he was less serious in tone. As Hunter argues, ‘the abandonment of wittiness was accompanied by this greater accent on verisimilitude and integrity.’²⁷ This reveals that Glanvill’s acceptance of the case as genuine was met with resistance and scepticism, and that aware of this, he modulated his tone to one that could be taken more seriously. In the original letter of 1662, from Mompesson to the Rev Dr. Creed, Mompesson wrote that the spirit troubled one of his friends called John, who came to offer his services. The story is related thus (and I shall put it in full so that the differences are made clear)

I have a man a Clowne of great Courage but no great witt, but of good conversation and sober; this fellow offerd his service...so I lay him in the next Chamber to me and gave him a sword to stand by his bedside; there is scarce a night but there is conflict between these two, sometimes John hath the best of it, and sometimes the Goblin: sometimes Johns Breeches and Doublet are pulld about the roome and his shooes thrown at him; then John takes his sword and recovers it: but now and then it takes John at the advantage when he is asleep and his Armes in bed, and layes so hard upon him that for his life he cannot get one hand loose...but as soon as he can get out his hands then he beats him away...thus much we have discovered of it, that it is afraid of weapon, or to be handled, and very shy of much light.²⁸

²⁶ Hunter, ‘Drummer of Tedworth’, p333.

²⁷ Hunter, ‘Drummer of Tedworth’, p337.

²⁸ John Mompesson, letter 26th Dec.1662 sourced from Hunter, ‘Drummer of Tedworth’, appendix, pp338-353. p344.

In Glanvill's earlier account of this incident in *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (1668) it was a little different (again the text is extensive but necessarily so) and treated with substantial humour and dry wit;

After *this* the *Spirit* was very *troublesome* to a Servant of Mr. *Mompessons*, who was a stout Fellow, and of sober conversation. In the Relation of whose *vexations*, I beg your Lordships leave to be a little less solemn... for some time there was scarce a night past, without some doubty action and encounter, in which the success was various. One while *John's* bag and baggage would be in the Enemies *power*, *Doublet* and *Breeches* surprised, and his *Shooes* raised in *rebellion* against him; and then *lusty John* by *Dint* of Weapon recovers all again, suppresseth the *insurrection* of his *Shooes*, and holds his own in spite of *Satan*, and the *Drummer*... there came a rushing noise as if it had been a Gentlewoman in Silk, to *Johns* bed-side. Our *Champion* takes the *Alarm*, and catches at his *Sword* to assault the *Lady*, contrary to all the rules of *Knight errantry*. 'Twas with much difficulty and tugging that he got it into his possession: for it seems the *Aiery Damosel* was not willing to be courted with *John's Cutting Complements*...²⁹

In Glanvill's later version in *Saducismus Triumphatus* of 1681, the tone of the story changed again. It had been tidied up, and gone was the humour and the wry comments, replaced instead by a substantially more sober account;

It was very troublesome to a Servant of Mr. *Mompesson's*, who was a stout Fellow, and of sober Conversation. This Man lay within, during the greatest disturbance, and for several nights something would endeavour to pluck his cloaths off the Bed, so that he was fain to tug hard to keep them on, and sometimes they would be pluckt from him by main force, and his shooes thrown at his head... *John* heard a rusling noise in his Chamber, and something came to his Bedside, as if it had been one in silk. The Man presently reacheth after his Sword, which he found held from him, and 'twas with difficulty and much tugging that he got it into his power, which as soon as he had done, the Spectre left him.³⁰

The sequence of original events had also been changed. In the original account from Mompesson in 1662, the rustling of silk was heard by Mompesson and his wife in their bedchamber and they saw the blue lights, which in Glanvill's account, were seen by the tormented John. Note the difference in establishing him as a witness. To Mompesson he was a character of slow wit, a 'Clowne' albeit 'of good conversation and sober' and to

²⁹ Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (1668), p105-107.

³⁰ Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1681), pp96-97.

Glanvill a serious credible man. John's testimony was trusted by Mompesson, and thus, in turn, valued by Glanvill.

The initial response by those involved was sceptical. In John Mompesson's letter to the Reverend William Creed in 1662, he explained that 'my Wife told me that the house had like to have been broken up, and they had been much affrightened in the night with thieves...[and] I must confesse I did at first doubt it to be what it proved to be.'³¹ However, this rational explanation was ruled out when the disturbances repeat themselves on a nightly basis, and gradually, through the use of observation and other sensory evidence, they reached the conclusion that the cause of the strange events was supernatural in origin.

They used sensory evidence such as sound to support their claims. For example there was heard a beating drum which happened 'foure or five nights in seven, and make very great hollow sounds...and come constantly within half an houre after we were in bed, and stay almost two houres...for two months'.³² By noting the time of the event, the witness was laying down a framework of fact upon which to hang the event. To add to this, the drum would 'beat the same point of Warre that is usually beaten when guards breake up as truly and sweetly as ever Drum beat in this world.' On occasion it played the tune 'Roundheads and Cuckolds goe digge, goe digge.' Additional sounds were noted, for the spirit would 'imitate the hammering of pease upon boards, the shoing of horses, the sawyers, and many others.'³³ In a second letter a few weeks later Mompesson described being plagued by a sound akin to 'the chinking of money.'³⁴ In another note another week later he wrote of 'a tinging in the chimney' and 'heard something come up the staires resembling one coming up without shooes', doors slamming and the rustling of 'a silk garment.'³⁵ Importantly, sound was used in an experimental way, involving multiple witnesses:

When the knocking was, many being present, a Gentleman said, Satan, If the Drummer set thee on worke, let us understand so much by giving three knockes and no more; it presently gave three knockes distinctly and audibly: then the Gentleman

³¹ Mompesson, letter 6th Dec.1662, sourced from Hunter, 'Drummer of Tedworth', appendix, pp338-353. p339.

³² Mompesson, letter 6th Dec.1662, p339.

³³ Mompesson, letter 6th Dec.1662, p339.

³⁴ Mompesson, letter 26th Dec.1662, p344.

³⁵ Mompesson, letter 4th Jan.1663, p346.

knockt to see where it would it imitate him or no, as it had done severall times before, but it remained silent.³⁶

Not only did they perform this experiment in a controlled way in front of witnesses, but they then repeated it asking the spirit to give five knocks, which it duly did. Interestingly, Mompesson employed the language of law, saying ‘this I suppose is no evidence to a jurie’ and in his letter of the 26th December, he declared ‘I might testify myself to be Your affectionate Kinsman.’³⁷ In expressing his affection and loyalty in such rigorously legalistic language, he was adding further credibility to his account. He further swore, as if taking the oath in a court of law that, ‘for my own part should I falsify in the report of it or any particular circumstance of it, I should tremble to lay in my house, and think that I put a Mockery upon God and the passages of his Providence.’³⁸

Mompesson had employed legalistic language, and used the evidence of time and sound. In addition, touch and physical sensation were also brought into play. He noted that ‘the windowes would shake and the bedds...we hold our hands upon those bedsteeds all the while, and could feel no blowes but feel them shake extremely.’ The local minister, Mr Cragge was hit in the leg, and Mompesson’s children ‘were pulled by their night geare and their hayre.’ A ‘sulphureous smell’ was also included in this arsenal of sensory evidence.³⁹ In addition, multiple witnesses were cited; ‘the fift of November in the morning, it kept a mighty noise, and one of my men observing in the morning.’ Apart from his immediate family as witnesses, there was Mr Cragge, who was the local minister, his neighbours and there ‘have been many spectators as well Divines as others, persons of judgment’ who all concluded it to be witchcraft. In this one letter, Mompesson was clearly aware of the criteria needed to prove his case. The evidence of the mundane could verify the numinous. As he tellingly said in a following letter, ‘I have often thought that if any learned men had made these observations that I have done, he might have discovered much of the nature of spirits.’⁴⁰

Glanvill’s account of the case in *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (1668) drew heavily on the letters of Mompesson, whom he described as ‘a Gentleman’ who was ‘neither vain,

³⁶ Mompesson, letter 4th Jan.1663, p346.

³⁷ Mompesson, letter 4th Jan.1663, p347; Mompesson, letter 26th Dec.1662, p345.

³⁸ Mompesson, letter 4th Jan.1663, p348.

³⁹ Mompesson, letter 6th Dec.1662, p340.

⁴⁰ Mompesson, letter 6th Dec.1662, p342.

nor *credulous*; but a *discreet, sagacious* and *manly* person.⁴¹ The language of fact was also clearly utilized and understood in this context for he added, ‘You know...the credit of *matters of fact* depends much upon the consideration of the *Relators*...and *matter of Fact* is not capable of any proof besides, but *that of immediate sensible Evidence*.’⁴² Not only was Mompesson a credible witness, but he was not alone for the events were witnessed by ‘numbers of sober and uninterested persons’ and ‘*multitudes of competent, and unbiast* Attestors, and *acted in a searching and incredulous Age; Arguments* enough for the *conviction of a modest, and capable* reason.’⁴³ After an account from a ‘Reverend Person’ he added ‘I judge his *Reflections* as *ingenious*, as his *report* is *sincere*...[and] that many of those *matters of Fact*, have been since *critically inspected* and *examined* by several *sagacious* and *deep* searches of the ROYAL SOCIETY, whom we may suppose as unlikely to be deceived by a contrived imposture, as any persons extant.’⁴⁴ Quite whom and what was involved in these procedures is unfortunately elusive information, but it is possible that Glanvill’s efforts, and his experiments with knocking and eliciting responses with the spirit may have been conflated to add gravitas to the account.

In addition, Glanvill visited the house to investigate events first hand for himself. He displayed an awareness of the sceptical arguments (and possibly of the arguments employed by Lavater made a century before) that could be made against the case by declaring that it was not the work of fraud or mischief on behalf of the servants or Mompesson’s family, and nor ‘can it with anything of more *probability* be imagined, that his own *melancholly* deluded him...these are *wilde Supposals*.’⁴⁵ In order to refute these ‘wilde supposals’ he repeated the experiments that Mompesson recounted in his letters. He wrote,

I had heard of it imitating noises, and therefore made a trial, by scratching certain determinate times upon the sheet, as 5. and 7. and 10. which *It* did also, and still stopt my number...I put my hand upon the place, and the Bed bear up against it, as if something had thrust it up; but by grasping, could feel nothing but the Feathers: and there was nothing under it.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism*, p117.

⁴² Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism*, p118.

⁴³ Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism*, pp121, 125.

⁴⁴ Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism*, pp86, 89.

⁴⁵ Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism*, p118.

⁴⁶ Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism*, p112.

He then described this evidence in the terms that were available to him that would carry conviction, claiming that after his ‘*search and inquiry*: And after things were weighed and examined, several that were prejudiced enough before, went away strongly convicted.’⁴⁷ He talked of making a ‘trial’, examined by multiple witnesses of ‘sober and intelligent’ reputation in order to ‘convict’ and prove ‘the *matter of fact*.’ The language of the courts which had shaped the language of investigation and experiment associated with the new Royal Society, was now used to prove the existence of the supernatural. In a letter of July 1676 to Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, in which he wrote of the Tedworth Case, he fused the phraseology of law and natural philosophy saying,

Whereas your Grace calls the Inducements to the belief of Witches, *probable Arguments*, I am apt...to think some of them to be as great demonstrations as matter of fact can bear; being no less than the evidence of the Senses, and Oaths of sober Attestors, and the critical inquiries of Sagacious, and superstitious Persons; which Circumstances of Evidence...some of those Relations have to prove them.⁴⁸

For Glanvill, sensory evidence and eye-witness testimony entirely replaced the arguments of Scripture and Natural Reason. These new sets of proof were seen as valid and unshakeable. As Glanvill said, ‘we know not any thing of the world we live in, but by experiment, and the Phænomena; and there is the same way of speculating immaterial nature, by extraordinary Events and Apparitions’ all of which would ‘be a standing evidence against SADDUCISM...and a sensible argument of our Immortality.’⁴⁹

While Glanvill studied one case extensively to prove his case, there were others who felt that vast collections of ghost accounts would incontrovertibly provide proof of the immortality of the soul. Their work, like that of Glanvill, was influenced by the new epistemological approaches of Natural Philosophy, and it to those works that I now turn.

⁴⁷ Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism*, p121.

⁴⁸ Joseph Glanvill in *Letters and Poems in honour of the incomparable princess, Margaret, Dutchess of Newcastle*, (1676), p138.

⁴⁹ Glanvill, *A Blow at Modern Sadducism*, p95.

II

The Collating of Evidence: The New *exempla* of Thomas Bromhall, Nathaniel Crouch and George Sinclair

Although Henry More's new way of refuting mortalism and atheism in 1659 reflected a shift in approach, he was not the only one to recognise that the dead could be a useful tool. Thomas Bromhall's *An History of Apparitions* was printed in 1658 and it was the first collection of its kind. Thomas Bromhall himself is an elusive figure and it is uncertain if he actually wrote the book as its title states that it was 'written in French, and now rendered into English.'⁵⁰ This uncertain provenance makes it difficult to know if Bromhall was the original author or merely the translator. Nonetheless, the content suggests that the author was a well educated Protestant. It contained standard anti-papist rhetoric, and the author stated that his intent was to confute 'the opinions of the Sadducees', Socinianism, Epicurianism and Atheism. The book was divided into thematic chapters, all of which, apart from the last two, contained no exposition, only example after example of the supernatural. That many of these examples of supernatural occurrences were European, rather than English, further hints at a continental author, and although the provenance is uncertain, this work is notable for two things.

Firstly, Bromhall was the first to present examples of ghosts without any scriptural exegesis or arguments of natural reason. Instead, the multitudes of examples comprise a form of empirical evidence previously unseen in this type of text.⁵¹ Secondly, while he did not explicitly state that the dead could return to the living – he favoured the explanation that they were evil angels – importantly he used the word 'ghost' no less than fifty-two times. The word 'ghost', after disappearing from texts for the past seventy years, had been reclaimed in a Protestant discourse. Much of what the author wrote was standard anti-papist trope. Relics, miracles, mass and any form of sacramentalism, were he argued, clearly papist frauds. A chapter entitled,

⁵⁰ Bromhall was likely the gentleman known as 'old Bromhall from Nantwich' a draper/mercator featured in the diaries of Roger Whitley (a Cheshire gentleman, royalist officer in the Civil War and Whig Member of Parliament for Chester in 1689-97). See National Archives, NRA 23480, ref. to Bodleian Library, MSS Eng. Hist.c396, 710-12. no. c711.

⁵¹ The book is a substantial 367 pages long.

Of Sathan's wonderful Legerdemains, Deceits, and Impostures, used, for the setting up, and establishing Idolatry, by Invocation of Saints departed this life, worshipping of Statues and Images, and for confirmation of the doctrine of Purgatory, contrary to the preaching of *St. Paul, 2 Thess. 2.*⁵²

clearly stated his position. Likewise, the lurid retelling of the famous demonic possessions in the convents of sixteenth century France clearly reconnected the link between Catholicism and Satan.⁵³ Yet, despite his clear religious position, there was a marked absence of biblical quotation. Instead, he used reams of examples from Antiquity and the Patristics, mixed with medieval *miracula* and *mirabilia* and sixteenth-century relations from all over Europe. He provided the reader with a history, a long tradition of ghost stories, the sheer volume of which constituted evidence in itself. Not only that, but the stories from history were provided by authorial credible witnesses, such as Herodotus, Homer and Cicero, who were given equal status with Origen, Tertullian and St. Augustine, and to the later authors, Luther and Erasmus. As the sources listed alphabetically in Latin at the front of the book, suggests – ‘The Worthiness of those Learned Authors, by whose Care and Industry these Examples were left for the use of future Ages’ – their status fulfil the criteria for credibility. So too does the dedication to the ‘honourable, THE Lord *Cholmley*, Lord Viscount Kell, &c.’ Bromhall writes in the preface that the patronage of this said gentleman would add credence to this work saying ‘Your Patronage [will] secure it from the imputation or prejudice of any.’⁵⁴

Every example in the text was referenced, be it from Roman legend or drawn from medieval *exempla*. If known, the date and place was also mentioned, and constituted factual colour that bolstered the proof, for example Bromhall fleshed out one story with a plethora of circumstantial context:

Under the Emperor Ludovicus the 3d, the City *Moguntia* was miserably haunted with a daemoniall spirit. There is in *Germany*, and in the third part of *Gallia*, a little from the town *Bingus*, where the River *Navas* and *Rhene* meet, a country town commonly called by the name of *Camontus*...the highest mountain. There in the year 858...[from] *Sigerbertus. Chron. Hirsaug. Antonius...lib.4.*⁵⁵

⁵² Thomas Bromhall, *An History of Apparitions* (London, 1658), p285.

⁵³ Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, p64-65.

⁵⁴ Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, in the preface the Viscount was the 1st Viscount Robert Cholmley of Kells, County Meath, Ireland.

⁵⁵ Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, pp24, p25.

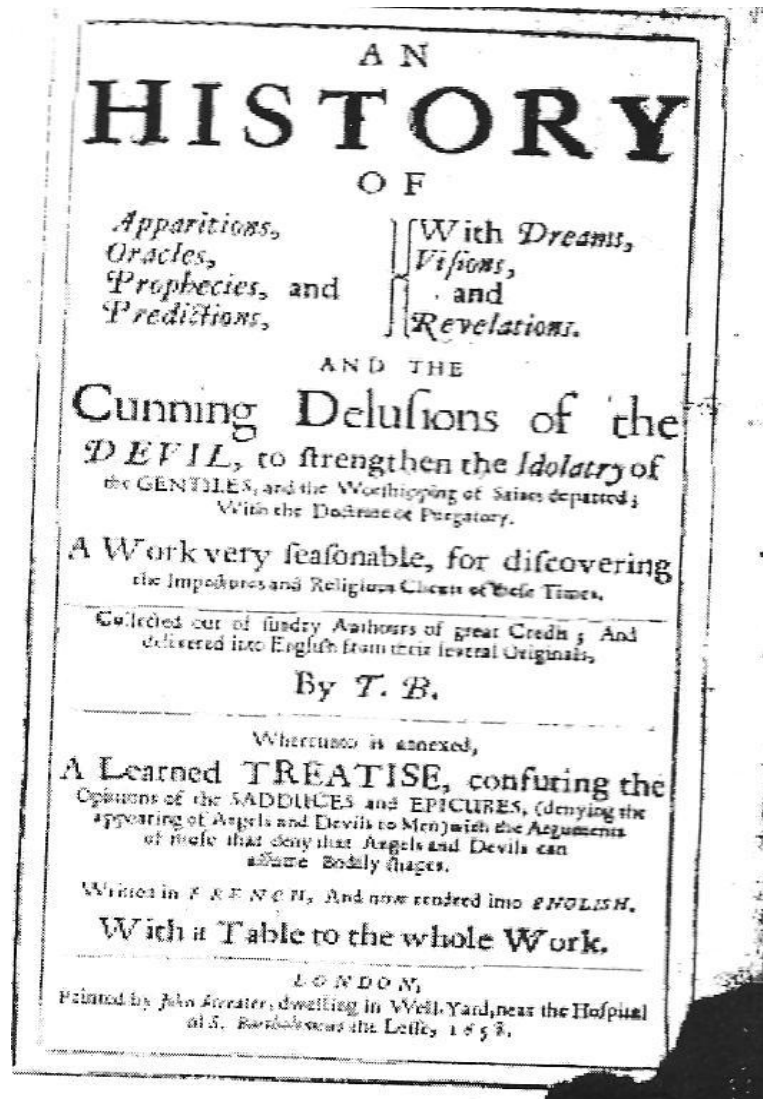


Fig.17.Thomas Bromhall, *An History of Apparitions* (London, 1658), Frontispiece.

The place was given in exact topographical detail, the date was mentioned and so was the source. These ‘facts’ constituted evidence, even for the more spurious relations, such as the one in which a man married a swan, ‘*Vicentius* reports this out of *Helinandus*, lib.3.cap.27. that in the Diocesse of *Colony*, there is a famous great palace, which looks over the River *Rhene*, ‘tis called *Juvamen*...’⁵⁶

This was the sort of *exempla* collation and the sheer volume of these examples – there are 153 authors cited and 342 pages of *exempla* – form a type of empirical evidence, that, to the author, provided unassailable evidence of the existence of supernatural forces. Bromhall’s book also contained a menagerie of supernatural creatures, ranging from standard demons and evil angels, to hobgoblins, mermaids, lycanthropes, shape-shifters and ghosts. Bromhall did not merely list these accounts but also explained the appearance of the entities. They were not just part of the fabric of creation, but served a purpose, for ‘By God’s permission, and the operation of the Devill, these spectrals were obvious to the eyes of men, that others might be terrified from that horrid impiety and ungodlinesse of the Epicureans.’⁵⁷

As with the cases of witchcraft and poltergeist activity, ghosts existed to test our faith and punish our sins, in the manner of Job, as Bromhall wrote; ‘two wayes doth God shew his power, by suffering the Devill to assail men...First, to punish the sins of the wicked: secondly, to try the pious and faithful, and for their glorious approbation which they will obtain by their perseverance in faith.’⁵⁸ He added ‘God hath placed, and left here below this World, Devills and wicked Spirits, to be as tormenters and executioners to wicked men: that so his Justice might shine more glorious, to the comfort of the godly, and of his elect, that live in the love and fear of him.’⁵⁹

Bromhall’s last two chapters broke away from the *exempla* and contained instead a narrative discourse entitled ‘*The Opinions and Arguments of the Sadduces, and Epicures; by which they would prove, that the Angels and Devils do not appear unto men;*

⁵⁶ Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, p18.

⁵⁷ Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, p23.

⁵⁸ Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, p113.

⁵⁹ Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, p350.

Confuted.⁶⁰ He sought to counteract various heresies, along with those of the Perpateticks and Atheists through use of Patristic text and sensory testimony, instead of biblical scripture.

Bromhall roundly condemned materialism as erroneous, ‘For the Divinity of God, neither is, nor can be, in any corporeal substance: but it is an incorporeall and spirituall essence, which hath nothing in common with that substance which is proper unto these Earthly Creatures.’ Furthermore, while Mankind clearly had corporeality, humans also had an ‘incorporeall’ essence, the soul, from which all reason and understanding issued. As Bromhall put it, ‘reason in man, cometh not of the humane body: but from the Soul of man, which is Spiritual and Divine, made unto the likenesse of God, and capable of reason, of prudence, and of Wisedome.’⁶¹ Consequently, apparitions which were non-corporeal in aspect *could* be the souls of the dead. He summed up this argument thus, ‘I have said before, that the Sadduces did maintain God to have a body, to the end they might better deny the appearing of Specters; which are substances without a body.’⁶² Their very lack of physicality was evidence of their supernatural nature.

Furthermore, precisely because we were corporeal and our physical senses were prone to error, we might fail to correctly perceive that which was spiritual in essence. So, instead of using physical evidence to prove the existence of spirits in the world, he turned the argument on its head. Our senses did not necessarily prove the supernatural, since our experience of sight, smell, touch and sound could be inaccurate, for spiritual substance was indefinable and powerful, and we, as weak sinful humans, were handicapped by our faulty senses in perceiving the truth. To highlight this, he discussed the deception that echoes could cause to our senses, along with the refraction of light, reflections, rainbows and how all these with the ‘thicknesse of the Ayre...which stayeth and limiteth the beams of the eyesight’, can cause the senses to be deceived. Our senses, so rooted in sinful flesh, could mistake and be deceived by spiritual beings in exactly the same way that light refraction tricks our vision.⁶³ He said that we should be careful not to be misled into thinking that our

⁶⁰ Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, p343.

⁶¹ Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, p348.

⁶² Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, p349.

⁶³ Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, pp353, 354.

visions of ghosts are just our imaginings, for they do exist. The Epicureans, he claimed, argued we were often tricked by fear and error into believing in ghosts. He wrote

I see not how this can be a good argument, to shew that the Ayre can engender forms or figures; which may refer themselves to the eyes, as Specters... We (say they) are affected and altered, according to the things which we see, and which are next unto us. As for example; we perceive ... salt humour being near the Sea;...so likewise, when these Images and figures do present themselves unto us, we cannot abide nor suffer them; but we find our selves altered and changed in our understanding.⁶⁴

His response to this was to argue that our senses were tricked into not believing in the reality of these 'Images and figures' by the faulty sinful nature of our physical being. He concluded 'That the fear which men have by the sight of Specters or Spirits, commeth in regard that the things are unaccustomed and admirable to the bodily senses...besides, things that are supernatural, do much more touch the senses of man, then those things do, which are natural.'⁶⁵ The very fact that we feared and did not understand ghosts was in itself evidence of their non-corporeal nature. While Bromhall's approach and interpretation may seem eccentric, his work is nonetheless important, for he was the first who sought to provide evidence of the reality of the ghost through this collation of histories. While More provided a few ghost stories, they were recited with little in the way of provenance and were used to substantiate his argument. They were not used by More as a discrete body of evidence in and of themselves. Bromhall's work is distinguished from More's as it was almost solely formed of categorised and listed examples of the supernatural. This approach was the basis upon which all the writers who came after formed their arguments.

Bromhall was not the only person trying to collate *exempla* as evidential data in the late 1650's. Matthew Poole, the Presbyterian biblical commentator tried to implement a 'design for the registering of illustrious Providences' at the end of the Cromwellian Protectorate.⁶⁶ This was not a new idea, as Thomas Beard had famously done this some fifty years before, but Poole suggested that it would succeed as a co-operative venture, in which various 'secretaries' from each county would send him relations of Providence, to an

⁶⁴ Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, p356.

⁶⁵ Bromhall, *History of Apparitions*, p356.

⁶⁶ Nicholas Keene, 'Poole, Matthew (1624?–1679)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

office in Cheapside, which he would then analyse and collate.⁶⁷ In 1657 Samuel Hartlib Noted that ‘Mr Poole Minister of London...is vpon a designe of collecting all signal and extraordinary *Providences* of God, wherby the mouth of Atheisme may bee stopped.’⁶⁸ Hartlib seemed to have supported Poole’s scheme and spread the news around his circle of acquaintances. A chain of evidence gathering came in to being; for example, Hartlib’s friend John Beale wrote with several relations of Providence, which he had collected from his acquaintance Henry Miller. In Beale’s letter he stated, ‘This Henry Miller, who attests this wonderful relation is by all the Godly of the neighbourhood an esteemed Man fearing God & hateing lyes; I have known him, & soe respected him thiese seaven yeares & more. Soe I atteste, Iohn Beal.’⁶⁹ Having established Beale’s credentials, he related that he had heard of an incident (not clarified in the letter) which ‘at leisure I intend to record with the names of the persons, places, circumstances, & witnesses. This is for Mr Pooles use, Not for the Mercuryes.’⁷⁰

Also found in the Hartlib papers is ‘A Designe for Registring of Illustrious Providences.’⁷¹ This letter is attributed to the preacher John Dury who wrote, ‘I doe soe highly approve of Mr. Pooles Designe, & of the whole draught, That I dare not confine it to any humane Invention, but must confesse the great appearance of God, as in a mighty Worke.’⁷² Having given the endeavour his approval, he wrote down a twelve point processes by which the evidence should be collected and then examined. He stated that all correspondence should go through a single ‘minister’ in each county or ‘quarter of the nation.’ This ‘minister’ was charged with the task of getting a ‘full narrative of the case, & get it subscribed by the witnesses, (naming the places of their abode, & { where it is convenient } the quality of the person witnessing it) & that they be ready to sweare it, when ever legally required to doe it.’⁷³ If any minister heard of a case outside of their jurisdiction, they had to notify the relevant minister, so that they could collect the information, and that

⁶⁷ Thomas, *Decline of Magic*, pp110-112.

⁶⁸ Samuel Hartlib, *Ephemerides*, (1657) University of Sheffield, Hartlib papers, HP52, 29/6/20A.

⁶⁹ Harlib papers. 52/17B.

⁷⁰ Harlib papers. 52/17B.

⁷¹ Harlib papers. 26/8/1A.

⁷² Harlib papers. 26/8/4B.

⁷³ Harlib papers. 26/8/2A and 26/8/2B.

they all had to take care that the ‘Witnesses bee fide digni, least some Persons discredit, bring the whole into disrepute.’⁷⁴

It was an ambitious project, which for reasons unknown, he did not eventually undertake, but the idea was later picked up in North America by Increase Mather, who published *An essay for the recording of illustrious providences* in 1684. Mather acknowledged Poole’s intellectual contribution in his introduction, writing,

About six and twenty years ago, *Design for the Recording of illustrious Providences*, was under serious consideration among some eminent Ministers in England and in Ireland. That motion was principally set on foot by the Learned Mr. Matthew Pool, whose *Synopsis Criticorum*, and other Books by him emitted, have made him famous in the World. But before any thing was brought to effect, the Persons to have been employed, had their thoughts diverted another way.⁷⁵

He further added that he was following the ‘Rules and method described by that Learned and excellent person Robert Boyle Esq. being duley observed within.’⁷⁶ The epistemology of knowledge had crossed the Atlantic and Mather was formally recognizing the influence of these Englishmen and the new science. Having thus acknowledged the intellectual origin of his work he then copied Dury’s approach and clarified his purpose in an eight point plan. In point three, he declared;

Inasmuch as we find in Scripture, as well as in Ecclesiastical History, that the Ministers of God have been improved in the *Recording* and *Declaring* the works of the Lord; and since they are in divers respects under peculiar Advantages there unto: It is proposed, that each one in that capacity may diligently enquire into, and Record such *Illustrious Providences* as have hapned, or from time to time shall happen, in the places whereunto they do belong: and that the Witnesses of such notable Occurrents be likewise set down in Writing.⁷⁷

It was to be a long term project that was thorough and rigorous in its approach. He added,

Although it be true, that this Design cannot be brought unto Perfection in one or two years, yet it is much to be desired that something may be done therein out of hand,

⁷⁴ Harlib papers. 26/8/2B.

⁷⁵ Increase Mather, *An essay for the recording of illustrious providences* (Boston, 1684), The Preface. (unpaginated). Unfortunately Mather does not expand upon this statement and relate which of Boyles rules and methods he was referring to.

⁷⁶ Mather, *Illustrious Providences*, Preface.

⁷⁷ Mather, *Illustrious Providences*, Preface.

as a *Specimen* of a more large Volumn, that so this work may be set on foot, and Posterity may be encouraged to go on therewith.⁷⁸

He also planned to collect evidence alongside those whom he termed ‘elders’ who would then all gather to assess the verity of the incidents. As he pointed out,

I am Engaged to many for the Materials, and Informations which the following Collections do consist of. It is not easie to give an Account of things, and yet no circumstantial mistakes attend what shall be related. Nor dare I averr, that there are none such in what follows. Only I have been careful to prevent them.⁷⁹

Like Bromhall he cited the name of those involved, and the time and place of the event, but he also went a step further than Bromhall, for he clearly sought to establish credible witnesses. Where Bromhall had cited Herodotus and Origin, Mather wrote:

We shall begin with that *Remarkable Sea-Deliverance* which Mr. *Anthony Thacher* did experience ...a full and true Relation whereof, I find in a Letter directed to his Brother Mr. *Peter Thacher*, then a Faithful Minister of Christ in *Sarum England* (he was father to my worthy dear Friend Mr. *Thomas Thacher* late Pastor of one of the Churches in this Boston.) This Letter of Mr. *Anthony Thacher's* to his Brother being written within a few days after that eminent Providence hapned unto him, matters were fresh in his memory. I shall therefore here insert his Narrative in his own words...⁸⁰

Mather rigorously sought to establish the truthfulness of the tale. He set out the credentials of those involved, noting in particular that they were godly men and good friends of his. In addition, he cited the source, i.e. the letter, which he printed, so that the relation was in the words of those who experienced the event. It was thus a first hand account, of a recent event that was ‘fresh’, with multiple witnesses, verified by credible men of God.

Mather acknowledged that his influences and approach had come from those such as Matthew Poole and Robert Boyle. It was not just his approach that was shaped by these men, but the theme of Providence was an already established tradition in Protestant thought by this time. The ghost as an agent of Providence had already been written about by Lavater in the 1570’s, when he had said that ‘God doth suffer Spirites to appeare vnto his

⁷⁸ Mather, *Illustrious Providences*, Preface.

⁷⁹ Mather, *Illustrious Providences*, Preface.

⁸⁰ Mather, *Illustrious Providences*, p3.

electe vnto a good ende, but vnto the reprobate they appeare as a punishment.’⁸¹ As these new Protestant writers argued, if God allowed the dead to return, it had to be for a purpose. As such, the ghost became champion of the favourite Protestant themes, justice and Divine Providence. Consequently, the ghost that emerged in the works of these men and in the pamphlets was a new, crime fighting ghost. No longer did a ghost return to demand suffrages, but in its place, in a continuation of the theme of intercession, was a ghost who interceded or required intercession to right an injustice, in particular, one involving murder. This type of ghost fitted within the parameters of Protestant eschatology, especially that of Calvinism, and could function and exist without being tainted with popery. It was also in this capacity that those wishing to refute mortalism and atheism could turn to the sceptics and point out how the wonder of God’s Providence was illustrated by the presence of ghosts. Walsham has written that ‘Reformers poured scorn on the notion that the souls of the dead returned to avenge their crimes and to punish relatives who failed to carry out their last wishes or dishonoured them.’⁸² Yet, her basis for this argument is cited as Reginald Scot, the elite writer whose views were a lone sceptical voice and whose main agenda was to attack popery. It is also worthy of note that these pamphlets did not just deal with proof of life after death and Providence, they dealt with the concept of good and bad deaths and the idea of not wasting one’s time.

The ghost thus became a powerful figure in Protestant culture, both elite and popular. This was possible since the tales, in both academic books and popular pamphlets worked on several different levels. They featured people with whom the gentry, the middling and the lower sort could all associate. They were set in recognisable places, which, as the stories became more developed, incorporated traditional ideas of haunted locales that created a syncretism of pagan, Catholic and Protestant thought. Furthermore, they were often salacious, and importantly they contained examples of God’s continued interaction in the world, for every single story was resolved by an act of Divine Providence. They were shaped in print by authors who claimed to have heard first hand accounts or relations by credible witnesses. The oral fed into the textual and the textual fed back into the oral, as Michael McKeon phrased it, ‘Print not only replaced orality; over the

⁸¹ Lavater, *De Spectris*, p175.

⁸² Walsham, *Providence*, p28.

short term it also stimulated and perpetuated oral culture.’⁸³ As a consequence the ghost once more became an accepted feature of the mental landscape, if it had ever gone away.

The influence of notions of Providence, and the work of Mather can be seen in the work of Nathaniel Crouch. He published *The Kingdom of Darkness* a few years later in 1688 under the pseudonym Robert Burton. A prolific publisher as well as an author, he owned a bookshop on Cheapside. In his work *The Kingdom of Darkness*, he declared that the purpose of the book was ‘obviating the common Objections and Allegations of the Sadduces and Atheists of the Age, who deny the Being of Spirits, Witches, &c.’⁸⁴ His methodology was to provide, like Bromhall, Mather and Poole a collation of examples, and set it out as a history, ‘Containing near Fourscore memorable Relations, Forreign and Domestick, both Ancient and Modern.’⁸⁵ However, although he set out his work as an extensive collection of ghostly and demonic relations, unlike Bromhall and Mather, he was deliberately imprecise as to the specific provenance of his sources. As he wrote,

In this collection I have no respect to time when these matters were acted, so as to put them in Chronological order, though I shall set down the years wherein most were done...neither will I divide the Histories that are Domestick from those which happened in Foreign nations; But only relate bare matters of Fact as I find them recorded by credible Historians.⁸⁶

It is interesting that he had chosen ‘credible historians’ and ‘bare matters of fact’ over other elaborate details. He seemed to spurn these details as elaborations that would detract from the truth of the tales, for he stated that he would ‘therefore proceed with that brevity and perspicuity which becomes an uninterested person to use, wherein I shall indifferently set down the Relations...’⁸⁷ He sought to provide credibility through objective evidence, unlike Mather who drew entirely from narratives that concerned, or were related by, personal friends. Yet, despite this rhetoric about precise brevity, Crouch’s tales were substantial, like those of Mather, and unlike those of Bromhall, which were sometimes only a few lines long. For example, his tale of ‘Ann Bodenham, a Witch who dwelt near *Salisbury* in *Wiltshire* as it is related by *Edward Bowyer*...’ not only contained anchoring details of name and place, but it was also nine pages long. In conjunction with the stories, there were

⁸³ Michael McKeown, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore, 1987), p51.

⁸⁴ Nathaniel Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness* (London, 1688), Preface, A6r.

⁸⁵ Crouch, *Kingdom of Darkness*, frontispiece.

⁸⁶ Crouch, *Kingdom of Darkness*, p1.

⁸⁷ Crouch, *Kingdom of Darkness*, p1.

many woodcuts depicting a main character or event from the story, and this conjunction of the visual with the written text added extra weight to the reality of the tale. The reader could see an image of what happened and then process it as a real event.⁸⁸

In addition to this, his work contained stories lifted wholesale from Mather's collection. For instance, in his first tale in which 'In 1679, the house of *William Morse* in *Newberry* in *New-England* was strangely disquieted by a Dæmon...' spans nine pages and is cited as being from p142 of Mather's work.⁸⁹ The story varied only in occasional differences of grammar, otherwise it was almost verbatim from the stated page in Mather's work. This sharing of ideas illustrates how various elements and features of the new spirit collections could cross the Atlantic. Both Crouch and Mather's works were published in the 1680's, which seems to have been the peak decade for adopting this approach. In another similar account, George Sinclair, the Scottish natural philosopher and Professor of Philosophy published *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* in 1685. This popular book went through seventeen editions between 1685 and 1815 and Sinclair, like the others, amassed a large collection of ghostly tales to provide evidence against mortalism and atheism, writing that the 'reason, why Folk disbelieve Witches and Spirits, is Atheism. For if a man take good notice, he will find there is of it lurking at the root of the *Saducean Principle*.'⁹⁰ Unsurprisingly, disapprobation fell particularly on the unholy triad of Hobbes, Spinoza and Descartes:

But what can be the reason of so much *Atheism* in the World? There are many, but I shall only touch at two: First, there are a monstrous rable of men, who following the *Hobbesian* and *Spinosian* Principles, slight Religion, and undervalue the Scripture, because there is such an express mention of Spirits and Angels in it, which their thick and plumbeous capacities cannot conceive. Whereupon they think, that all contained in the Universe comes under the notion of things material, and bodies only; and consequently, no GOD, no Devil, no Spirit, no Witch. *Hobbs* the *Inglishman* is too well known by his Atheistical writings. There is a second Reason, namely the absurd Principles of the *Cartesian Philosophy*.⁹¹

His book sought to disprove these heresies by proving the existence of the returning dead. His approach, like the others, was to present a collection of tales, and he too

⁸⁸ See Fig.17 on p218.

⁸⁹ Crouch, *Kingdom of Darkness*, Av.

⁹⁰ George Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (Edinburgh, 1685), A2v.

⁹¹ Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, A4v-A5r.



THE KINGDOM OF Darkness:

OR

The History of Dæmons, Specters, Witches, Apparitions, Possessions, Disturbances, and other wonderful and supernatural Delusions, Mischievous Feats, and Malicious Impostures of the Devil.

Containing near Fourscore memorable Relations, Forreign and Domestick, both Antient and Modern.

Collected from Authentick Records, Real Attestations, Credible Evidences, and asserted by Authors of undoubted Verity.

Together with a Preface obviating the common Objections and Allegations of the Sadduces and Atheists of the Age, who deny the Being of Spirits, Witches, &c.

With Pictures of several memorable Accidents.

By R. B.

Robert Burton

Licensed and Entred according to Order.

LONDON, Printed for Nath. Crouch at the Bell in the Poultrey near Cheapside. 1688.

Fig.18. Nathaniel Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness* (London, 1688), Frontispiece.

known, some as was said, suspected *Morles* Wife to be guilty of Witchcraft. One of the Neighbours took apples which were brought out of the house and put them into the fire upon which their own houses were much disturb'd. Another Neighbour caused an horihoe to be nailed before the doors, and as long as it remained so, they could not perswade the suspected Person to go into the house, but when the horihoe was gone she presently visited them; The vanity and superstition of these experiments deserves to be exposed, since the Demons whom the blind Gentiles of old worshipped told their Servants that such things as these would very much affect them, yea and that certain Characters, Signs, and Charms would render their Power ineffectual, and accordingly they would become subject when their own directions were obeyed. It is sport to the Devils to see silly men thus deluded and made fools of, by them. Others suspected that one *Powel* a Seaman who was thought to be a Conjuror let the Devil on work thus to disquiet *Morles* family, or it may be some other thing yet reserved in the secrets of providence might be the true Original of all this trouble, *Essay of Provid. p. 142.*

II.

Very observable is the Narration concerning *Ann Bodenham* a Witch who dwelt at *Filbert* near *Salisbury* in *Wiltshire* as it is related by *Edward Bowyer* an eye & ear-witness of several Passages. This miserable woman did not conceal her Skill in foretelling things to come, helping people to store goods, and such other, feats that the more remarkable sort of Witches and Wizards pretend to. Among others one *Ann Style* Servant to *Richard Goddard* Esquire of the close in *New Sarum* resorted to her, who was sent by *Mr. Mason* this *Goddards* Son in law to learn of the Witch what the event of a Law suit would be which he designed to commence against his Father. The maid gave her three Shillings, and desired

answer, who took her staff and therewith drew a circle about the house and then took a book carry- over the circle with her hands, after that she green glass on the book, and placed within the an earthen pot of Coals wherein she threw



something which caused a very noisom smell, and told the maid she should not fear whatever happened for they would come, and so calling *Belzebub* *Tor*, *Satan* and *Lucifer* appear, there suddenly arose a very high wind which made the house shake, and presently the back door flying open there came five pits, as the maid supposed, in the likeness of ragged men, some bigger than others and ran about the house where she had drawn the Staff; and the Witch threw upon the ground crumbs of bread which the pits pickt up, and leapt often over the pan of coals

B

corls

Fig.19. Nathaniel Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness* (London, 1688), p11, the tale of Ann Bodenham.

advertised for contributions of ‘Relations about Spirits, Witches and Apparitions.’⁹² The fact that around the same time these men were employing matching methodologies to prove their case shows a shift in thought that was influential in England, Scotland and New England. They were not lone eccentrics; they were instead, part of a widespread Protestant shift in attitudes, not only towards the ghost, but also towards the means by which they proved their existence.

There were, of course, some differences in the final results. Sinclair differed from Bromhall and Crouch in that all his stories were contemporary. Like Mather he used credible, contemporary eye-witness accounts, sometimes in the form of letters – there are few of the tales from Antiquity that featured so heavily in Bromhall’s work. As Sinclair put it, his work was to be ‘A choice collection of modern relations proving evidently against the saducees and atheists of this present age, that there are devils, spirits, witches, and apparitions, from authentick records, attestations of famous witnesses and undoubted verity.’⁹³ Indeed, the oldest relation in the book was from 1649.

This position ran contrary to growing contemporary scepticism regarding the existence of witches. As I have demonstrated in chapter three, by the 1670’s the witch was no longer a powerful figure in the mental landscape. To explain strange events by means of witchcraft in the 1680’s in elite writing was a futile gesture in many ways, and no doubt, marked Sinclair as old fashioned and out of touch in elite circles. Yet he had attempted to remedy this by using the new forms of evidence, for according to Sinclair, proof of spirits by ‘famous witnesses’ refuted scepticism of any kind-

The *Relations* are plain and easy, and all of them may be attested by *Authentick Records*, or by famous witnesses, There are here, no old *Wives trattles about the fire*, but such as may bide the *Test*, and *strick trial* of any mans examination. What belief can be given to any human histories, and matters of *Fact*, related by famous Writters, as much may be given to these following Relations.⁹⁴

And so, in the first relation, in a case involving witches plaguing Sir George Pollock, he not only printed two letters from those involved, which detailed names (as many as possible were added), dates and events, but he also added the depositions and the

⁹² Coleman O. Parsons editor of George Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (Gainesville, 1969), ppxxi-xxii.

⁹³ Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, Frontispiece.

⁹⁴ Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, A1v.

legal proceedings of the court case against the accused witch. He made and presented a case as if in a court of law. The methods he used to prove the existence of both witches and ghosts were heavily based on the approach adopted by Joseph Glanvill, for it is Glanvill's 1681 edition of the *Drummer of Tedworth* that Sinclair used verbatim in his work. Not only this, but Glanvill's influence is also apparent in the other technique that Sinclair used in his work – that of empirical evidence. Glanvill's work on the Tedworth case, which happened over the winter of 1662/1663, ran parallel to that of Bromhall and Crouch and later deeply influenced Sinclair. There was a confluence of ideas on the subject matter of the ghost.

III

“Abominable cheats and impostures”: The Problems of Evidence

Of course, not everyone was persuaded by these accounts. John Webster, the vocal non-conformist, argued that the Devil could only have mental, not physical contact with mankind, and that many supposedly supernatural occurrences were the work of deceivers and fraudsters. In his work *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* of 1677, in which he primarily decried Enthusiasm, (with particular emphasis on the Quakers), he was highly dismissive of the Tedworth case, saying,

Must not all persons that are of sound understanding judge and believe that all those strange tricks related by Mr. Glanvill of his Drummer at Mr. Mompessons house, whom he calls the Demon of Tedworth, were abominable cheats and impostures (as I am informed from persons of good quality they were discovered to be) for I am sure Mr. Glanvill can shew no agents in nature, that the Demon applying them to fit patients, could produce any such effects by, and therefore we must conclude all such to be impostures.⁹⁵

This accusation of fraud was in turn roundly rebutted in 1684 by Richard Bovet. Written twenty years after the original event, his work demonstrates that the ‘truth’ of the Tedworth case was still a matter of fierce debate. The frontispiece to his *Pandæmonium, or the Devil's Cloyster* (1684) claimed that within was ‘a collection of several Authentick

⁹⁵ John Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, Ch.XIV (London, 1677), p278.

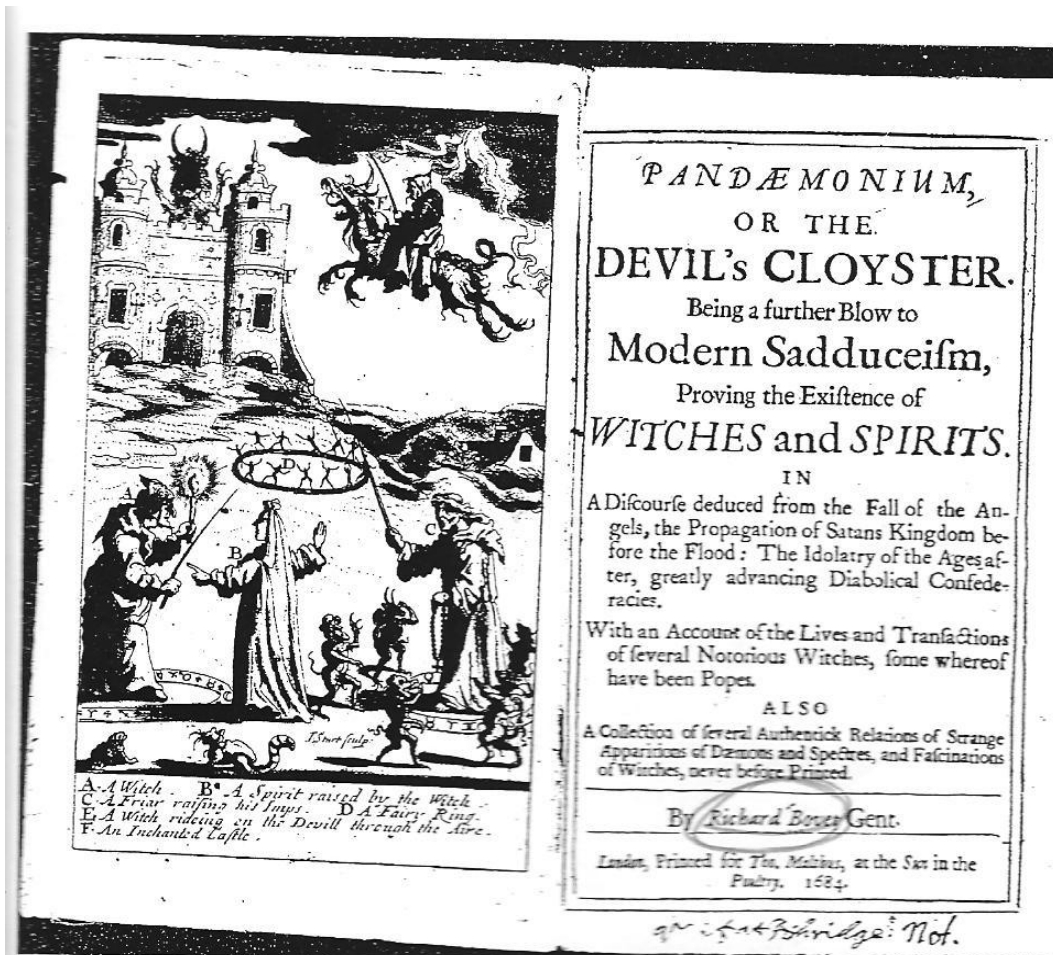


Fig.20. Richard Bovet, *Pandæmonium, or the Devil's Cloyster* (London,1684), Frontispiece.

Relations of Strange Apparitions of daemons and Spectres.’⁹⁶ Bovet was motivated by political and religious events relating to the succession of Charles II to write a book which, in essence, was a thinly veiled attack on Roman Catholicism. Bovet was a non-conformist, radical Protestant writer, who while attacking the papacy with one hand as ‘witchmongers’, criticised ‘the Legions of the Atheistical, and disbelieving pretenders; who seem to be incredulous of discourses of the Existence of Spirits’ on the other. This apparent contradiction he justified in his dedicatory epistle to no less than Henry More. Bovet wrote that he had read More’s letter prefixed to Glanvill’s *Saducismus Triumphatus*, in which More had said, ‘Those that lay out their pains in committing to writing certain well attested stories of witches, and Apparitions, do real service to true religion, and sound Philosophy...to the confounding of Infidelity, and Atheism.’⁹⁷ Taking this on board, Bovet added in his words, ‘I thought myself obliged by an indispensable necessity to contribute all I could to the asserting the reality of *Spiritual Existencies*.’⁹⁸

In attempting to do this, he too departed from the traditional sources of Scriptural, Patristic or Classical authorities. Of the latter he wrote, ‘As for the Fictions of the Ancient Poets, I have as little inclination as any man to affix any extraordinary Credit to them.’⁹⁹ Instead, he used the evidence of elite eye-witness testimony, claiming the authority for the reality of the events ‘will be Attested by many worthy, and unprejudiced persons, whose Testimonies are sufficient to rescue them from the Attempts of the most virulent detractors.’¹⁰⁰

With regards both to the Tedworth case and Webster’s scepticism, Bovet declared that such truths must be evident ‘to men of sound Judgment, and accurate Scrutiny.’ People like Webster, Bovet continued, ‘oppose...the most unquestionable Testimonies, of persons of the greatest Integrity and Generosity’ and doubt ‘what themselves had not with the greatest investigation of circumstances, been convinced to be beyond a possibility of doubting.’¹⁰¹ He added,

⁹⁶ Richard Bovet, *Pandæmonium, or the Devil’s Cloyster* (London, 1684), Frontispiece, see Fig.19, p222.

⁹⁷ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, A3r.

⁹⁸ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, A3r.

⁹⁹ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, A5r.

¹⁰⁰ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, A5v.

¹⁰¹ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, p61r.

they durst Effront 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 fond of crediting stories of that kind; Yet ...had some of this sort of men the impudence to declare to the World that the whole Relation was but a Figment, or Forgery, and that Mr. Mompesson, and Mr. Glanvil had retracted, whatever they had published touching that Transaction.¹⁰²

According to Bovet, those who denied seeing such apparent truths such as the existence of witches and ghosts had assumed ‘to themselves an arrogant confidence to deny the Divine Verity.’¹⁰³ In one passage he employed the language of the courts saying that those who denied these truths were ‘Arraigning the Equity of the Preceding Ages, the Justice of the most Solemn Judicatories’ and deriding ‘the wisdom of the most learned Councils.’ They were themselves ‘proof of what they deny’ i.e. of ‘the power of fascination, and a prevailing Daemon.’¹⁰⁴ He was putting the disbelievers on trial and proving their positions to be falsehood through proof of the ‘most learned Councils.’ In addition to Glanvill and More, he cited others whom he deemed sufficiently credit worthy to support his defence, such as ‘Mr. J.R. a Gentleman of good Ingenuity, and Reputation’¹⁰⁵ and of another named source, George Burton, he claimed ‘This Gentleman is so well known to many worthy Persons, Merchants and others upon the exchange in London, that there can be no need of my justifying for the Integrity of the relation.’¹⁰⁶

Bovet’s work was published in 1684, the same year as Mather’s book and just before those of Crouch and Sinclair. Although his work is also a collection of case testimonies, furnished with eye-witness accounts and places, name and dates, I have featured his work in this section because of one fundamental and important difference – that of his conscious use of sensory testimony. Glanvill’s techniques were very much in evidence in Bovet’s work. He printed letters from credible witnesses, and had a detailed narrative of events, defined by detail, and importantly sought to strengthen his case through evidence of sound, smell and touch. For example in his first relation of a haunting he wrote that the man of the house

¹⁰² Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, pp60, 61.

¹⁰³ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, p60.

¹⁰⁴ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, p60.

¹⁰⁵ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, p164.

¹⁰⁶ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, p175. Despite this claim I have not been able to ascertain the identity Burton.

Became an Ear-witness of the most dreadful, and accustomed noises; so, together with the whole Family, he repaired into a Chamber at one end of a Gallery, at the other end of which, was a large bulky Trunk, full of old lumber, and so heavy, that four or five men were not able to lift it...later...[they] found the door barr'd close with the great Trunk.¹⁰⁷

In this instance, there was sound and multiple witnesses to what constituted physical evidence, namely the movement of an object which, it was attested, several men could not lift.

Bovet also made use of another story, this time published the previous year. The *Demon of Spraiton* was a tale particularly rich in physical testimony. It was first published anonymously as a pamphlet in 1683, with the bold injunction, 'Where are your HOBBS', your SCOTS', your WEBSTERS, with their Blasphemous denials of the Existence of Spirits...' The author cited More and 'the ingenious Glanvill' who had 'printed in Confutation of your Brutish Stupidity; which one would think were enough forever to Silence and Confound the Advocates of Debauchery, and Sadducism.'¹⁰⁸

Although the pamphlet was anonymous Bovet asserted that it was the extract of a letter from 'T.C.Esquire, a near neighbour to the place' of the event which had happened in 1682.¹⁰⁹ He added, '& though it needed little confirmation further then the credit, that the Learning & Quality of that Gentleman had stamp't upon it, yet much of it was likewise known to and related by the Reverend Minister of *Barnstable*.'¹¹⁰

The story was long and detailed, and it was the physical aspects of the evidence that were crucial, many of which were violent in nature. There were firstly, multiple eye-witnesses to two ghosts. The first was an old gentleman who had returned to ensure his will had been correctly enacted and to repay various debts. These actions enraged his second wife from beyond the grave, for she was also dead. She was so angered that she returned to violently abuse the family and the servants of those who abided by the old man's requests. Many people saw this 'she-spectre' throw a young man off his horse, before thrusting his head between the bed railings. She choked and strangled him, threw him up into the air, undid his shoe laces, cast his wigs into trees, tore various people's clothes, hurled stools

¹⁰⁷ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, p165, 166.

¹⁰⁸ Anon, *A Narrative of the demon of Spraiton* (London, 1683).

¹⁰⁹ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, p177.

¹¹⁰ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, p177.

and furniture around and finally dumped the unfortunate young man into a bog. The witnesses were hurt, and there were reports of bleeding and bruises, of furniture broken, and the author asserted that ‘whether the young man be yet alive, I can have no certain account.’¹¹¹ While the Tedworth case was attributed to witchcraft, this one was ascribed to a malevolent ghost and the influence of Glanvill’s approach is clear to see. Not only was Glanvill mentioned in the original pamphlet and Bovet’s account, but his approach and style had been emulated. The criteria for credibility for some writers had moved on from simply putting out collections of stories. Irrefutable and clear physical evidence attested to by multiple witnesses, created a cast iron, *bone fide* ghost tale that would surely refute the heresies of Sadducism and atheism.

Glanvill’s approach of matching credible witnesses with sensory testimony, and the use of contemporary accounts, are also found in Sinclair’s work. As I mentioned before, he published Glanvill’s 1681 account of the *Drummer of Tedworth* in his work of 1685, about which he wrote,

I have collected some of them from *Saducismus Triumphatus*, that excellent Book composed by *Doctor Glanvil*, and *Doctor More*, and the rest are purchased from Persons of eminent honesty and Faith... It is not possible to write a Book of this Nature, but the *Author* must collect, since it depends, not upon a Mans own *Invention*, but essentially upon Information from others.¹¹²

He too used the technique of publishing multiple contemporary accounts, by credible witnesses furnished with details of names, places and dates. Crucially, like Bovet, he was also among the first to use physical evidence.

For example, in one narration in which the ghost of a gentlewoman returned to her maid, Alice, the maid questioned who she was and ‘expresse very great amazement, and said “were not my Mistris dead, I should not question but you are she.” She replied, “*I am the same that was your Mistris*”, & took her by the hand which Alice affirmed was cold as a *Ston*.’¹¹³ In another tale Sinclair wrote, ‘I read of an old *Gentleman* an excellent *Justice of Peace* in *England*, who did always dispute against the *immortality of the Soul*, and its *distinction* from the *Body*, and of the *existence of Spirits*. No reason could convince him,

¹¹¹ Bovet, *Pandæmonium*, pp177-187.

¹¹² Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, A1v.

¹¹³ Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, p128.

*but palpable experience.*¹¹⁴ This ‘palpable experience’ was certain to eradicate the strongest of doubts. In this case, the Justice experienced ‘such a *Clap* on the back’ by ‘some *invisible hand*’ that it ‘made the *Hall* ring.’ The gentleman, it transpired was ‘more confounded with this, than with all the *Philosophical*, or *Rational Arguments*, that could have been brought against him.’¹¹⁵

Although the maid Alice was not of the class or gender whereby she could be considered a credible witness, but she might be considered unlikely to lie and her account featured strong physical, ‘palpable’ evidence which circumvented this problem. With the Justice, there was physical contact and sound which together constituted ‘palpable experience’. In addition, like the Tedworth case, these relations were set in a clear temporal framework, with additional names and places added to provide additional substantiation. For example,

In 1632 near unto *Chester* in the *Street*, there lived one *Walker*, a yeoman of good estate, and a widower, who had a young woman named *Anna Walker* to his kinsman...who...one night sent away with one *Mark Sharp*, who was a *collier*...who had been born in *Blak-burne-Hundred* in *Lancashire*...one night about twelve, or one a clock at night, from having been putting Corn in the *Hopper*, the *Mill-doors* being shut, there stood a woman upon the midst of the floor with her hair about her head hanging down, and all bloody, with 5 large wounds on her head.¹¹⁶

Sinclair had provided the date, the time, the place, names, the status of those involved, a crime, the later discovery of a body and a trial at the assizes, where Mark Sharp was found guilty and hanged (although it did state that he had never confessed to having done the deed). That the ghost appeared in a quotidian setting to her relative not only added perhaps, unintentional horror to the tale, but clearly anchored it in ‘fact’. The witness, a man of good standing, could clearly testify that the ‘fact’ occurred at this time and in this place. The conventions for establishing the ‘fact’ in a court of law can be seen in this tale. No longer was simply giving the provenance of the tale enough, detailed contemporary accounts were now required to prove the case. In this narrative the influence of Glanvill’s *Drummer of Tedworth* is apparent, and indeed, Sinclair did relate the Tedworth story, and

¹¹⁴ Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, p188.

¹¹⁵ Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, p189.

¹¹⁶ Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, pp19, 20.

used Glanvill's account of events which he related word for word. He did not cite the original letters from the case, presumably because Glanvill was sufficiently credit-worthy to directly plagiarize.¹¹⁷

So, the Tedworth case is significant as it employed new ways to address the mystery of the event. Furthermore, the devices used to argue against mortalism reveal subtle differences in Protestant thinking at this stage. A case in point is that of Thomas Wadsworth, the avid preacher, non-conformist minister and religious writer. Wadsworth was in frequent dialogue with Richard Baxter, and Baxter apparently advised him on his ministry.¹¹⁸ Baxter also wrote the gracious obituary epistle in Wadsworth's posthumously published *Last Warning to Sinners* of 1677, stating that Wadsworth was a man 'addicted ...to the winning and edifying of souls'.¹¹⁹ His work *Antipsychothanasia, or the Immortality of the Soul Explained* (1670) reflected the new Protestant attitude to the ghost. Furthermore, the fact that he adopted the ghost in the way he did is rather unexpected, for although he denounced Thnetopsychism in clear terms, his initial tactics were fairly standard as he sought to prove 'the Soul's Immortality...by Scripture Arguments.' As Baxter said of Wadsworth's approach, 'he would not make light of...the use of such as reject not Scripture-proof, leaving out most of the Philosophical Reasons which Infidels [Atheists] expect; but adding some few of them which are of weight, though not a large performance of that part of the work.'¹²⁰ Ghosts must have met the criteria of 'weight' in the matter.

Initially, Wadsworth's dualist perspective was conventional. He said of the soul that 'her Original is from God, the Father of Spirits, and that to him she shall return, so soon as her earthly house proves untenantable'.¹²¹ He appeared to subscribe to the Bullingerian/Anglican view of immediate reward and punishment for our souls, saying, 'That our Souls are Immortal, that they shall not dye, when our bodies do; but shall immediately enter into paradise, and enjoy the presence of their desired Jesus...the souls of men separate at death from their bodies, enter into a state of joy or misery before the Resurrection'¹²² He saw

¹¹⁷ Jason McElliot, 'Crouch, Nathaniel [Robert Burton] (c.1640–1725?)', *ODNB*.

¹¹⁸ Alexander Gordon, 'Wadsworth, Thomas (1630–1676)', rev. J. William Black, *ODNB*.

¹¹⁹ Richard Baxter, *Mr. Thomas Wadsworth's Last Warning to Secure Sinners* (London, 1677), A5v.

¹²⁰ Baxter, *Mr. Thomas Wadsworth's Last Warning to Secure Sinners*, (1677), A7r.

¹²¹ Wadsworth, *Antipsychothanasia*, p2.

¹²² Wadsworth, *Antipsychothanasia*, pp4, 24.

Abraham's Bosom as a parable, yet his vision of the immediate afterlife seems to blend both Bullingerian and Calvinist thought, for although the righteous went straight to Paradise, Hell as a separate place of eternal torment was absent from his eschatology; instead he had the sinners annexed in an 'inferior' part of Heaven. He wrote,

Yet there are some inferiour part of the Heavens, where he [God] keeps particular Sessions, to which evil spirits may approach...God may pass sentence of Confinement or Imprisonment upon the Souls of the wicked, and yet not bring them into the third Heavens, the Paradise of God, the place where no unclean thing enters...there he doth transact many affairs relating to the Government of this World...If Devils may appear before God, then may the souls of wicked men, and , as Prisoners, receive a partial doom, til the Resurrection of the flesh, when the Sentence and Punishment will be complete upon them.¹²³

This is an extraordinary passage which shows a syncretic mix of different eschatologies, from Purgatory to Abraham's Bosom, to create a far from conventional view of the afterlife.

In addition to the conventional scriptural exegesis, he used analogies with nature saying that the soul was like a tree being nourished by the sun, which was God. This approach took up the first 138 pages of the 188 page long text before he veered in unexpected directions. He added an inexplicable mathematical diagram to prove that the soul was incorporeal, then added twelve pages of evidence as written by the Patristics in neat chronological order before adding three pages of ghost stories.¹²⁴ He wrote '*Lastly, And to shut all up, what shall we say to the Histories of those of many Ages, which have recorded the appearing of the Ghosts of men after death, as very credible stories; if the souls be not immortal?*', adding after relating some tales from Ancient Greece, contemporary Ireland, Scandinavia and Italy, that

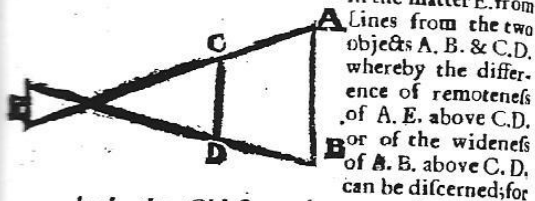
many more credible stories there are of such Apparitions, where the Ghosts of deceased men have detected Murders, rebuked injurious Executors, counselled their Wives and Children...Either such Spirits are really the Souls of the deceased, or else good or bad Angels. Not good Angels for they would never lie, in saying they were the Souls of dead men...Or bad Angels, but that is not credible, that They should be so kind and just to mankind, as these stories seems to import; therefore they were, as they said, the Souls of the Deceased.¹²⁵

¹²³ Wadsworth, *Antipsychothanasia*, p59.

¹²⁴ See Fig.20, p230.

¹²⁵ Wadsworth, *Antipsychothanasia*, pp155-157.

That there can be no Signatures in Matter of wideness and distance, appears hence: For, as for both of them, there can be no Note made



in the matter E. from objects A. B. & C. D. whereby the difference of remoteness of A. E. above C. D. or of the wideness of A. B. above C. D. can be discerned; for both the Objects make one and the same Signature in the matter E. And thus would the Soul, if it were purely corporeal or Elementary, be utterly inapprehensive of the different distances of things, as they stand one from another; things at half a Mile distance, would seem as near, as others but at a quarter of a Miles distance, which is contrary to experience. So that I inferre; Since that the faculty of Reason in man, apprehendeth such objects, and is posselt of such notions, that a substance merely elementary or corporeal, is incapable of; I conclude, The soul of man is no such substance; but, that it is a substance incorporeal, of a far nobler nature, which I have proved already to be immortal.

This does not agree with the principles of medicine. Hence, we have not yet found it at liberty Here with the author's arguments.

Here is farther shew'd the Immortality of this Doctrin of the Soul's Mortality.

That it hath an ugly influence on good Manners, is very evident; ~~If we consider,~~ And in the first place, let it be considered how notoriously this Opinion of the Soul's Mortality, gratifies that monstrous brood of speculative Atheists: the very first-born of whose blasphemies is this, That there is no such thing in being, as a Spirit, or substance incorporeal, but that the whole World is a congeries of elementary matter; and that our Souls are no more. And though I am not so wild, as to conclude every thing false, barely because bad men maintain them: Yet, when I see an Opinion, that such a vile Generation of Men hug, as some beloved Darling, and that it lies near the foundations of those Diabolical fallacious Sciences they build thereon; I say, I cannot but think it most certainly so, and in its original to be no less than a suggestion of the Devil: Nor is it, in the next place, a despicable consideration, to prove the likelihood of this Opinion's being false, if we think how highly complacential it is to the most sensual and debauched Sons and Daughters of Men, whilst, though they are not arrived to the height of speculative Atheism, yet are they compleat in the practick part thereof. For,

First, It hath a tendency to breed contemptible thoughts of their Souls and Spirits: for who almost

Fig.21. Geometrical configuration of the elements of the soul, Thomas Wadsworth, *Antipsychothanasia* (London, 1670), p138.

He was not explicit on quite how or why the dead were able to return from his unusual three tiered system of Heaven, but, for him, the amount of historical accounts, plus experience and quantity through the ages was evidence enough.

IV

The Resurrection and the Recycling of the Protestant Dead

For this new wave of writers, not only did ghosts exist, but they had reclaimed the word ‘ghost’ itself. For obvious reasons, for over a century, Protestant commentators had been wary of using the term ghost, instead favouring ‘Spectre’ and ‘Apparition’, in order to separate themselves from Catholicism. However, they now boldly restored the word, going a step further than previous Protestant writers. Henry More was the first Protestant writer to reclaim the word in the 1650’s. At a time when the witch and the ghost had become entwined in the mass ephemera of publications on witches, More was the first to separate them again and in doing so he created the conditions in which the Protestant ghost was possible. In his work of 1653, *An Antidote Against Atheism* he did not use the word ‘ghost’ at all but did use ‘apparition’ five times. Eight years later when *Immortality of the Soul* was published the reverse happened. He used the term ‘apparition’ four times and the term ‘ghost’ six times. In 1658, Bromhall used the word ‘ghost’ no less than 51 times. By the time George Sinclair wrote in 1685, the word had been firmly reincorporated into the Protestant lexicon. He used the word ‘apparition’ thirty-nine times and the word ‘ghost’ thirteen times. Crouch in 1688 used the term ‘ghost’ three times and the term ‘spectre’ once within the same story. By mixing the two terms in the relation as an appellation for the same entity, he was re-enforcing the fact that when he talked of the ‘ghost’ it was the returning dead he meant and nothing else. Similarly, when he wrote of a house that was ‘haunted by a Spirit or Ghost’ he was emphasising that he meant that spirit and ghost were one and the same thing.¹²⁶ It is important to note that both Sinclair and Crouch revived the adjuration that was so prevalent in late medieval exempla, both citing it in the same fearful tale of a ghost of a man’s head appearing in a bedroom fireplace. This ‘old man’s head’ appeared to a pious couple each night until the husband found the courage to say “in the

¹²⁶ Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, pp42, 43, 49.

cast her eye toward a little Chamber door just over against her, where she spied the head and face of an old man with a gray Head and Beard looking directly upon her at a little distance; At which sight she endeavouring to awaken her husband had not time, falling down instantly into a Swoon or Fainting Fit, and lay in that manner, till she heard some of her Neighbours open their doors when they came to Church; And then recovering her senses, wakened her husband and told him what had happened, who alleged it was only a fancy or delusion of her senses, and bid her be of good courage.

After supper being both, by themselves the Womans fear still continuing she made a huge fire and went to bed; After a little time the Husband casting his eye toward the Chimney espied the same Old Mans Head in the former place; He told his wife, who was like to have fallen into the former passion; He rises, lights a candle, sets it on the Table, and goes to bed again, encouraging themselves in God, and earnestly recommending their safety to his protection and providence; About an hour after they plainly perceived a young child with a Coat upon it hanging near the Old Mans Head; At which sight the Man flew out of his bed and his Wife after him, and taking her in his arms they kneeled down at the beds-side, and with fervent Devotion humbly intreated the Almighty to deliver them from this horror and disturbance; He lighted another candle the first being burnt out, and called to some of his Neighbours, but hearing no answer returned to their bed, where they both kneeled and prayed in excessive fear and perturbation of mind so that they sweat again. Soon after a naked arm appears in the room toward the roof from the elbow downward and the hand stretched out as when one man is about to salute another; He then again leapt out of his bed, and kneeling down begged help from heaven; The Arm

now came very near as it were to shake hands with him, whereupon he goes into his bed again, and at the opening of the Curtain it offered him another apparition; The Man and his Wife embracing each



other through fear, and still eying the naked arm they prayed more earnestly, but at length it offering to touch him he was in such consternation and amazement, that he was like one distracted, yet taking courage he boldly spoke to it after this manner; *In the name of the living God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ tell me why thou troublest my House? To my knowledge I never wronged any man by killing or cheating, but have lived honestly in the World; If thou hast received any wrong, and I can right thee I shall do my utmost for thee, but trouble me no more; Notwithstanding this the Arm and Hand came nearer than before, yet still after a courteous manner with an offer of acquaintance. They fell to prayers again, both of them being even drowned with sweat, and in the meantime they saw a little Dog come out of the little room aforementioned, which after a while looking about both toward the Bed and the naked arm laid it self down*

Fig.22. Woodcut of the ghost of the old man's head which appeared in the fireplace. Nathaniel Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness* (1688), p51.

name of the living God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ tell me why thou troublest my House?’¹²⁷ The difference between this adjuration and the traditional one was the insertion of Christ’s name into the formulation. The adjuration had been Protestantised.

In addition to this, in order to prove their case that ghosts existed, these authors not only printed contemporary tales, but also reworked those previously found in medieval *Miracula*. They reworked them and contemporised them so that they were free from any taint of Catholicism and made to seem like new events. In doing so, we can see the beginnings of the creation of the ghost story, and the establishment of what would later be deemed as fiction, rather than as fact.

For example Sinclair related the tale of Julian[ne] Cox, an ‘*English* woman apprehended for witchcraft.’¹²⁸ It is the classic medieval hunt story reworked. The huntsman and his dogs chased the witch in the form of a hare from her house. Upon vanquishing the hare he picked it up only to find it transformed again into Miss Cox and ‘He knowing her, was so affrightened that his hair on his head stood on end.’¹²⁹ Compare this to the traditional hunt tale from Caesarius of Heisterbach in the thirteenth century, in which a mistress of a priest demanded to be buried in her best shoes. She is spotted after death screaming, running and crying for help as a hellish horseman (no doubt the Devil) chased her with a pack of hounds.¹³⁰ Many similar stories feature unruly women; the whore, the witch and in a more disturbing version in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, written c.1353, a cold hearted, virtuous woman. The hunted woman was trapped in a cycle in which she was repeatedly chased by mastiffs and had her ‘hard, cold heart’ ripped out and thrown to the dogs to feed on. A previous suitor who had committed suicide after she had failed to yield to his erotic desires was her pursuer. She had been condemned for her sins of pride and cruelty and for ‘being convinced that she was more of a saint than a sinner.’¹³¹

This was not the only tale to be reworked, for the medieval revenant story reappeared, only this time the revenant was not a reanimated corpse, but was now a ghost.

¹²⁷ Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, p51. See also Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, pp142-147.

¹²⁸ Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, pp189-191.

¹²⁹ Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, p191.

¹³⁰ Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue of Miracles* (13th C), Book XII, Chap XX. Ed. Joynes (2001), pp37-38.

¹³¹ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (c.1353) Trans. G. H. McWilliam (London, 1995), p419.

As I have shown in chapter one, these revenant stories were found in many medieval *miracula* by court writers such as Walter Map, William of Newburgh, and Caesarius of Heisterbach. These revenants were either reanimated corpses, caused by the entering of a demonic spirit into the cadaver, or the dead person, re-animated by their soul and able to rise from the tomb until their flesh decayed, at which point the spirit departed to the otherworld.¹³² They were always fleshy, though rancid with deterioration, and different from the skeletons depicted in the *danse macabre*. In one of these medieval tales, in Buckinghamshire, the corpse of a man returned from his tomb the day after his burial, and night after night, attempted conjugal relations with his terrified and revolted wife. He then ‘took to prancing among the animals in the byre and the fields around the house’ which caused a great disturbance in the local community.¹³³ This story first appeared in English in William of Newburgh’s *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* in the twelfth century and after lying dormant for centuries next resurfaced in Henry More’s *Immortality of the Soul*, but only this time the revenant was now named Contius and was now a ghost. More’s version was brief, but it is clearly the same tale;

the *Spirits* of the deceased Husbands, would be very troublesome to their Wives, & endeavour to lye with them, while they could have any recourse to their dead Bodies. Which mischief therefore was prevented by a Law, that if any Woman was thus infested, the Body of her Husband should be burnt, and his Heart struck through with a stake. Which also put a speedy end to those stirs and tragedies the Ghost of *Cuntius* and those others caused at *Pentsch* and *Breslan* in *Silesia*. The like disquietnesses are reported to have hapned in the year 1567.¹³⁴

Compare this with Crouch’s version thirty years later of a man named Contius, of Pentsch, Silesia, date not given, who ‘had not been dead a day or two when several rumours were spread in the Town of a Spirit in the shape of Contius that would have ravished a Woman...his Widdow, to give him place for it was his right.’ Contius proceeded to throw objects about, and opening and shutting doors and gates very loudly, ‘galloping up and down like a wanton Horse’ and tormenting dogs, cows, horses, poultry and goats.¹³⁵ As in the original medieval tale, Contius’s corpse was exhumed, decapitated, mutilated and then

¹³² See Caciola, ‘Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture’.

¹³³ William of Newburgh, (1136-98), *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, Book V, Chap.XXII. ed. Joynes (2001), pp97-98.

¹³⁴ Henry More, *Immortality of the Soul* (London, 1659), p292.

¹³⁵ Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, pp39, 40.

burned to prevent further such occurrences. Like the original, it took extraordinary force to dispose of the menace, for when local townspeople tried to burn it, 'it proved as unwilling to be burnt as before to be drawn' so the hangman was forced to tear the body apart with hooks and cut him into pieces 'to make him burn', and in doing so the blood spurted onto the hangman's face and 'cut him.' Eventually, they succeeded and he was burnt to ashes, whereupon they were thrown into the river and 'this turbulent Ghost never appeared more.'¹³⁶ Contius the revenant had been appropriated by More and Crouch and reshaped to suit their purposes in a new incarnation, as a ghost.

It is difficult to know where both More or Crouch found this tale as More offers no provenance for it and his version is pared down. Crouch's version was much more elaborate which may simply be artistic embellishment. Still, it was very similar in richness of detail to that of William of Newburgh's original twelfth-century account. Although Crouch asserted that he was not concerned with provenance, he stated that his tale came from Weinrichius, who penned *Capita Disputationis Theologica* in Leipzig in 1597. However, he noted that Weinrichius himself had asserted that 'he was not the first Pen-man...but transcribed it from one that...dwelt in the place.'¹³⁷ It is feasible that Crouch lifted the tale himself from the original and reshaped it to his purpose, for he cites his sources as '*Camer. Hist. Med. p290.*'¹³⁸

In addition to tales taken from men of credit and status, a number of writers recycled standard stories from each other, clearly signalling the credit worthiness of the other author to the reading public. As the Catholic Taillepie borrowed from the Calvinist Lavater, and George Sinclair from More and Glanvill, so Crouch borrowed from Mather and Sinclair, lifting whole tales and reproducing them verbatim, citing Sinclair's work as the source.¹³⁹ For example, Crouch related Sinclair's tale of a woman in Edinburgh, who

¹³⁶ Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, p45.

¹³⁷ Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, p38. This was possibly Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg. There was a Doctor of Theology in Lipsia (Leipzig) Saxony called George Weinrich, who penned *Capita Disputationis Theologica* (Lipsia, 1597), Lipsia was the home of Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg who wrote extensively on apparitions of the dead in his *Chronicon* in the early 11th century. That I located the story in William of Newburgh (1136-98), *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* suggests, although does not confirm absolutely, the transmission of the tale across Europe. Andrew Joynes says that these tales are identical to the Scandinavian tales of the risen dead. See p88 in *Medieval Ghost Stories* (Woodbridge, 2001).

¹³⁸ Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, p65. I have been unable to locate this work but the wording suggests a medieval history.

¹³⁹ Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, pp23, 24.

after death, returned to torment her husband who had a new mistress, claiming that he ‘had too soon forgotten her’ and requested that he should join her in the afterlife. Subsequently, he took sick and died within a month.¹⁴⁰ In turn, Sinclair appropriated tales from Glanvill and Bovet. Sinclair’s noted tale about the fairy boy of Leith, for example, can be found in Bovet on p172, a year before Sinclair’s work came out. This is hardly surprising however, as I mentioned before that he actually advertised and cast about, seeking to collect contemporary stories.

Crouch also appropriated ideas and tales from the witchcraft tradition and, crucially, from pre-Reformation traditional thought. He went back to late medieval thought and reclaimed and revived the strong ghost tradition of the past, reshaping it in a clearly Protestant form in order to refute the heresies of Mortalism and Atheism. He asserted, unlike the radical Protestants of the previous generation, that the dead did return; ‘As to Apparitions, That Spirits have sometimes really as well as imaginarily appeared to Mortals in the World is amongst sober men beyond controversy.’¹⁴¹ Crouch’s work thus became a clear example of the syncretism of traditional ideas and elements of Protestant thought.

Crouch himself had recycled, and his stories were cited in Richard Baxter’s *Certainty of the World of Spirits* of 1691. Baxter, was like Crouch, neither straightforwardly Anglican nor Calvinist in his thinking, but he held a long term interest in the subject and was drawn into the Poole project. He too drew on other non-conformist writers, such as Crouch, and Sinclair for he allowed that ghosts existed and his purpose like the others was to refute the twin enemies of mortalism and atheism. He declared that ‘to be an *Atheist* was to be mad.’¹⁴² Like Crouch, he assembled a collection of hauntings and witchcraft in order to ‘cure’ the ‘Atheists, Sadduces and Infidels.’¹⁴³ Also, like Glanvill, More, Sinclair, Bovet and Crouch, his stories were verified by gentlemen of good credit, yet he went a step further in his approach and printed them as letters from the said gentlemen. In doing this, he was taking ‘original’ evidence and placing it in the public sphere as ‘fact’, declaring, ‘I dare say have such Evidence, as will leave every sadduce that

¹⁴⁰ Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, pp23-24.

¹⁴¹ Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, Preface.

¹⁴² Richard Baxter, *Certainty of the World of Spirits* (London, 1691), Preface.

¹⁴³ Baxter, *Certainty of the World of Spirits*, Preface.

readeth them, either convinced, or utterly without excuse.’¹⁴⁴ A bold claim, indeed. The authors of these letters were, of course, of elevated social status and men of good sense, such as Colonels, Lords, Earls, Doctors, Schoolmasters, Ministers, Gentlemen and women famed for their piety. For example, in the relation of ‘The Devil of Maçon’, it was noted that the events were witnessed by no less than fifteen men and women of ‘known learning, piety and Honesty.’¹⁴⁵ It is not insignificant that these witnesses were all good godly Protestants, for they fitted into the ideal of the community of multiple witnesses. In such cases, their evidence could not possibly be refuted, or even fall victim to accusations of papist nonsense.

While, like the other authors, there is little in the way of theology in this work, Baxter did write of what he perceived happened after his death. He claimed,

that if my soul must pass through the airy inferior region, where these Miserable Spirits now inhabit, it will not be dangerously Assaulted by them, but in triumph: For I know whom I have trusted, and into the hands of him do I commend my Spirit...to convey his[my] soul to *Abrahams Bosom*: Yea to be that day with Christ in Paradise.¹⁴⁶

This extraordinary passage shows a blending of different eschatological ideas. Spirits of the ‘miserable’, possibly the damned, inhabit a third space, an ‘airy inferior region’ that is reminiscent of More’s views. He was unclear why this was so, presumably because Hell did not yet exist. By the same inference, then, Heaven should not yet exist, and while he did speak of Abraham’s Bosom, it was synonymous with Heaven, for in his description, Christ was present. This supports what I previously noted in chapter two, that by the late seventeenth century, Abraham’s Bosom meant Heaven, and was not seen to be an intermediate, third place for the middle state of the soul. In addition to all of this he believed that the souls of the dead could return to the living.

Baxter’s work reveals that all these strands of shifting Protestant eschatological thought had mixed together to become a heterogeneous, amorphous set of beliefs. Like those before him, Baxter, recycled stories from others. With strong echoes of Crouch’s recycled revenant story, he recounted an incident when the wife of a self declared atheist

¹⁴⁴ Baxter, *Certainty of the World of Spirits*, Preface.

¹⁴⁵ Baxter, *Certainty of the World of Spirits*, pp18-21.

¹⁴⁶ Baxter, *Certainty of the World of Spirits*, Preface.

was plagued by a monstrous visitor. An ‘Apparition walked into the [bed] chamber, having an unsufferable Stench, like that of a putrified Carcase.’¹⁴⁷ The apparition was of her husband who was a General serving in Ireland, and like the aforementioned revenant tale, this foul creature attempted to claim his conjugal rights from the unfortunate woman. Furthermore, this apparition set a series of fires in the nearby fields and harassed the animals. Baxter printed a series of letters relating this account, and its veracity was proven by the multitude of witnesses in the case. Its themes are uncannily similar to the revenant tale.

Along with the Drummer of Tedworth and the Demon of Spraiton, the now familiar tale from Melanchthon, of the widow’s hand turning black when touched by the ghost of her dead husband also appeared in Baxter’s book, unchanged from its original. He also commended Lavater’s *De Spectris* as a book that ‘is so common and well known ... that I will suppose the Learned Reader to have read it.’ He further cited Le Loyer as a place to read about the fraudulent activities of servants who pretend to be ghosts to cover their fornication and other sins, claiming ‘I myself discovered a notable Cheat in a Servant in my own House.’¹⁴⁸

Baxter also appropriated Crouch’s tale of a ghost that appeared in Brightlingsea (Brighton), Sussex, in 1659. Crouch related the tale as being an example of ‘amazing providence’ in which stones and dust were thrown at a couple, their milk house was set ablaze and knives were thrown. The upshot was that the husband of the haunted couple confessed he had been ‘an Hypocrite and a Pilfering Fellow, and that he had robbed his Master, &c.’¹⁴⁹ Crouch concluded the tale with the declaration that ‘Divine providence seemed to be much maligned, thus to discover the Hypocrisy and Theft of the man by these invisible Agents.’¹⁵⁰ In Baxter, this story was elaborated, but this time the cause is attributed not to Providence, but instead to exposure of the theft of goods by the husband from a local woman who ‘was formerly suspected to be a witch.’¹⁵¹ This illustrates the mutability of these tales, and how they could be recycled and adapted to suit a particular polemic. No longer were Protestant elites quibbling about the possibility of these events,

¹⁴⁷ Baxter, *Certainty of the World of Spirits*, p25.

¹⁴⁸ Baxter, *Certainty of the World of Spirits*, both cited on p122. See chapter three for more on this.

¹⁴⁹ Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, pp94-97.

¹⁵⁰ Crouch, *The Kingdom of Darkness*, p97.

¹⁵¹ Baxter, *Certainty of the World of Spirits*, pp54-57.

instead they were using them to lend substance to their own agendas. The ghost was no longer something to be rejected outright, but was a crucial polemical tool, and it is apparent that Protestant writers clearly understood this. They no longer wrote to correct vulgar errors; instead they manipulated the ghost to suit their principles.

John Aubrey, biographer, archaeologist and antiquarian, published *Miscellanies* in 1696, just before he died. The only one of his works he saw published in his lifetime, his work was a jumbled and seemingly random collection of anecdotes on everything from second sight to haunted houses, gathered loosely into themed chapters. It was dedicated ‘TO THE Right Honourable JAMES EARL of Abingdon, Lord Chief-Justice in Eire of all His Majesties Forests and Chaces on this side *Trent*.’¹⁵² His declared friendship with the Earl helped cement not just his social status but also provided an authentic provenance for his tales. Also, the hauntings in his work usually happened to those of high social status: for example, he relates that ‘*Charles* the Simple, King of *France*, as he was hunting in a Forest, and lost his Company, was frightened to simplicity by an Apparition.’ Likewise he recorded that, ‘There is a Tradition (which I have heard from Persons of Honour) that as the Protector *Seymor* and his Duchess were walking in the Gallery at *Sheen* [in *Surrey*] both of them did see a Hand with a bloody Sword come out of the Wall. He was afterwards beheaded.’¹⁵³ The ghost tale was no longer the provenance of the vulgar in elite thought; the elite had reclaimed the ghost to prove their point. The following tale related by Aubrey, demonstrates a culmination of this new approach to the dead;

The Learned *Hen. Iacob*, Fellow of *Merton* College in *Oxford*, died at Dr. *Iacob*'s M. D. House in *Canterbury*. About a Week after his Death, the Doctor being in Bed and awake, and the Moon shining bright, saw his Cousin *Henry* standing by his Bed, in his Shirt, with a white Cap on his Head, and his Beard Mustaches turning up, as when he was alive. The Doctor pinched himself and was sure he was awaked: He turned to the other side, from him; and after some time took courage to turn the other way again towards him; and *Henry Iacob* stood there still, he should have spoken to him, but he did not; for which he has been ever since sorry. About half an Hour after, he vanished. Not long after this, the Cook Maid, going to the Woodpile to fetch Wood to dress Supper, saw him standing in his shirt upon the Woodpile.

¹⁵² John Aubrey, *Miscellanies upon the following subjects* (London, 1696), A3r.

¹⁵³ Aubrey, *Miscellanies*, pp59-60.

This Account I had in a Letter from Dr. *Jacob* 1673, relating to his Life, for Mr. *Anthony Wood*; which is now in his Hands.¹⁵⁴

This tale had evidence from men of learned and erudite status, whose credentials were clearly stated. There were two witnesses, one from the lower social order – the cook maid – and the other from the higher social order – the academic. The main witness of social standing, Dr Jacob, further tested the evidence by checking his physical senses. He pinched himself to make sure he was not dreaming and regretted not checking further by the act of speech, although he did relate the time span and date of events. Aubrey claimed he had personally received the tale first hand from the witness in a letter, which was dated as further proof, and was now owned by Anthony Wood, the famous Antiquarian and personal friend of Aubrey.¹⁵⁵ All the elements that comprised a reliable argument for the existence of life after death, set in motion in the 1650's, had reached its apotheosis by 1696, and had been neatly drawn together and presented as irrefutable fact.

¹⁵⁴ Aubrey, *Miscellanies*, pp67-68.

¹⁵⁵ Wood was assisted by Aubrey in his collection of pamphlets. They collaborated over a period of twenty-five years. See Graham Parry, 'Wood, Anthony (1632–1695)', *ODNB*.

Chapter Six

From Fact to Fiction: The Rise of the Ghost Story

In the previous chapter, I examined elite writing on the subject of ghosts in the late seventeenth century and I showed how important the ghost remained in proving the immortality of the soul. I also argued that the new methods of collating incidents from multiple witnesses served to give an epistemological foundation for collections of ghostly narratives and demonstrated how tales, both old and new, got recycled and reconstituted on a regular basis. Yet, these were not the only texts in circulation at the time, and in this chapter I will examine the less elite, more populist texts that emerged in this period, which together with the works by Bromhall, Sinclair and others, laid the foundation for the ghost story as a piece of ‘fiction’, rather than a relation of ‘fact’.

From the 1640’s onwards there was an explosion of cheap print, due in part to the lifting of press censorship in 1641. By the time censorship was re-established in 1661, print was so prolific and in such demand by the public that independent presses remained in action, although perhaps a little more circumspectly than before. Naomi Conn Liebler estimates that, in London alone, the total of printed ephemera published in the mid-seventeenth century was about 375,000, or the equivalent of one item per person.¹ She added that although we can not assume every adult bought a pamphlet at some point in the year, there were many who would buy more than one. Pamphlets relating all kinds of strange and marvellous things, from two-headed babies, to giant fish, and of course the ghost, formed a significant part of the output. Tessa Watt has noted that prior to the lifting of censorship, in the period of 1560 to 1622, there were forty-two publishers in London alone who specialised in this kind of literature.² After the easing of censorship in 1641 this increased exponentially. With such a plethora of publications in circulation, readers of all social stations would have had access to this printed matter. As Conn Liebler points out, this ephemeral literature would have been shared and distributed, within households and in local communities. As she notes, domestic servants had access to printed matter bought by the master of the house and vice versa. Tessa Watt argues that at a time of increasing

¹ Naomi Conn Liebler, *Early Modern Prose Fiction* (New York, 2007), p5.

² Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991), pp264-5, Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York, 2001).

literacy, that is, the ability to read rather than write, many more people could read the text of a broadside ballad than could sign their names. Furthermore, pamphlets and almanacs were widely available at markets and fairs, often sold by itinerant peddlers, which suggests a readership which crossed all the social and economic borders of English life.³

Adam Fox has found that pamphlets of all kinds were disseminated via the social networks of inns and alehouses, and by carriers and traders. In addition, by the end of the seventeenth century, coffee houses provided another means for the distribution and sharing of the pamphlets, and the ideas contained within them.⁴ Pamphlets were the cheap ephemeral literature of the masses, and the ghost pamphlet formed a significant genre within the canon. They were published at the same time as the printed collections, that is from the 1660's onwards and they peaked around the 1670's and 80's. They had attention grabbing titles such as *A True Relation of a Horrid Ghost* (1673) and *The Rest-less Ghost* (1675), and they were in many ways the tabloids of the day. They were colourful, violent tales, frequently furnished with extensive descriptions. Only one of the ghost stories out of the twenty-two pamphlets that survive was registered with the Worshipful Company of Stationers. Since they were all printed post-1661 when censorship of the press was re-established, this suggests they were printed on independent presses, possibly illegally.⁵ As a result authorship is a problem, for they were printed anonymously.

In form and content they could be up to eight or nine pages long, and they had a constructed beginning, a middle and a conclusion. They were rich in detail, as they contained names, dates, locations, graphic descriptions of events, and even dialogue. The central characters were generally drawn from the middling-sort and below, with maids and apprentices often being the key character. This suggests a target readership.

³ Liebler, *Early Modern Prose Fiction* (New York, 2007), pp7-8.

⁴ Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2000) pp400-401; Margaret Hogden, 'Fairs of Elizabethan England', *Economic Geography* 18 (1942), pp.389-400; Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs 1500-1800* (London, 1979); Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991); Naomi Tadmor, James Raven and Helen Small, *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996); Sandra Clark, *Women and Crime in the Street Literature of Early Modern England* (London, 2003), ch.3 'the Broadside Ballad'; Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat* (New Haven, 2002), chs.1-5, pp3-183.

⁵ The one that was registered was a murder/ghost story licensed to be published by the censor Roger L'Estrange in 1677; Anon, *The Wonder of this Age* (London, 1677).

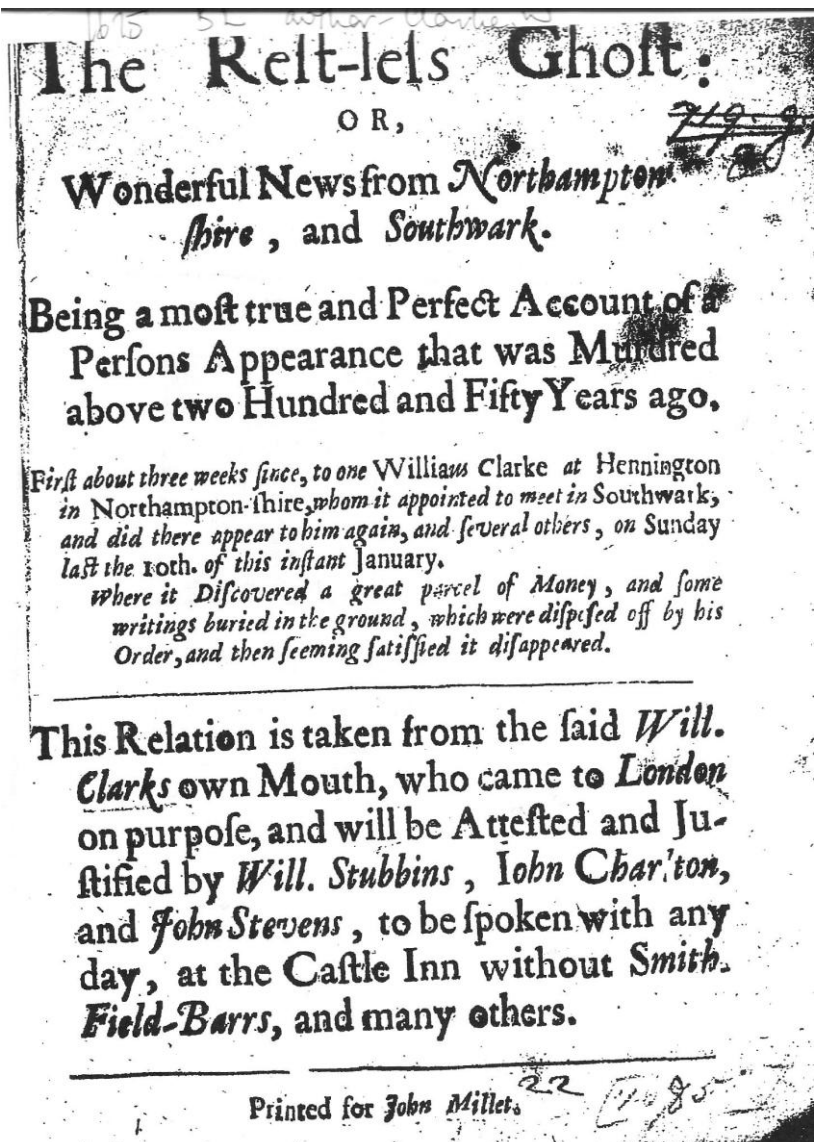


Fig.23. Anon, *The Rest-Less Ghost* (London, 1675).

Two forms of print ran parallel to each other and the fact that two varieties of ghost literature were published, aimed at different levels of the social strata suggests a widespread appetite for the ghost. Where the works of More, Crouch, Bovet et al had clearly been targeted at other elites who would have been familiar with the terms ‘Sadducees’, ‘atheists’, ‘peripateticks’ and ‘pyrhonnists’, the ghost pamphlets were aimed at a less elite readership. There was plenty of rhetoric about the ‘Judgements of Almighty God’, and warnings to ‘moderate your Deeds and Actions in this life’, but there was also a marked absence of theological debate.⁶ The language was of Divine Providence and mercy, not of mortalism and atheism. The pamphleteers sought to tap into lay folk beliefs, and they were unashamedly populist in tone.

It is important to recognise that these pamphlets were original compositions, in the sense that their content was not merely copied from other contemporary sources. They did not recycle and reuse stories in the way that Bovet et al had done, but instead, the pamphleteers centred their ghostly narrative upon real crimes that had been tried in the assizes. Evidence about whether the author intended to produce a piece of fiction, or a recitation of fact is elusive, nonetheless a complex embellishment of ‘fact’ emerged. A typical example is *A Full and True Relation of the examination and confession of W. Barwick and E. Mangell* published in 1690.⁷ On September 16th 1690, the judge Sir John Powel, passed a sentence of death by hanging in chains, upon William Barwick at the Assizes of York, for allegedly murdering his heavily pregnant wife Mary. The pamphlet stated that Barwick had been forced to marry Mary after getting her pregnant, and having grown ‘weary’ of this enforced tie, he had ‘ventur’d body and soul’ to get rid her. So at two o’clock on Palm Monday, Barwick supposedly beat her, and then threw her into a local pond where she drowned. He then dragged her body from the pond, and hid her in the nearby bushes until the next evening. At dusk he returned and dug a shallow grave by the pond with a ‘hay-spade’. The following day he went to visit Mary’s brother-in-law, and told him that she had gone to visit his uncle at Selby. However, as the author reminded the reader ‘Heaven would not be so deluded, but rais’d up the Ghost of the *Murder’d Woman*

⁶ Anon, *An Account of a most Horrid and Barbarous Murther and Robbery* (London, 1694); Anon, *A True Relation of the Horrid Ghost of a Woman* (London, 1673); Anon, *A Full and True Relation of the examination and confession of W. Barwick and E. Mangell* (London, 1690); Anon, *The Deemon of Marleborough* (London, 1675); Anon, *Great News from Middle-Row* (London, 1679); Anon, *Strange and Wonderful News from Lincolnshire* (London, 1679).

⁷ Anon, *Confession of W. Barwick and E. Mangell* (London, 1690).

to make the discovery.’ So, on the Easter Tuesday at two o’clock in the afternoon, Mary’s brother-in-law went to the pond to fetch some water, and to his amazement saw Mary sitting by the pond, only her countenance was much altered. She was ‘extream Pale and Wan, with her Teeth in sight, but no Gums appearing’. When he went to approach her, she suddenly disappeared. He thought no more of it until his devotional prayers that evening, when that ‘Apparition return’d again to his thoughts, and discompos’d his Devotion.’ Upset he told his wife (Mary’s sister) of what he had seen, and she ‘laying Circumstances together, immediately inferr’d, that her Sister was either Drown’d, or otherwise *Murder’d*.’ They embarked upon an enquiry after which Barwick confessed, although he later claimed he had done so under duress, and that he had in fact sold his wife for five shillings. However, he could not prove this defence which was regarded as ‘too frivolous to outweigh circumstances.’⁸

This relation was typical of the new Protestant ghost tale, in which ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ were delivered to the readership. The reality of the ghost was given credence by using real criminal cases like that of William Barwick, and as such it was part of a whole new genre of ghost tales. While Crouch, Bovet et al used names, dates and location to give their tales authenticity, the pamphlets took this approach a step further by using contemporary, well known murder cases. Yet awareness that the authors could be accused of fraud was addressed in *The Wonder of this Age* of 1677.⁹ In this narration, a ‘Ghost...in the form of a man’ caused much disturbance in a house, where strange noises were heard, ‘things met upon the stairs, but not seen’, and curtains were opened and closed. One night the ghost appeared to the man of the house, and explained that ‘Thirty years ago I was barbarously Murthered in this house for my money...my Blood is not Revenged; I Charge you to acquaint the Magistrates that the thing may be Examined.’ He continued ‘God will raise up Witnesses: and rather than fail, I will appear, and make the Murderer’s confess it.’ Subsequently, his bones were found under the floorboards. Two servant women who had lived in the house at the time of murder were arraigned. They vigorously swore their innocence, but soon after one of the women sickened and died, which was seen as evidence

⁸ Anon, *Confession of W. Barwick and E. Mangell* (1690).

⁹ Anon, *The Wonder of this Age* (London, 1677); Anon, *An Account of a most Horrid and Barbarous Murther and Robbery* (London, 1694); Anon, *A True Relation of the Horrid Ghost of a Woman* (London, 1673); Anon, *Confession of W. Barwick and E. Mangell* (1690); Anon, *The Deemon of Marleborough* (London, 1675); Anon, *Great News from Middle-Row* (London, 1679); Anon, *Strange and Wonderful News from Lincolnshire* (London, 1679).

of her guilt. This tale of God's vengeance was prefaced with the acknowledgement of the boundaries of truth and lies, saying that the circumstances of the relation were 'so strange, that 'tis not to be expected, but many will suspect the Truth thereof, and decry it as a Fiction.' The author added, 'But having received sufficient Attestations of its verity as well by Leters to divers worthy Persons in London; as by the Information of several credible People, lately come from the Parts wherein the Thing was transacted.'¹⁰

These accounts not only show the pamphleteers' awareness of the current epistemology on proving the reality of ghosts, but they also show how the authors took this new approach, and extended and elaborated upon it. In doing so, they created a new genre of ghost story that fitted comfortably within the parameters of Protestant thought. Yet, there are echoes of pre-Reformation themes at work within the tale. The returning soul may no longer have been tormented by the physical agonies of Purgatory, but they were suffering the anguish of a guilty conscience. They were so distressed that they were unable to rest in peace. To obtain this peace, they required intercession, action and resolution in order to accrue temporal justice, which is what the traditional ghost had also required. Only now, the old themes manifested in a different way. This illustrates the mutability of thought, and how the old and the new, can be syncretised to create a new interpretation.

Crucially, there was homogeneity in this shift of thought, in a way that parallels the culture of witchcraft. For example, within the witch narrative, certain criteria had to be met to establish believability; bewitched young women vomited pins and had contortions. Ghosts too behaved in a specific way. The ghost tended to linger in bedchambers, float in through windows and lurk by riversides. In addition it had to appear at night (hence the bedchambers). They rarely appeared in broad daylight in the flower garden. The medieval ghost had appeared in bedrooms, bath chambers, cemeteries, fields and hedgerows. They had haunted places that were seen as portals between this world and the next. In the seventeenth century, the geography of the haunting was still a key feature of the relation, and many of the sites of haunting remained the same, only the Protestant ghost did so for a different reason. The medieval ghost had haunted traditionally liminal and numinous sites. The Protestant ghost haunted the same sites, but under a different set of explanations. They haunted the site of their untimely deaths, or they appeared to those who had known them in

¹⁰ Anon, *The Wonder of this Age* (London, 1677).

their lifetime. So, for example, Mary Barwick, appeared by a pond, a traditional, pre-Christian place of slippage between worlds. However, the reason she appeared there was because that was where she had met her death. This would explain the one key difference between traditional and contemporary locations of haunting, for the early modern ghost was rarely found in a cemetery. That they haunted the site of their untimely demise, reinforced the providential aspects of the tale and enhanced the ‘reality’ of the narration.

Another crucial component of the new Protestant ghost story was the framework of time upon which the narrative was hung. To establish the ‘matter of fact’, Bovet et al had used dates and location as a key component of the tale. In the pamphlet, dates were not only important to the narrative, but so were the times of the haunting. For example, Mary Barwick appeared to her brother-in-law at two o’clock in the afternoon, because that had been the time of day in which she had been murdered. The author’s purpose in relating this served two functions. One was symbolic – the aspects of which will be examined in section I of this chapter – and the other function was to support the verisimilitude of the story. The pamphleteers were precise in their relations of time, place, name, character and dialogue, all in an effort to convey the ‘fact’ of the tale. They also used language that would re-enforce this ‘truth’. Words such as ‘news’, ‘fact’ and ‘true’ filled the text as opposed to ‘history’, ‘romance’ and ‘fiction’ and this lexicography of ‘fact’ will be examined in section II of this chapter. This language, in conjunction with using a real crime lent veracity to the tale, and as Figure 23 shows out of twenty-two surviving pamphlets printed in the period 1647 to 1696, 54% of them dealt with the subject of murder.

The authors used crime cases, in which a ghost, usually the victim of murder, returned to the living to demand justice. This is a well known aspect of the ghost story, but what has been overlooked is the complex intertwining of evidence which not only proved the ‘fact’ of the case and the work of God’s Providence, but also proved the ‘fact’ of the ghost.¹¹ The authors were making a case, not only for the actuality of the crime, but the reality of the ghost as well.

¹¹ See Thomas, *Decline of Magic* (1971), pp713-717; Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities* (Cambridge, 2000); Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (1998); Theo Brown, *The Fate of the Dead* (1979).

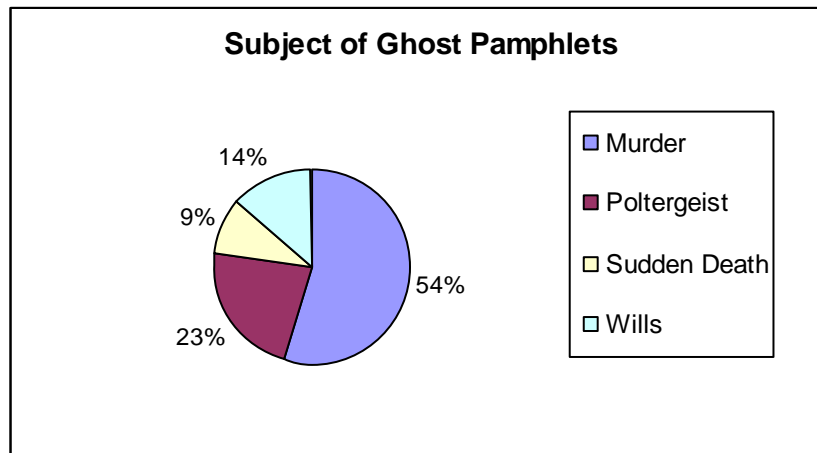


Fig. 24.

Another means by which they bolstered the impact of the ghost story was by the woodcut. This not only acted as a visual aid for those less proficient in reading, but it also powerfully reinforced the narrative of the text, a technique which had been used effectively in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563) in particular.¹² However, the richness of detail within the text provided the basis for the dismantling of the non-fictional narrative, and changed ghost literature. The pamphlets were elaborate, well structured tales of horror and mayhem, with a beginning, middle and an end. Consequently, they began to blur the distinction from tales of 'fact' to tales of 'fiction'. The more complicated the tale was, the more a fiction-like narrative emerged. Paradoxically fiction requires the techniques of truth, and these elements were deliberately incorporated, and so the foundations for the ghost as character of fiction emerged. This important aspect will be looked at in the third section of this chapter.

¹² See Figs. on pp250-251.

I

“Is’t Thus You Squander Time?”: Liminalities of Time and Space in the Ghost Story

Notions of time within the ghost tale were just as important as the judicial and providential aspects. The temporal framework of a tale was a key component of proving its ‘fact’, and this is more elaborately apparent in the pamphlet literature than in the published collections. Time is a major feature of the early modern ghost narrative, yet this subject has been much underplayed by historians. While some work by Le Goff, Ariès and Schmitt has been carried out on the temporal logic of the late medieval afterlife, the early modern temporal aspect of the Protestant ghost story has been little studied.¹³ Natalie Zemon Davis has offered up a number of insights as a result of her work on Catholic and Protestant spheres of time in 16th Century Lyon.¹⁴ She described the former as ‘complex, bunched and irregular’ and the latter as ‘simple, even and uniform.’ Her view of Catholic time reflects all the physical aspects of Catholic liturgy, with saints’ days, feasts, bell ringing and so on. Her depiction of Protestant time fits in with the Weberian notion of the Protestant work ethic and the organisation of time. In accordance with this work ethic, time should be wasted, squandered or lost.

The cultural influences of the Protestant notion of time that she explores are apparent in the narrative of the ghost. Time provided a factual reality to the story in a way that was quite different from previous notions of purgatorial temporality. Roman Catholic perceptions of time in the purgatorial afterlife had followed a different temporal logic from that of earthly time. In accordance with this, the medieval ghost followed this purgatorial temporal logic. The medieval terrestrial and eschatological temporal logics were multilayered, but also straightforward. They followed the Judeo-Christian linear perspective, which was book-ended by Creation at the start and the Last Judgement and

¹³ Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries and English Diurnal Form, 1660-178* (Chicago, 1996), px; Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1980), ch.2; Le Goff, *Medieval Civilisation 400-1500* (Oxford, 1988), ch.6; see in general Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (Oxford, 1981); Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages* (1998), ch.8.

¹⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Sacred and the Body social in Sixteenth Century Lyon”, *Past and Present*, 90 (1981), pp40-70.

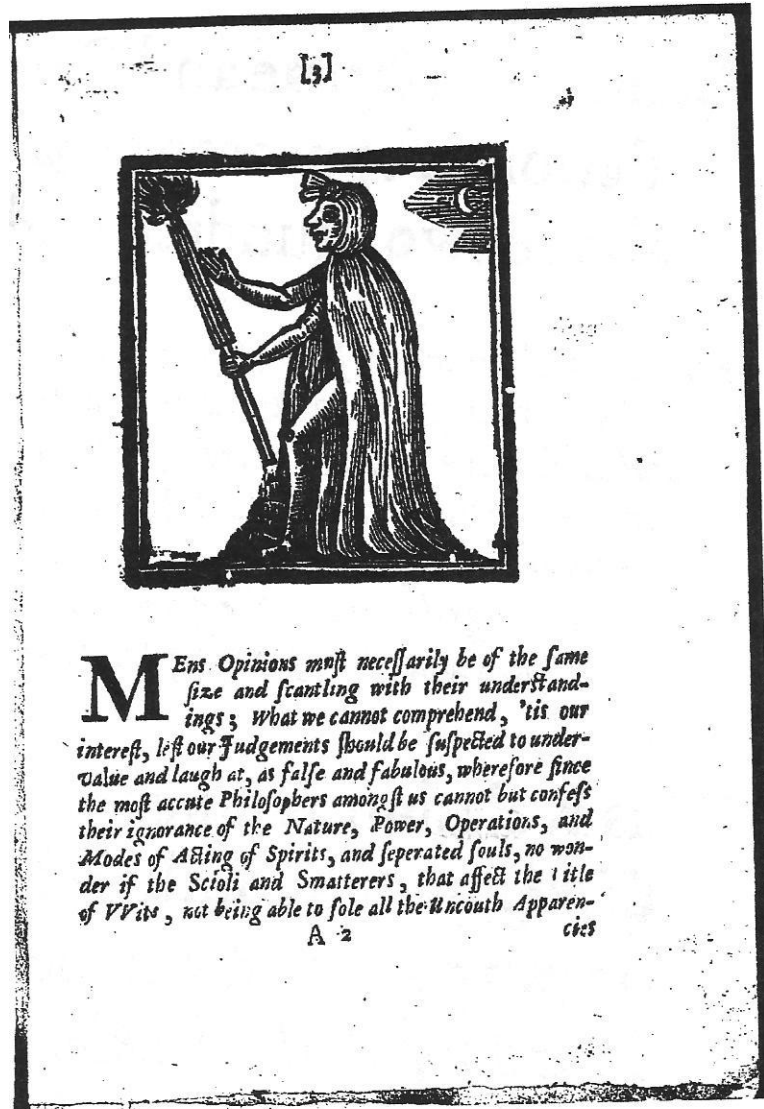


Fig.25. Woodcut of the ghost in the pamphlet *A Rest-Less Ghost* (1675). The spirit is still wrapped in his death shroud.

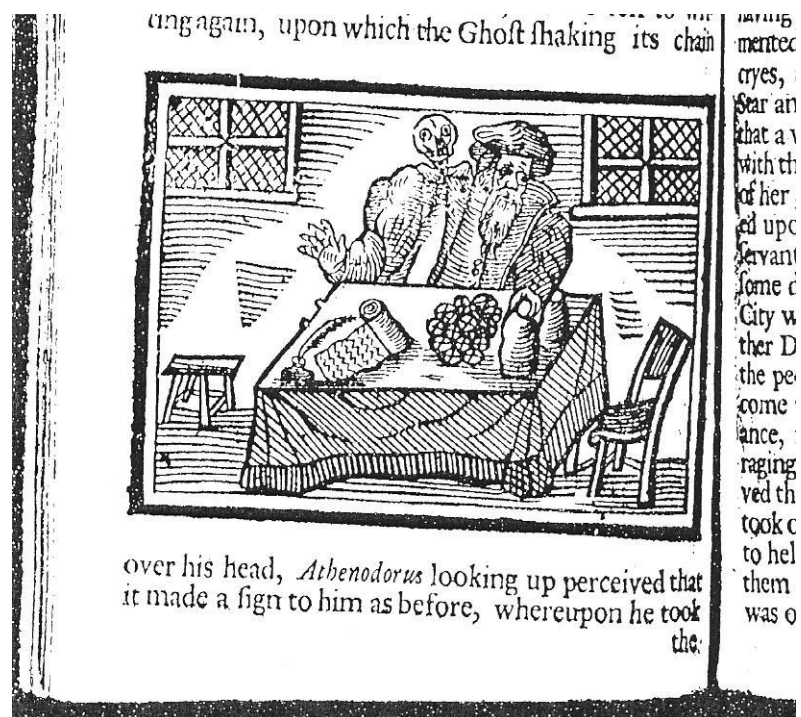


Fig.26. Woodcut of Athenodorus haunted by the ghost of a body that had been buried in his house, from Crouch, *A Kingdom of Darkness* (1688), p66, D4v.



Fig.27. Woodcut from Anon, *The Wonder of this Age* (London, 1677), in which the ghost of a man murdered for his money haunts a house seeking justice.

General Resurrection at the end. Yet within this framework, time in Purgatory worked differently to terrestrial time. Although the dead still lived in a domain dominated by the language of years, months and days, time followed a different logic. It was a place where one's purgation could be speeded up or slowed down, and where 'the shortest period of time there appears to be a very long duration, an instant appears a day, an hour years.'¹⁵ These concepts of time served to bolster the view that Purgatory was an 'other', a supernatural world.

In the seventeenth century the temporal logics at work within the Protestant ghost story were quite different, for the texts reveal an emphasis on a utilitarian calculus of time within Protestantism. The temporal element to which the ghost was subject, was based on earthly time and was not supernatural. By emphasizing this feature, the 'reality', the mundane facet of the event was further established. Not only this, but it re-enforced the doctrine that wasting time was as Le Goff called it; a 'spiritual scandal.'¹⁶ He points out that 'the idler who wastes his time and does not measure it was like an animal and not worthy of being considered a man...in this way, a humanism based on a nice computation of time was born.'¹⁷ Time was something to be valued, and neither wasted nor squandered in reckless and sinful pursuits. How one used one's mortal, earthly time consequently had a serious impact on eschatological time, that is, the time between one's death and the Last Judgement.

Hence, time in the Protestant ghost story served three functions. Firstly it provided a structural framework for the narrative of events. In the case of Mary Barwick's ghost the story progressed from Palm Monday to Easter Tuesday, and around 2 o'clock in the afternoon. *The Deemon of Marleborough* (1675) began on 'the ninth Day of November, about nine of the clock in the forenoon, being Munday....'¹⁸ Likewise, the *Strange and Wonderful News from London-Wall* (1674) commenced with 'A Full and True Relation of a House miserably disturb'd ever since Fryday the Third of this Instant April.'¹⁹ The sequence of events began with this established time, and then followed a simple linear

¹⁵ Father F.X.Schouppe, *Purgatory* (Illinois, 1986), p63.

¹⁶ Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture*, p50.

¹⁷ Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture*, p51.

¹⁸ Anon, *The Deemon of Marleborough* (London, 1675), A2r.

¹⁹ Anon, *Strange and Wonderful News from London-Wall* (London, 1674).

narrative thereafter that showed cause and effect – that is, the crime, its discovery and the consequences.

The second function was that it provided a form of evidence that grounded the story in ‘reality’ rather than ‘fiction’, for the time of appearance was usually noted with precision. For example, when the ghost of murdered apprentice Robert Eliot appeared in 1662 to Isabel Binnington, he manifested ‘on the 13. of August last...betwixt the hours of eight and nine at night’ and again on the 24th of August, the 28th, the 30th, 31st and ‘Monday the first of September’ all at the same time of day.²⁰ In 1675, Edward Aven came forth ‘the ninth day of November, about nine of the clock in the forenoon, being Munday.’²¹ In the same year, the spirit who appeared to William Clarke declared ‘I am the disturbed spirit of a person long since dead; I was Murthered neer this place Two Hundred Sixty and Seven years, nine weeks and two days ago to this very time.’ It is no wonder he was greatly agitated that ‘he should never be at rest.’²² Mrs. Adkins appeared in 1679 ‘on Tuesday being the 16 of the Instant march about 9 of the clock in the evening.’²³ The ghost of Roger Carter, died on ‘Tuesday the 14 of this Instant November’ 1679, and reappeared in ‘the spirit or Airey form...two or three nights together.’²⁴ Like Robert Eliot, Carter’s date of death was recorded, along with the times of his visits. In 1690 Mary Barwick who was murdered ‘the fourteenth of April last, about two of the clock in the afternoon’ also reappeared thereafter at the same time.²⁵ I would argue that the inclusion of time in the story was by now a standard device for enhancing the verisimilitude of an event.

The third function of time in the narrative was that it served as a moral warning to the reader on the dangers of wasting one’s time.²⁶ This was illustrated by the ghosts concern with the hour of death itself.²⁷ This suggests that the *Ars Moriendi* of late medieval culture had not disappeared at all. The difference is that although pre-Reformation ghost

²⁰ Thomas Blackwell, *The relation or examination of Isabelle Billington*, Folger Shakespeare Library, folio X.d.442, 1662, and also Anon, *A Strange and Wonderful Discovery* (London, 1662).

²¹ Anon, *The Deemon of Marleborough* (London, 1679).

²² William Clarke, *The Rest-less Ghost* (London, 1675).

²³ Anon, *Great News From Middle-Row in Holbourn: or a true relation of a dreadful ghost* (London, 1679).

²⁴ Anon, *Strange and Wonderful News from Lincolnshire* (London, 1679).

²⁵ Anon, *Confession of W, Barwick & E, Mangel* (London, 1690).

²⁶ The idea that time should not be wasted was not a new concept by any means, for it had been present already in Roman Catholicism for hundreds of years. Le Goff found that it was considered a sin to waste time as far back as the 13th and 14th centuries. *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*. What changed is that it became a dominant feature of the early modern ghost story.

²⁷ Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (London, 1981).

stories followed the surreal temporal logic of Purgatory, they were very vague when it came to the timing of events. For example the ghost of a man's mistress appeared to him at night, at a rural crossroads, and exhorted that he say as many masses for her as there were hairs on her head. The tale went on to relate that after 'a large number of masses' he met her 'at the specified time.'²⁸ While the temporal aspect of the tale is much less detailed, and explicit than that of the seventeenth-century story, what is similar is that she appeared at night, in a place of liminal geography to someone who had known her in life, not long after her death, seeking intercession. Likewise, the *Ghost of Beaucaire* featured a young man who had been murdered in a sword fight in July 1211, who three days after his death, appeared to his young female cousin as she prayed for his soul.²⁹ He then reappeared 'on the seventh day after his death, at about the hour of Tierce', and later it was said that he returned at 'fixed and pre-determined times.' The times at which he returned were liturgical, which re-enforced the sacred aspect of his mission. Eventually, due to the pious suffrages enacted by his cousin on behalf of his soul, his purgatorial torment had eased, and he had made progress towards Heaven. Having made it to Heaven he was seen no more. Although somewhat vague, these stories focused on liturgical time and recent memory, and revolved around the purgatorial processes of suffrages, intercession and absolution. They dealt with the larger, more abstract temporal logics of purgatorial time, side by side with vague references to earthly time. That the emphasis was on some vague otherworldly time, and not pinned down by the exactitudes of earthly time highlighted the spiritual point of the story.

In the Protestant ghost stories post-mortem time was hardly referenced, but a clear and precise marking of terrestrial time was a key feature of the narrative. The Protestant ghost encouraged people to use their time in this life wisely; that is, to live an exemplary godly and penitent life. If one did not, one could be fated to a restless and anguished post-mortem existence between death and the Last Judgement. As we have seen, this view totally contravened the Anglican position on the afterlife, which allowed no chance for reparation after death. The restless ghost that permeated Protestant literature did not reflect this orthodox position in any way. The narrative hung on a clear framework of time, i.e. the

²⁸ 'The Hair that Turned Gold' 15th Century, from *the Book of the Preacher of Ely* ed. Joynes (2001), pp 40-41.

²⁹ Gervase of Tilbury, 'The Ghost of Beaucaire' in *Otia Imperialia*, Banks and Binns, eds.(2002), p761.

time of death, and the times of appearance, in hours, days, weeks, months and years were all related. These features were notably absent from the late medieval ghost story. This was an important new development.

When the ghost of Roger Carter appeared in 1679, this temporal narrative was a well established feature of the ghost story. Roger Carter died on ‘Tuesday the 14 of this Instant November’ of 1679, and appeared in ‘the spirit or Airey form...two or three nights together.’ Like Eliot, Carter’s date of death was recorded, along with the times of his visits. This tale had a satisfactory ending, for according to the pamphlet the guilty were apprehended for his murder. The pamphlet triumphantly declared that ‘his blood was by justice answered for, whereupon...he vanished.’³⁰ Protestant ghosts were trapped in a cyclical loop of time, in the sense that they reappeared at exactly the same time every day. They were then symbolically trapped in that moment of death over and over again, until they were released. This emphasised the importance of death itself as a moment in time in which one’s future fate hung in the balance. Release from the fate of a restless afterlife, in that time between death and the resurrection, was usually obtained by the attainment of temporal justice for their murder. Carter had managed to break his doomed cycle of appearing at specific times, for justice was achieved and his murderer had been found guilty. He could rest at last, for he was no longer compelled to seek temporal justice.

Few of the ghosts in the stories had achieved a good death, for many had died suddenly and violently. These ghosts provided a warning to readers on the dangers of not being ready at any given moment for God’s calling. To die unprepared clearly had serious consequences. For example, in the case of ‘*the Deemon of Marlborough*’ printed in 1675, the apparition of Edward Aven returned after death to make financial reparation to his daughter on ‘the ninth day of November, about nine of the clock in the forenoon, being Munday.’³¹ He reappeared five months after his death, and confessed to a murder forty years after its event. He had been unable to achieve post-mortem rest, and his tale served to illustrate the dangers, not just of sin, but of grievously mismanaging time. If he had repented prior to death, peace after death would have been achieved. This tale emphasised the Protestantised notion of organised time, for as one ghost said to a still living man ‘Is’t

³⁰ Anon, *Strange and Wonderful News from Lincolnshire* (London, 1679).

³¹ Thomas Godard, *The Deemon of Marlborough* (London, 1675).

thus you squander time?’³² These tales served to call attention to, and to extol, the religious and moral economy of time that was particular to Calvinist thought.

Since the ghosts had died without effecting some kind of resolution in their life, they were forced by God to return to the living to rectify the problem. As Thomas Beard expressed it, ‘When God’s judgements are upon the earth, then the Inhabitants learn justice.’³³ The message was that it was crucial for the living to pay attention to the returning dead, so that God’s justice could be meted out as soon as possible. When justice was served, the ghost in the story invariably disappeared. They did not return bathed in glorious light thanking the living intercessor, as they did so often in the pre-Reformation tradition. They simply vanished.

Just as aspects of time within the narrative had become more detailed and symbolic, so too did the geography of the haunting. Both new and old symbolic aspects of locality began to emerge in the narrative. Like the temporal aspects of the story, the location also provided a setting for the structural narrative, in a way that was to become one of the building blocks of ghost fiction and literature in the wider sense. The geography of the haunting had altered in some aspects from pre-Reformation tales, yet they still retained many old ideas. These notions of liminal geography were so ingrained within folk and lay culture that they remained a steady feature of the popular ghost narrative. As I showed in chapter one, ghosts appeared in cross roads, hedgerows, by bodies of water, in bedchambers and in cemeteries. The early modern ghost haunted all of these places except the cemetery. This is an important difference, for they had no need to haunt the cemetery, as it was not the scene of the crime, and more often than not the corpse of the ghost was not interred there.

For example Roger Carter was murdered for his wealth by his brother. The latter tried to cover his tracks by declaring that Carter had been murdered by thieves. He then provided and attended a lavish funeral, at which he was seen to weep copiously. Yet, despite being buried in the cemetery, Carter did not manifest there. Instead, he appeared ‘with fresh bleeding wounds’ to his brother, his brother’s servants, and then his brother’s neighbours. He stood in the corner of the yard, and threw furniture out of the front door.³⁴

³² William Dunkin, *An Account of a Strange & Wonderful Apparition* (Dublin, 1734).

³³ Beard, *Theatre of Gods Judgements* (1642), p3.

³⁴ Anon, *News from Lincolnshire* (1679).

In short, he created such a disturbance that people began to suspect something untoward had happened. The brother was eventually tried and found guilty for the murder. Likewise, in 1677, an apparition in the West Country haunted the stairs and lurked menacingly behind the curtains of the house where he was murdered.³⁵ The murdered Captain Brown moved around, appearing first to friends to alert them to his plight, and then in the houses adjacent to the field in which his bones lay.³⁶ In another tale, the midwife Mrs. Adkins was seen ‘sitting upon the cupboard head’ in the room where she buried the two murdered infants.³⁷ Edward Aven appeared at ‘the stile...neer the highway’ and at the window, at a woodhouse, and ‘the highway into the Copse’ where his victim lay.³⁸ Mr. Powel of Southwark, in 1661, manifested in ‘the garden, under a Pear-Tree’ where he had buried treasure.³⁹ The violent Mr Griffin returned to his daughter’s house to get her attention that his sudden demise was not necessarily natural, and an anonymous ghost haunted where his bones lay interred underneath the floorboards, as did Robert Eliott.⁴⁰ Also, murdered Mary Barwick haunted the edge of the pond where she was drowned in 1690.⁴¹

These ghosts did not lurk about cemeteries, but inhabited some very specific places. The imagery was of portals and boundaries, doors, windows, trees, walls, water, stiles, bridges, fields, the edge of the parish, and highways. These were all areas of access, which enabled the restless dead to enter the corporeal world. The idea of water, trees, and crossroads as portals to other realms has long been a tradition found in many cultures, including the Druids and Celts and the haunts of the ‘other’ in medieval times, such as trolls, brownies, fairies and boggarts. Windows and mirrors were traditional Catholic points of exit for the souls of the dying.⁴² Few of these locations were suffused with religious

³⁵ Anon, *The Wonder of this Age* (London, 1677).

³⁶ Anon, *An Account of a Most Horrid and Barbarous Murther and Robbery* (London, 1694).

³⁷ Anon, *Great News from Middle-Row* (London, 1679).

³⁸ Godard, *Deemon of Marleborough* (1675).

³⁹ Anon, *Strange and True News from Long-Ally* (1661).

⁴⁰ Anon, *The wonder of this age*, (London, 1677); Anon *Strange and True News from Long-Ally*(1661).

⁴¹ Anon, *Confession of W.Barwick & E. Mangel* (1690).

⁴² See in general Andrew Joynes, *Medieval Ghost Stories* (Woodbridge, 2001); Bob Curran, *Celtic Lore and Legend: meet the gods, heroes, kings, fairies and ghosts of yore* (Franklin Lakes, 2004); Peter Haining, *A Dictionary of Ghost Lore* (Englewood Cliffs, 1984); David McAnally, *Irish Wonders: the ghosts, giants, pookas, demons etc., and other wonders of the Emerald Isle* (New York, 1996); Diarmuid MacManus, *Between Two Worlds: true ghost stories of the British Isles* (Gerrards Cross, 1977); Margaret Miller & Charles Keeping, *Knights, Beasts and Wonders: tales and legends from Medieval Britain* (Leicester, 1969);

iconography, which is significant, as they were points of contact with the dead. There was no mention of any graveyards, mortuaries or charnel houses, the stereotypical haunted sites.

None of these sites were Protestant in origin, but harked back to much older traditions of thought. What is different however, is that the sites of visitation suggest that the majority of hauntings were not impersonal or random; they had an agenda, acting as agents of God, which was often personal. These places were haunted for a reason, for the ghost inhabited the scene of a crime in which they had featured as a key player. What is more, they appeared to those who could help them, in an echo of the concept of purgatorial suffrage, where the dead had sought intercession from people who had known them in their lifetime. It seems then that old traditional ideas time, place and intercession had become syncretised with Protestant thought, to create a new ghost lore.

II

‘Almighty vengeance slacks not its dread arme’⁴³: Crime and Punishment in the Ghost Story

In the more elite collections of spirit narratives, many of the contents were gleaned and recycled from other sources. The pamphlets, however, were compositions derived from contemporary court trials. The cases of the assize courts, particularly those which involved a murder, provided rich material for pamphlet writers seeking to address the doctrine of God’s Providence. The addition of a ghost to the narrative bolstered the message and undoubtedly helped boost sales and circulation. The murder genre, and the ghost narrative blended perfectly together to create gripping stories of crime and punishment. The case of Isabel Binnington exemplifies this. This incident was not only the feature of a pamphlet, *A Strange and Wonderfull Discovery* (1662), but also the original hand written deposition to the justice of the peace relating the story survives in the Folger Shakespeare Library. The deposition was taken by Thomas Blackwell, on behalf of the witness Binnington attesting to the multiple visitations of the ghost of Robert Eliot. Eliot had been an apprentice who was allegedly murdered while trying to collect a debt. The deposition was given before

James Turner, *Ghosts in the South West* (Newton Abbot, 1973); Peter Underwood, *Ghosts of Cornwall* (Bodmin, 1983).

⁴³ Anon, *News From Lincolnshire* (1679).

three separate assize judges, and the testimony of Eliot's ghost was presented and submitted to the county assize court at Great Driffield, Yorkshire on the 24th September 1662.

In the deposition, Isabell had claimed that one Sunday morning she had discovered a 'skull, teeth, collar bone and several other bones the skull bruised in several places' under her floorboards.⁴⁴ The following Saturday, a young man appeared to her 'in greene light dublet and breeches and coats, bare footed and bare heade and with long flaxen haire, about 18 or 19 yeares of age.' She suspected that he might be a ghost, and so she instantly offered the standard adjuration "what wants thou? In the name of the father and the sonn." He told her that his name was Robert Eliot, and that three local women had killed him after he had sought to collect a debt from them. Isabell took this so seriously that she went to the local justice of the peace, who requested that, when Robert next appeared she was to ask him to confirm his identity. This she did by asking him what his father's name was, where he was born, where his sisters lived and what his mother was called. Word of what she was doing spread throughout the local community, and Isabell was subsequently threatened by one of the accused, Mary Barton, who warned Binnington that she 'would cut of her nose.' Every subsequent weekend Robert appeared to Isabell, and she related all the evidence back to the two justices, and her deposition was eventually presented to the assizes. Unfortunately, the outcome of this case is not recorded, but this evidence was taken seriously enough to go through the judicial system. Furthermore, although Binnington was the central figure, many other people were also involved, such as Eliot's parents, his sisters, their husbands and their children. His employer, his friends, as well as Binnington's husband and family, and many prominent members of the community, as well as the justices, and the three accused women, all featured.⁴⁵

In this relation, all the necessary evidence to prove the 'matter of fact' is present. The location and names were real and corroborated by the fact that such court proceedings did in fact exist. The temporal framework the tale hung upon was again, an important component of the story. The ghost revealed that '14 yeares have I wandered in this place suffering wrong 3 times, 7 yeares I have to wander, 21 yeares is my time.' According to the text Eliot manifested 'on the 13. of August last...betwixt the hours of eight and nine at

⁴⁴ Isabel Binnington, *A Strange and wonderful discovery* (London, 1662); Thomas Blackwell, 'The relation or Examination of Isabelle Billington of Great Driffield', Folger Shakespeare Library, MS Add 319 (1662).

⁴⁵ Blackwell, *The relation or Examination of Isabelle Billington*, MS Add 319.

night,’ and again on the 24th, the 29th, the 30th and 31st of August and ‘Monday the first of September’ all at the same time of day. This was important evidence in the legal case against the accused, for it was the time the victim had lost his life, as Eliot apparently testified that ‘my life was taken from me betwixt eight and nine of the clock at night in this place.’⁴⁶ This temporal evidence further strengthened the ‘reality’ of the ghost. It seems that Eliot was condemned to remain in the earthly moment of his physical death he was doomed to revisit this moment in a cycle that reflects and mirrors the cosmic processes of time, such as the endless cycle of planetary movement, sunrise and sunset. Each successive day, as the earth revolved again, Eliot appeared at the same time. He was trapped in that cycle until the resurrection, and so far he had been unable to move forward for 21 years. He therefore sought justice so he could break free of the loop of time, and rest in peace.

This tale contained several dominant themes, wrapped up in both factual and fictional details. By having the fictional – that is the ghost – intertwined with the ‘fact’ of the case, imputations of fabrications could be averted. Their graphic details of violence, the supernatural elements that revealed God’s Providence, and the elements of justice, all served to provoke terror and wonder, as well as fulfill the role of instructive *exempla*. Crime pamphlets were a means of displaying what happened when the social order was inverted or disrupted. There was a popular demand it seems, for having religious ideology wrapped up in a nice parcel of salacious news. The case of Mrs Adkins is a case in point. On Tuesday 16th March 1679, a maid-servant entered her mistress’ bed chamber in order to fetch her night clothes: ‘No sooner had she entered the Chamber, but a dreadful Ghost...presents it self unto her view, seating it self sitting as she supposed upon the cupboard head, and with ghastly Countenance seemed to belch flames of Fire.’⁴⁷ Once the maid had gathered her wits, the ghost informed her that she was Mrs Adkins, a mid-wife who had died some six months before, and who had carried out the murders of two illegitimate babies. The apparition of Mrs Adkins had appeared to the maid saying ‘its commission was not to injure her, but charged her...that she should take up two tiles in the hearth.’ After some deliberation the maid and the household executed the task they were asked to perform and under the tiles they found ‘the bones of two Children...Illegitimate or

⁴⁶ Binnington, *A Strange and Wonderful Discovery* (London, 1662).

⁴⁷ Anon, *Great News from Middle-Row* (London, 1679).

Bastards who to save their Mothers Credits had been Murthered.’ The tale ended with the bold statement:

Let all admire and fear that God who...views with narrow searching Eyes whate’r
is done, thought sable-night and veils of darkness cover the most horrid
Sceene, yet all lies open, and no secret can overpass his boundless wisdom, nor
escape his sight...[for] blood of innocents creid loud for Vengeance from the earth
and their Murthers after Ages have revealed.⁴⁸

In this tale, Mrs Adkins’ soul had not yet been committed to Hell, for as the pamphleteer stated, ‘When Death, has closed their Eyes... their restless Spirits forced about the earth, do wander up and down until they have made known those Crimes the Party represented in those thin and Airy forms did in their Lifetimes Act.’⁴⁹ Until ‘the dreadful day of rendring account’, she had been sent on a ‘commission’, presumably by God, to expose her crime, and request a consecrated burial for the infants’ bones. She was the new Protestant ghost sent back to the living under the aegis of God to right a wrong. Her immediate punishment was not Hell – that would come after the Last Judgement – instead she had to endure restlessness, and mental anguish until her crime had been exposed. This pamphlet was not unique in expressing this completely un-orthodox eschatology.

Edward Aven re-appeared five months after his death of natural causes in 1675, to make reparation for several misdemeanours and crimes he had committed. He first appeared to his son-in-law stating he wished to make financial compensation to his daughter ““for I shut up my bowels of compassion towards her in the time of my life.”” He later returned to reveal the whereabouts of the remains of someone he had murdered; ‘in this place lying buried the bones of him that I murthered in the year 1635.’ He appeared five months after his death, and confessed to the murder some thirty years after its event. It was this delayed confession, and omission of justice that was the cause of his restlessness. In the ballad version of the broadside pamphlet, he was said to have affirmed, ““and that’s the reason I am so oprest, Till I declared it, (I could take no rest).””⁵⁰

Protestant ghosts may not have required suffrages, but like the traditional ghost, they too needed intercession, action and resolution in order to achieve release from torment.

⁴⁸ Anon, *Great News from Middle-Row* (1679).

⁴⁹ Anon, *Great News from Middle-Row* (1679).

⁵³ Anon, *Deemon of Marleborough* (1675).

Only then did the ghost disappear, never to return. Where they went was not stated, or even speculated upon.

Restlessness was a key theme in the late-seventeenth century Protestant ghost story, putting emphasis and meaning on the idea *Requiescat in Pace*. Take for example, the *Relation of the Horrid Ghost of a Woman* of 1673. An admonishment in the pamphlet extorts the reader to ‘moderate your deeds and actions in this life, that hereafter, in the world to come, we may enjoy peace and rest to eternity, which God grant.’⁵¹ This statement was more than a typical Christian exhortation to behave, the context in which it was placed, within the ghost story, implied more than just a warning not to lose out on salvation by sinning. It intimated two things; the first was that sin could lead to a restless unhappy existence in the immediate post-mortem interim state, between death and the Last Judgement. Secondly, in the context of the felonious ghost, this torment could be avoided if penance, and confession had taken place before death. This penance may not have led to eternal life in Heaven, but it could at least bring about a peaceful middle state. Also, in contradiction to orthodox doctrine, the Protestant ghost suggested that sins could be rectified after death. This was a wholly new idea that had no basis in either reformed theology or in traditional Roman Catholic theology, in which one could repent for one’s sinful actions after death, but one could not bring about change, or influence the living.

The fact that belief in a middle state still persisted in popular thought is illustrated, not just in the continued existence of ghosts, but in the Protestant rituals that surrounded the act of dying itself. The evidence from the pamphlets suggests that ghosts were regarded as individuals who had suffered a bad death. The consequence of this bad death was to be suspended in a middle state, in a condition of restless agitation between death and the General Resurrection. *Ars Moriendi* is most commonly associated with medieval thought, yet there were reams of literature that advised people on how to die well. This suggests that the art of dying was still regarded as an important ritual, albeit in a more Protestantised form. The art of dying well now reflected the moral economy of not wasting or losing time and the ghost was a useful tool for Protestants in illustrating what happened if one died badly. It seems, that by the seventeenth century, if one negotiated a good death, one could be assured, not necessarily of salvation, but of a peaceful state in that amorphous time

⁵¹ Peter Griffith, *A True Relation of the Horrid Ghost of a Woman* (London, 1673).

between death and the resurrection. The ghost story on the other hand exposed what happened if one had failed to negotiate a good death. Unfortunately, a bad death could be all too possible, be it by accident, murder or simply sudden, and the tormented ghost who was restless and seeking peace of some kind illustrated the perils of not being ready.

The ghost usually returned seeking restitution or reparation of some kind to enable them to rest in peace, after they had mismanaged their time while alive to do so. This new role the ghost played was essentially Protestant, and was couched in the language of Providence. However, the reasons behind its return, and the requests it made of the living, had strong echoes of negotiating intercession and suffrages that had been the key feature of the ghost tale prior to the Reformation. Like the traditional view, there was frequent emphasis on not wasting time, and on using one's temporal life well to prepare one's soul for the afterlife. To squander one's chance to do this while alive was considered to be an almost blasphemous waste of time.

The new Protestant ghost in both the pamphlets and the elite texts did not just feature those guilty of a heinous crime, such as Mrs Adkins and Edward Aven, it also involved those who had been victims of terrible crime, something that did not feature in the medieval ghost story. In a society where the corpses of the murdered bled in the presence of the perpetrator, it was not a stretch to actually have the victim return in ghostly form to the living in order to apprehend the guilty party. After all, what better way was there to demonstrate the long arm of God's Providence? Their appearance, usually bloodied and battered and suffering the torments of the injustice perpetrated against them, was a potent image. In this state, they visited the living demanding retribution and reparation, which were expressions of God's Providence. As Beard stentoriously declared, 'the execution of God's vengeance is most notably manifested in the punishment and detection of...homicide.'⁵² These Protestant ghosts were the realization of that view.

For example, in John Aubrey's collection of ghost stories of 1696, there is a paragraph that sums up well Protestant thought on the matter:

As murder is one of the greatest crimes that man can be guilty of, so is it no less strangely and providentially discovered, when privately committed. The foul criminal believes himself secure, because there was no witness to the fact. Not considering that the all-seeing eye of heaven beholds his concealed iniquity, and by some means or other bringing it to light, never permits it to go unpunished. And

⁵² Beard, *The Theatre of God's Judgements* (1597), p203.

indeed so certainly does the revenge of God pursue the abominated murderer, that, when witnesses are wanting of the fact, the very ghosts of the murdered parties cannot rest quiet in their graves, til they have made the detection themselves.⁵³

His was not a lone voice, either. The ‘all seeing eye’ he wrote of appeared in an anonymous pamphlet, printed in 1690, of the trial of William Barwick who stood accused of murdering his pregnant wife. The main evidence against him was the continued appearance of her dead self to her brother-in-law in the site where she was slain. The crime had gone undetected for some time but according to the pamphlet the ‘all-seeing eye of heaven... refused to let the crime go unpunished.’⁵⁴ Expressions of this kind in one form or another were to be found on almost every ghost/murder pamphlet that was printed. Justice could be achieved even beyond the grave, for by the ‘revenge of God’ the dead could expose their killer.

The need to expose the crime committed, and to exact Divine Vengeance on their behalf, caused many ghosts to commit violent acts in order to gain the attention of the living. This was illustrated in the pamphlet relating the tale of Griffin Davis in 1661. After being dead for seven years, he appeared to his daughters making ‘such a hideous noise, with screams, cries and heavy groans that many neighbours have been so disturbed, they have removed from their lodgings.’ As if this was not enough, he physically assaulted the percipients; ‘his daughter going up to bed, and the maid before her having a candle in her hand: he met her, struck out the candle and both fell downstairs.’ Such was the disturbance of ‘this restless ghost’ that it was concluded, with no other evidence than this, that ‘he hath been murthered and will hardly be layd again, for murther will certainly cry aloud for vengeance, till satisfied by justice.’⁵⁵ The story ends there and there is no further relation of what happened next, but because the ghost had created such a disturbance, they had decided that justice had somewhere gone awry, and that vengeance had been left undone.

Similarly, in 1678, a gentleman died whose will was not respected. This had caused his wife and children to be deprived of their estate, so he repeatedly appeared to the guilty party, and made as much fuss as possible to get their attention. They ‘were affrighted with hideous noises, skreekings, howlings, clattering together of the pewter dishes, throwing to

⁵³ Aubrey, *Miscellanies* (1690), p95.

⁵⁴ Anon, *A Full and True Relation* (1690).

⁵⁵ Anon, *Strange and True News from Long- Ally* (1691).

of the doors, &c.’ The ghost vowed ‘that if he [the guilty] did not suddenly make restitution, he would come and tear him in pieces.’⁵⁶ This dire warning seems to have done the trick.

In 1677, a pamphlet was published relating how a house with another restless ghost,

has been much disturbed or haunted...strange noises heard; things met upon the stairs, but not to be seen etc, insomuch that the people were much frightened and afflicted; til...the man of the house being in bed and broad awake, a ghost or apparition in the form of a man...said these or the like words; “thirty years ago I was barbarously murdered in this house for my money: part of my body has been found but my blood is not revenged...God will raise up witnesses: and rather than fail, I will appear and make the murderers confess it.”⁵⁷

Note that it was God who would raise up the evidence on his behalf. It was not just the victim who required retribution, but God himself. As Thomas Beard had declared at the end of the sixteenth century,

Wee see, how hard it is for a murderer to escape without his reward: when the justice of man is either too blinde...or too blunt, that it doth not strike with severity... then the justice of God riseth up, and with his owne arme he discovereth and punisheth the murderer.⁵⁸

The pamphlet relating the tale of the aforementioned Roger Carter similarly noted that,

Wonderful are the dictates of providence, in all their effects and heavens justice, seldom sleeps when Crimes like these cry Loud, almighty vengeance slacks not its dread arme, but by unexpected means pursues the Trembling offender. Ghosts and infernal shapes; whose midnight formes, Groan out absconded horrors, are often instrumental made, to the discoveries of villainous exploits.

Unequivocally, by the mid 1670’s, after the ghost had been redacted from the witch narrative in lay culture, and had once gain become an entity in its right, the ghost had become God’s direct instrument of vengeance and punishment. According to the anonymous author of this pamphlet, this case of fratricide which was deemed to be an unnatural murder, warranted special attention from the Almighty, for he,

thought fit to bring so vile a deed to light and innocent blood cried loud...there had been a dreadful ghost seen...an Airey form...with fresh bleeding wounds...and for two or three nights together, there was heard most dreadful groanings and laments

⁵⁶ Anon, *A Strange, but True, relation of a most Horrid and Bloudy Murder* (London, 1678).

⁵⁷ Anon, *The Wonder of this Age; Or, God’s Miraculous Revenge against Murder* (London, 1677).

⁵⁸ Beard, *The Theatre of God’s Judgement* (1597), p214.

and such a lumbering noise, as if stools and chairs; and all the other household goods were tumbling out of doors...and still the dreadful ghost pursued, and often changed itself into more fearful formes, as a bear, a lion and the like with ghastly countenance and horrid eyes, oft sparkling fire, sometimes shrill shrieks and sometimes hollow groans were heard...and that being not as yet discovered, was the cause his restless soul could find no fixed abode.⁵⁹

In the century preceding, such an incident would have been put down to demonic activity or witchcraft. Now it was viewed as the direct work of God in order to bring the 'vile' deed to light. What is significant is that the sudden, violent death of the innocent demanded a temporal restitution. Justice was not saved for Judgement Day, but demanded by the dead and by extension, by God, from the living. Once this justice had been achieved, peace could then be found for the dead. The ghosts in all these tales were unable to rest until justice and vengeance had been brought to bear, for after all, as it said in Acts 28:4, 'vengeance will not suffer the murderer to live.'⁶⁰ The language of restlessness and homelessness permeated the texts, for they were stuck in a state that had echoes of Purgatory, suffering mental anguish and torment and fueled by a thirst for vengeance. Until justice prevailed through the divine mercy of the Lord on behalf of the victim, 'his restless soul could find no fixed abode.'⁶¹

The living and the dead were caught up in a mutually beneficial system, which retained the traditional purgatorial themes of intercession by the living on behalf of the dead. The old concepts of merit-based reward and intercession can still be seen in the ghost tale of the late seventeenth century, only these concepts were now blended with Protestant notions of justice and Providence. The old suffrage-seeking ghost was long gone; in its place was a justice-seeking ghost.

Despite the efforts of authors in popular pamphlets to embed these tales in facticity through the new empirical approach of testimony, witnesses, evidence of the senses, places, names, details and time, the result was not just to create a new Protestant ghost, of a form that is still with us today, but also to engender the creation of the ghost 'story' and crime fiction. Still, it is important to note that many authors declared their intentions were not to create fiction, but a true relation of events. They sought to anchor the events in reality,

⁵⁹ Anon, *News from Lincolnshire* (1679).

⁶⁰ Acts 28:4.

⁶¹ Anon, *News from Lincolnshire* (1679).

despite plundering ideas that were deeply unorthodox in Protestant eschatology, and which still owed much to their Catholic predecessors. To provide evidence of this I will now turn to the language, form and structure of the ghost tale.

III

'It is a most strange and terrible, yet true Relation...':⁶² The Language of Truth and the Foundation of the Ghost Story

Both Ian Watt and Michael McKeon have argued that it was not until Defoe, Fielding and Richardson composed their lengthy fictions in the early eighteenth century that the novel came into being. Watt convincingly argued that works such as *Moll Flanders* were very much rooted in the pamphlet literature of the period, but that it was quite different from fictive work that had gone before because, as he put it, the novel was distinguished from other genres 'by the amount of attention it habitually accords both to the individualization of its characters and to the detailed presentation of their environment.'⁶³ The novel, he argued, purported to be an authentic account of the experiences of individuals.⁶⁴ It employed the same set of existing techniques that were used to convey the truth of an incidence in print. He argues that in a court of law, one must be satisfied with the particulars of a case and the same holds true for the novel. The novel was presenting a case for credibility that was carefully constructed to convey the knowledge of an event. He termed the result 'formal realism', that is, a fictive but nonetheless realistic plot, containing believable characters. This was first achieved through use of individualized characters, as opposed to generic stereotypes, imbued with 'real' rather than symbolic names. Watt notes that Fielding christened his characters not with 'fantastic high-sounding names', or with names that implied their character, but with names grounded in reality.⁶⁵ So, names such as Miss Matthews and Captain Trent appeared in literature as opposed to Bunyanesque names such as Mr Badman.

There was also an episodic plot, hung around a clear temporal structure, that had a beginning, a middle and a conclusion. Watt famously made the case that early fiction, and *Moll Flanders* in particular, was influenced by the crime pamphlets and ballads that were

⁶² Griffith, *A True Relation of the Horrid Ghost* (1673).

⁶³ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley, 1957), p18.

⁶⁴ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), p27.

⁶⁵ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), p20.

mass produced in the late seventeenth century. He avers that there was a direct connection between Defoe's early years as a journalist and pamphleteer, and the verisimilitude of his novels, for he knew how to write a story in order to convey its truth.⁶⁶ The novelist set out to create a fictional yet believable account, while both academic and popular authors wished to construct an account that was a 'matter of fact'. Yet, their practice for representing 'reality' were the same. As McKeon has more recently argued, the novel had its origins in the early modern 'epistemological revolution.'⁶⁷ He points out that attitudes towards how to tell the truth in narrative, shaped by 'naïve empiricism' influenced the literature that emerged from Defoe, Richardson and Fielding. The same can be held to be true for the ghost story. Although they had been a mainstay of early modern theatre, the first acknowledged 'fiction' of ghostly horror is the *Castle Of Otranto*, published in 1764 by Horace Walpole. Yet, I would argue that the genre had already been established by the late seventeenth-century, and that it had emerged from the epistemological shift analysed in the last two chapters. Ghost stories did not appear out of a vacuum in the eighteenth century. They existed already in the popular pamphlets.

As I have already demonstrated in this chapter, close textual analysis of the pamphlets and the texts by Sinclair et al, reveal that the tension between 'truth' and 'fiction' was clearly there. 'Fact' was consistently tied up with symbolism and fiction to create a potent narrative brew. Real criminal cases added evidence to the truth of the ghost and the ghost provided evidence of the crime in a mutual cycle of 'fact' reinforcement. Still, the term 'fact' was not the only term authors of this genre favoured. Close analysis of the lexicography of realism is revealing in itself. Authors seem to have been aware of the language of 'truth', as attempts to demonstrate verisimilitude were very much a feature of the language used. For example, pamphlets were entitled *Great News from Middle-Row* (1680), *The Full and True Relation* (1690) and *A True and Impartial Account* (1696).⁶⁸ The

⁶⁶ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), p103.

⁶⁷ McKeown, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore, 1987), p28.

⁶⁸ see also Anon, *Strange and True News from Long-Ally* (1661); Anon, *Here is a true and perfect Relation from the Faulcon at the Bank-side* (1661); Anon, *A True relation of a Horrid Ghost* (1673); Anon, *Strange and Wonderful News from London-Wall* (1674); Anon, *News from Puddle-Dock in London* (1674); Anon, *The Rest-less Ghost or, Wonderful News from Northamptonshire, and Southwark* (1675); Anon, *The Deemon of Marleborough or More News from Wiltshire In a most Exact Account of the Aparition of the Ghost, or Spirit of Edward Aven* (1675); Anon, *Strange and True News from Lincolnshire* (1679); Anon, *Great News from Middle-Row* (1679); Anon, *A True Relation of an Apparition* (1696); Anon, *A True and Impartial Account* (1696).

language was of ‘truth’, ‘news’ and impartiality. To add further credence, although the author was usually anonymous, lists of witnesses would be added to the tale, all being, of course, men of estimable virtue. In *The Rest-less Ghost* of 1675, in which a victim of murder returned seeking temporal justice, the author asserted that it was ‘a most true and Perfect Account’, a ‘matter of Fact’ and that the evidence of the ghost’s testimony was taken ‘from his mouth in the presence of several witnesses.’⁶⁹ The author had pre-empted any accusations of fiction. The *Deemon of Marleborough* (1675) claimed that the ‘news’ was from ‘the Examination of Thomas Godard’, the son-in-law of the ghost Edward Aven, ‘taken before the Major, and other Mejestrates of the Borrough.’ In addition, there were two ‘letters’ printed at the beginning of the story both from a William Houldbrook who stated that he,

did examine the Above Named Thomas Godard, who declared the whole matter, as it is herein related, and he doth affirm the same to be true in all Circumstances, and to my knowledge he is a Man of good Understanding, Honest Life and Conversation, Witness my Hand, William Houldbrook.

Over the page his other letter states,

Sir,

This is to Certifie you, that Edward Aven doth still appear, and shews himself to several people: First to Elizabeth Hibertt, next to one Goodman Bitten, otherwise Wiat, next to M. Richard Coleman’s maid of this Town, and in the same cloaths, which he wore in his life-time; as a long White-Crown’t hatt, blew cloaths, and White Stockings: All this Last Week he was seen.

William Houl[d]brook

The relation was then finished with the words,

All which this Relatant affirmeth, and doth attest it to be true under his hand the Day and Year above said, and shall be ready to testifie the same upon Oath, when he shall be required: witness his hand, Tho. Godard. In the presence of Mr. Christopher Lipyard, Major: And Joshua Sethcemerel Minister of St. peters in Marleborough. And Master Rolf Bayly, Town-Clark of the said Borough. And many other persons of credit.⁷⁰

Virtually all members of the social strata were present, from the maid to the town officials. The witnesses were assembled, the oaths were sworn and case of the ghost was presented in legal terms. How could such ‘truth’, such ‘facts’ be denied by the reader?

⁶⁹ Anon, *The Rest-less Ghost* (1675).

⁷⁰ Anon, *Deemon of Marleborough* (1675).

This carefully set the 'relation' up as being true as opposed to being a 'romance', a 'story' or a 'tale'.

Barbara Shapiro argues, with regards to pamphlets more generally, that such claims to factuality helped create and develop an audience that wanted 'facts' concerning the 'news,' with appropriate evidence to back it up.⁷¹ Whilst Shapiro has noted the proliferation of titles beginning *Strange and True News*, Joad Raymond has identified that this use of the *and* in the title is significant, for the tales are not *strange but true*, but, crucially, *strange and true*.⁷² The very fact that the story was strange was in a way proof of its reality. As Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park have pointed out, outlandishness in a tale was a positive virtue, for 'there were more things in Heaven and Earth than had been heard of in traditional natural philosophy, and strange facts were their heralds.'⁷³ These tales were not crude fabrications for the credulous vulgar, but sophisticated, commercial works in which gory violence and religious sermonizing were not at odds.⁷⁴ The text was peppered with the language of verisimilitude and loaded with content about Divine Providence, murder and justice.

This tells us many things about contemporary morals, the justice system, and the varied nature of early modern Protestant eschatology, yet, at the same time, these pamphlets tell us much about the conventions of story telling and the development of the ghost 'story' as a work of fiction. Raymond asserted that the news pamphlet, especially ones detailing crime, showed a 'heterogeneity of form', for they were a literary genre which combined entertainment with moralistic, often religious instruction, and were open to divergent uses.⁷⁵ However, I would argue that crime pamphlets that involved ghosts displayed a remarkable homogeneity of form. There was a formula that was required within the ghost narrative in order to make it a 'real' incident. This involved the frameworks of time that worked on several different levels, both actual and symbolic. They all included the same elaborate details of names, places and times. They almost all involved crime, particularly murder, and they were all contemporary tales, ranging from incidents that ranged from a month to two years old and this distinguished the pamphlets from the collections of Crouch,

⁷¹ See Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact*, ch.4.

⁷² Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), p114.

⁷³ Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of nature, 1150-1750* (New York, 2001), p250.

⁷⁴ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, pp115, 120.

⁷⁵ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p120.

Bovet and Sinclair, for they were not called ‘histories’. They were more immediate, they were ‘news’, ‘relations’ and ‘matters of fact’. They had to be couched in this language, for these stories were proofs of providential factuality.

McKeon has noted that there was a latent tension between the claim of truth and the nature of the material whose truth is claimed, particularly when it came to the ‘strange but true’ genre.⁷⁶ The evidence seems to support this in both pamphlets and the books. The language of ‘truth’, ‘relation’, ‘report’, ‘fidelity’, ‘credit’, ‘honesty’, ‘matter of fact/fact’, ‘news’ and ‘history’ dominates the textual landscape. Even though authors used the terms ‘lies’, ‘false’, ‘story’, ‘fiction’, ‘phansy’ and ‘invention’ they were used relatively sparsely in comparison, so that the reader’s mind focused on the positive words that helped augment the ‘truth’ of a tale. This positive reinforcement was deliberate and was very much a feature of both elite and popular ghost literature. Sinclair, for example, used variants of reinforcing truth words like ‘news’ and ‘true’, 143 times in contrast to negatively based, ‘untrue’ meaning words, which were used just 38 times in a thirty-four page book. In the 1677 pamphlet *The Wonder of this Age*, in which to prove a murder the ghost of the victim appeared at the assizes, the introduction claimed ‘The Circumstances of the Relation...are in themselves so strange, that ‘tis not to be expected, but many will suspect the Truth thereof, and decry it as a Fiction.’⁷⁷ In this context, fiction was equated with an absence of truth and the strangeness validated the event. Yet, at the same time as these authors were seeking to assert the truth of their accounts they were laying the foundations of ghost fiction.

Ronald Finucane has distinguished between what he terms ‘literary’ and ‘true stories’, though he admits that the literary stories are ‘just as revealing of social assumptions as so called authentic accounts.’⁷⁸ This is an important distinction, for it is clear that there was an acknowledged distinction between the ‘real’ and the ‘fake’ ghost, even from the late medieval period.⁷⁹ But how to acknowledge what was real and what was not? Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park termed this an ‘urgent problem’ of the times.⁸⁰ Daston and Park may have written of this in relation to early modern wonders and signs,

⁷⁶ McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740*, p47.

⁷⁷ Anon, *The Wonder of this Age*, p1.

⁷⁸ Ronald Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead; A Cultural History of Ghosts* (New York, 1984), p3.

⁷⁹ Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead*, p3.

⁸⁰ Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of nature, 1150-1750*, p246.

but the same problems faced those who believed in ghosts. How could one tell the ‘real’ accounts from the fictional ones? Presumably those in the pamphlets and collections could be counted as genuine due to the deliberate and detailed facts involved in the relation. As Barthes points out with regards to the nineteenth-century novel, every word in a text is deliberate, there is no such thing as ‘insignificant detail’. Everything within the text is a construct deliberately set in place to create the ‘reality effect.’⁸¹ I would argue, that in the late seventeenth-century authors were already aware of the conventions of the ghost genre and wrote accordingly.

Back in 1584, Reginald Scot had described witchcraft as a ‘fable’.⁸² He also famously decried ghosts, or, as he called them, ‘apparitions’, as inventions of an oral tradition used as a means of parental control, saying, ‘in our childhood our mothers maids have so terrified us with an ouglie divell ... wherby we start and are afraid of our owne shadowes... and then a polled sheepe is a perilous beast, and manie times is taken for our fathers soule.’⁸³ This oral tradition was not to be taken seriously, he declared. They were fireside stories and old wives’ tales, told for entertainment and believed as true only by the less well educated. Scot may have been an isolated voice in English sceptical thought in the late sixteenth century, but by the late seventeenth century he was increasingly viewed as a precursor of enlightened, sensible opinion. By the late seventeenth century, many elites came to see belief in various spiritual things as vulgar errors, and by the 1690’s there was a marked decline in elite writing on the ghost. On the continent the French Catholic the Reverend Father Dom Augustine Calmet produced several large works on the topic, but these appeared in the 1750’s.⁸⁴ In England, imported Dutch works such as Balthasar Bekker’s *The World turn’d upside down* of 1700, purported to examine the ‘errors, in the common or vulgar belief, relating to spirits, spectres or ghosts.’⁸⁵ Despite the efforts of Crouch, Bovet, Sinclair et al, the increasing view was that belief in ghosts was the prerogative of the ignorant and superstitious.

⁸¹ Roland Barthes, ‘The Reality Effect’, in (ed.) Dorothy J. Hale, *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1900-2000* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2006), pp229-234.

⁸² Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), p1.

⁸³ Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Bk: VII.Ch:XV, p86.

⁸⁴ Augustine Calmet, *The Phantom World: The History and Philosophy of Spirits, Apparitions, &c. &c.* (Paris, 1751); Calmet, *Dissertations upon the apparitions of angels, daemons, and ghosts, and concerning the vampires of Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia* (London, 1759).

⁸⁵ Balthasar Bekker, *The World turn’d upside down* (London, 1700).

Fox adds that the fables and superstitions of the old wives' tales, which the educated so derided in the late seventeenth century had 'once been disseminated from the pulpits of educated preachers and perpetuated in the chronicles of monkish writers...as with other aspects of oral culture by the early modern period, nursery lore was a product of a long series of interactions between written and spoken transmission.'⁸⁶ There is a sense in which many traditional old-wives tales were rejected because as sources they were inherently unreliable, and instead there was a pronounced belief that ghost tales in print, by learned gentlemen, attested by men of good credit could be taken more seriously. Stories told by the fireside on a winter's night were not 'news' or a 'matter of fact', they were 'romances', 'fictions' and 'fables', believed only as 'truth' by the foolishly ignorant, vulgar classes. The printed word was seen to have had more power than the spoken word, and the pamphlet writers show awareness of this. They consciously stated that the tales were a 'matter of fact', not just to prove the immortality of the soul, or provide evidence of God's Providence, but also to establish their relation as 'truth' or 'news' as opposed to the imaginative fancy of Old Wives Tales. With such terms, writers strove to distinguish their own, published narratives from the oral tales that so captivate children and the vulgar.

Paradoxically, at the same time these truths were being asserted, the pamphlet tales became more elaborate, employing a host of reality-enhancing techniques. *The Rest-less Ghost* of 1675 exemplified the problem facing writers and audiences regarding the tensions of 'truth' and 'fiction'. It used the usual fact-proving tactics on the frontispiece which declared the contents to be 'Wonderful News from Northamptonshire'. Like the aforementioned *Deemon of Marleborough* (1679), it stated on the same page that 'This Relation is taken from the said Will. Clarks own Mouth, who came to London on purpose, and will be Attested and Justified by Will. Stubbins, Iohn Charlton, and John Stevens...and many others.'

A brief synopsis involving names, dates and places was added, there was a brief moralizing introduction that rebuked sceptics, and then came another declaration: 'the truth of the following is so Notorious and Ready to be Attested...that it will better become Ingenious men to study how to Reconcile the same to Religious and philosophical principles, then like incredulous Buffoons, to question the certainty of it.' After this,

⁸⁶ Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2000), p198.

followed the narration of the tale itself. This followed what we would now recognize as a conventional story telling structure with a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning established the name of those involved and the location of the haunting,

The person that is the Original Author of this Account...*Is* an Honest, Substantial man, named *William Clark*, by Profession a Maulster, but living at present in a Farm-House, at a Town called *Hennington*, within four Miles of *Northampton*...

Then the events that had occurred ‘this Twelve-Month last past’ were related in what constituted the middle, the main part of the story. It all began with unusual incidents, ‘some times the doors in the Night all Unlock’d, Unbolted, and flung off the Hinges’. Then, actions and thoughts were ascribed to the central characters, such as disbelief, confusion and fear. Dialogue was included and even the tone of voice, with the percipient taking the ‘courage to Demand *what it was?*’ and the apparition responding ‘with a pleasant friendly countenance, and distinct voice’.⁸⁷ The ghost then told the percipient what had happened to him whilst he had lived, which formed the main backbone of the tale. Despite initial reluctance on the behalf of the percipient to act, justice eventually prevailed, and a resolution was sought. The crime of which the ghost had been a victim was exposed, restitution was made, and a happy ending was found. The formula for a believable ghost story, in narrative structure was adhered to by the author. There was fear, confrontation, expectation and resolution in that order, all of which comprised the beginning, the middle and the end, and all of the pamphlet stories followed this pattern. There were characters, emotions, dialogue and a plot, all very basic and simplistic, but, nonetheless important, for in such a structure lay the genesis of the ghost story as ‘fiction’.

This convention was so formulaic that if a story did not adhere to it, it could be seen as ‘false’. In addition, once a genre of literature has an established formula, it can be lampooned. Indeed, satirical ghost tales did emerge by the early eighteenth century. For example, William Dunkin’s pamphlet *An Account of a Strange and Wonderful Apparition* of 1734, ridiculed both awful poetry and ghost tales simultaneously. Even the title adhered to the established conventions of the ‘strange and wonderful’ genre. In his work, the character of the poet began by citing some purple prose he had composed. Half way through his recitation a ghost appeared demanding;

Ghost.— Is’t thus you squander Time, thus rack your skull?

⁸⁷ Anon, *The Rest-less Ghost* (London, 1675), p5.

This is call'd Dulness, this is to be dull.
Poet. – Ha! What art thou, that at Midnight
 Dost interrupt me, whilst I write...
Ghost. – ...I am thy Grandame's injur'd Ghost
 Not all the Owls, which haunt the Gloom,
 And Nightly Screech around my Tomb;
 Not all the Sins upon my Conscience
 Plague me so much as thy damn'd Nonsense.
 That horrid Elegy you gave,
 Makes People curse me in my Grave,
 And yet the wretched Epitaph
 Can never fail to make them laugh
Poet. – Alas! Dear Ghost – I thought no Evil –
 I meant it well –
Ghost. – You meant the Devil –
 Such is the Magick of thy Numbers,
 They lull the Living into Slumbers:
 Yet heavier on the Dead they fall,
 They will not let them sleep at all.⁸⁸

All the points discussed over the last two chapters of this thesis feature in this satire. The title fits the 'strange and true' genre. Protestant notions of time were referenced, as was a restless afterlife. The idea that ghosts could be disturbed by crime or a wrong was there, only the crime in this case was the awfulness of the poet's verses and epitaphs. The ghost of his grandmother had returned because she had been 'injur'd' by his work, and his 'damn'd Nonsense', which had disturbed her peace even more than her own conscience. The poet, upon seeing the ghost, cried out an adjuration 'what art thou?', to which she responded as someone known to the percipient, although she was an old woman, which is evocative of the witchcraft literature of the earlier seventeenth century. She had appeared at midnight, the witching hour, in his bedroom. She spoke of the screeching of owls around her tomb, sounds which writers such as Lavater had used as explanations for apparently supernatural events. In addition, the Devil and evil were evoked, as were curses. Here, distilled in this satire were all the elements of what was now an established Protestant ghost literature.

⁸⁸ William Dunkin, *An account of a strange and wonderful apparition lately seen in Trinity-College, Dublin* (Dublin, 1734), pp3-4.

Conclusion

At the start of this thesis I noted that there were three key central issues regarding the existence of the ghost in early modern society. Firstly, prior to the Reformation, ghosts had very much been part of the mental landscape. Elites and clerics alike agreed that the souls of the departed came to visit the living. In accordance with Thomist thought, with God's permission, the dead could show themselves in order to request suffrages that would ease their passage through Purgatory. Clerical *exempla* of the period demonstrated that there was a full and complex relationship between the living and the dead. The living could visit the dead in Purgatory on a pilgrimage, they could be visited by passed on loved ones requesting suffrages, or they could be terrorised by revenants. Subsequently, when reformers abolished Purgatory and dismantled the existing eschatological system, many of the new doctrines that emerged left no room for the ghost to exist. The Anglican Church adopted the Bullingerian doctrine of instant reward and punishment, and the three forms of mortalism also left no room for the possibility that the souls of the dead could continue, let alone visit the living. Yet, despite this, the ghost did not just survive the Reformation; although wrenched from one genre into another, it developed and thrived to the point where it became a key cultural figure by the end of the seventeenth century.

This raised the central problem of why this happened. The evidence presented in this thesis shows that the answer to this question lies paradoxically, in responses to mortalism that took place over a century apart. It was the response that mortalism engendered, that allowed the ghost to survive. Calvin's reaction to mortalism was to reintroduce the concept of Abraham's Bosom, a doctrine that still allowed for a post-mortem, sentient, still-active soul. His description of Abraham's Bosom was not far removed from that of the upper levels of Purgatory; a paradise where the soul rested in a state of felicity and whose only pain was the deprivation of the beatific vision. His vision of Hades, where the damned awaited punishment by the lake of burning sulphur, was also similar to the graphic descriptions of Purgatory that would have been so familiar to the first generation of Protestants. This sphere of existence, so clearly described by Calvin, was not such a radical departure from traditional thought, and, as such, it was a doctrine that did not completely shut the door between the living and the dead.

This in turn presented the second problem of what mechanisms allowed the ghost to continue after the Reformation. The story of the ghost in the early modern period, reveals that lay belief was usually out of synch with official eschatology. Lavater's attempts to address the vulgar errors of his parish, in the heartland of a reformed community, shows that there was a powerful attachment to the ghost in both lay and elite thought that should have diminished by the 1560's and 70's. Furthermore, my close textual analysis of Lavater's perspective, alongside that of the Roman Catholic writers who drew from his work, demonstrates that despite all the rhetoric of confessional difference, on occasion Protestant and Roman Catholic thought on the subject were extremely consonant with one another.

Of course, many reformers vehemently denied that the souls of the dead returned to visit the living, and many explanations, such as drunkenness, fraud, melancholy and demons, were put forth, but this was not the sole prerogative of the Protestants. Roman Catholics also sought to use the same set of rational explanations. In addition, both confessions argued that demons could masquerade as the souls of the dead, although this is more readily apparent in reformed thought.

This then raised the third central issue of the thesis, that is, in what way did the ghost function in early modern society. By the end of the sixteenth century, Protestant culture meant that ghosts and the spirits conjured up by witches became one and the same thing. At this point the ghost began to lose its identity as the soul of the departed. Instead, it became incorporated into the witch's narrative, and became the spirit that wreaked havoc within one's home, at a witch's bidding. Alternatively, strange occurrences were seen to be conjured up by a demon, who was acting under the aegis of God to test one's faith, in the tradition of Job. As the evidence demonstrated in chapter three, the ghost did not disappear between 1590 and 1650, it just changed identity for a while. Subsequently, we can see that interpretations of ghosts were remarkably fluid, heterodox and complex.

It was the re-emergence of mortalism in the 1640's that allowed Protestant elites the means to reassert the existence of ghosts, for the ghost provided key evidence that the soul was immortal and immaterial in nature. The ghost, who had served the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory so well now became an important tool of elite anti-mortalist writers. Large collections of ghost stories began to appear from the late 1650's onwards. These collections, full of exciting and hair-raising tales, constituted evidence that ghosts existed, and reminded the laity that they had better be good Christians. In

addition, they also upheld notions of Providence and justice, mercy and vengeance. Within pamphlet culture, ghosts became appropriated into the murder narrative, where they were seen to act on God's behalf. In a remarkable turnaround, in just half a century, the ghost moved from being an agent of the witch and of the devil, to being a messenger of God. As a further consequence of being sequestered to bolster Providence and fight mortalism in popular print culture, a new genre of ghost writing emerged that laid the foundations for ghost fiction. Yet, in another profound shift, the ghost moved from being a 'matter of fact' in the 1660's, to being a figure of fiction in the eighteenth century.

In a reversal of fortune, the ghost of the later seventeenth century, also required intercession, penance and justice, all of which were key elements of the pre-Reformation ghost story. Indeed, the Protestant ghost shared many traits with the traditional Roman Catholic ghost. For example, it sought mercy and repentance. It was restless and lived in torment, but, unlike the traditional ghost this torment was mental and emotional rather than physical. Traditional ghosts had often haunted cemeteries, but the early modern Protestant ghost did not, and instead they haunted the scene of the crime. Yet both the old and the new ghost haunted those who knew them in order to seek help. Also, like the old ghost, the Protestant ghost illustrated the perils of wasting one's time, of dying badly and of not repenting prior to death. In a reflection of traditional thought the Protestant ghost showed that wrongs could still be righted after death, however the key difference was that they would not be able to work their way to Heaven by having done so. All they would achieve was a peaceful state in the interim between death and the Last Judgement and General Resurrection. In traditional thought, the ghost upheld the doctrine of Purgatory, while in reformed thought the ghost contradicted the official doctrines of the church yet persisted as an important social tool. Study of the ghost has therefore revealed a complex syncretism of pre-and post-Reformation thought, and lay and elite ideas.

This thesis has demonstrated that in the wake of the Reformation, the ghost shifted its identity and purpose over the course of the early modern period. It became Protestantised and defined in form which has remained remarkably unchanged ever since. What had been seen as the soul of a lost loved one in traditional thought became, variously, a demon, an illusion, fraud, a witch's spirit, a test of faith, a 'matter of fact', a poltergeist, a facilitator of Divine Providence, and a work of fiction. The ghost was a mutable, flexible figure in a heterodox mental landscape and could be appropriated by

both the laity and the elite to serve their purpose. It was simultaneously appropriated and rejected. It was controversial and aroused strong opinions. It was both a figure of comfort, in that it proved the soul continued to live post-mortem, and it was a totem of fear, for it never quite lost the taint of its association with witchcraft and the Devil in contemporary thought. It was its association with these dark forces that created what we would now label the poltergeist. Indeed, in the present day, the idea of the ghost and the poltergeist as entities to be feared remains a staple of the media. In fiction, in films and in the plethora of ghost hunting programs that fill the television scheduling, the ghost we recognise today is the early modern ghost. Its behaviour and identity remains almost unchanged since the late seventeenth century, when all the formative elements became more immutable.

On a wider level, this thesis is more than a study of the continuity and change in the character of the ghost. While primarily a work of social history, this thesis also incorporates intellectual and theological history. It deals with complex metaphysical and theological issues, and as a result it is the first synthetic account of ghosts in the early modern period. It is a new and ambitious approach that has shown how one core idea – that the dead can return to visit the living – can serve a multiplicity of purpose and functions which enables the concept to survive, despite huge upheavals in thought and interpretation. My thesis has shown the relationship between ideas and culture and how the idea of the ghost shifted and changed. Indeed, it has demonstrated how debates on the matter spread over countries and continents, confessional boundaries and social divides. Subsequently, the study of the early modern ghost is an important one. It provides access into strands of early modern thought, which are important to our understanding of the period. This thesis has proven therefore that ghosts deserve to be featured in serious scholarship.

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