

The Devil in the Detail

Demons and Demonology on the Early Modern English Stage

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Bronwyn Johnston
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ABSTRACT

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“The Devil in the Detail” explores the rationality of magical belief on the early modern English stage. This thesis examines how demons and demonic magic were depicted in the theatre, arguing that playwrights ascribed a sense of realism to the devil’s methods. In explaining the devil’s *modus operandi* and exposing the limitations of his magic, the stage validates supernatural belief and depicts the devil’s craft as plausible.

More broadly, this thesis is situated within the ongoing debate over the relationship between magic and scientific thought in early modern Europe, confirming that demonology was not an irrational superstition but a valid pre-science. Set against a background of witch persecution and the widespread belief that demons were a material reality, the devil was both the subject of prevalent intellectual inquiry and a popular figure on the early modern English stage, featuring in at least fifty-two plays between 1509 and 1638. Underpinning this particular brand of entertainment is a cohesive and consistent ontological framework that dictated the extent to which the devil could – and could not – operate in the material world, entirely in keeping with the dominant demonological thought of the time.

“The Devil in the Detail” focuses on seven devil plays: Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (c.1590), Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (c.1590), *John of Bordeaux* (c.1590), Jonson’s *The Devil is an Ass* (1616), Dekker, Ford and Rowley’s *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621), Brome and Heywood’s *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634) and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1611). In each chapter, I demonstrate how these texts both adhere to orthodox demonology and emphasise the devil’s humanlike qualities. The final chapter presents the case for demonism in *The Tempest*.

Bronwyn Johnston
Keble College

Doctor of Philosophy
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Abbreviations and Conventions

edn(s)	Edition(s)
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>ELR</i>	<i>English Literary Renaissance</i>
<i>MLR</i>	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
<i>MLA</i>	<i>Modern Language Association</i>
MS	Manuscript
<i>N&Q</i>	<i>Notes and Queries</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i>
repr.	Reprint
<i>RES</i>	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
<i>SEL</i>	<i>Studies in English Literature</i>
s.d	Stage Direction

INTRODUCTION

Concerning Magic

Demonology and Science in the Early Modern English Theatre

How do you tell the difference between a devil and a human? It hasn't always been easy. On one afternoon in the late 1580s, the devil stepped on stage during a production of *Doctor Faustus* at London's Belsavage Inn, "to the great amazement both of the actors and the spectators...there being some distracted with that fearful sight".¹ Something in Christopher Marlowe's play must have appealed to him, because he appeared again during a production in Exeter, prompting the horrified audience to run for the doors on realising "there was one devil too many amongst them".² According to the latter, more detailed account, the audience recognised the demonic presence not by appearance, behaviour, or voice, but simply because there was one more body than there should have been; the devil was otherwise indistinguishable from the human actors dressed in the beast-like attire. Both of these oft-cited anecdotes suggest the intriguing possibility that there was something terrifyingly real about this display of theatrical magic in which the human imitation of magic inadvertently summoned the real thing. From these two stories, we learn two things.³ Firstly, at least some members of the audience were uneasy about the presentation of magic and devils on the stage; secondly, the actors did a very good job of imitating the devil and the devil, the actors.

While the story of the real devil appearing in *Faustus* is one of the most frequently cited anecdotes of early modern performance, the accounts themselves have received surprisingly little scrutiny. Kristen Poole asserts in *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare's England* that "[w]hile the 'myth' of *Faustus's* on-stage devils is widely known, it seems only to be deployed for the purposes of seasoning an undergraduate lecture or adding a little zest to a scholarly essay".⁴ As bewitching as these two stories are, they must be treated with

¹ William Prynne, *Histriomastix*, (1633), f.556.

² Quoted in E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* 4 vols., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), vol 3, pp. 423-4.

³ Chambers cites a third incident, recorded by John Aubrey in *Natural History and Antiquities of Surrey* (1718-19). Aubrey describes actor Edward Alleyne "in the midst of the play surpriz'd by an apparition of the devil" (qtd. in Chambers, p.424).

⁴ Kristen Poole, *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.34.

caution; neither is anything close to a first hand account of a *Faustus* production and both were written well after the alleged incidents occurred. The first story, from William Prynne's weighty anti-theatrical polemic *Histriomastix* (1633), is coloured heavily by the Puritan's belief that the theatre was a hotbed of immorality. Prynne implies that the actors at the Belsavage Inn might have deserved their demonic visitor, since they were "prophanely playing the History of Faustus".¹ Such blatant contempt for the theatre is hardly a reliable source of what went on in London's playhouses. Meanwhile, the second account does not accurately describe any scene in *Doctor Faustus*. Whoever recorded this story was clearly unfamiliar with the play; the anecdotes are not consistent with the *Faustus* plot, unless the enigmatic author 'J.G.R.' was describing a markedly different version to the two editions of *Faustus* we have today. The real devil allegedly materialised amidst other devils (as the 'among them' implies) when Faustus "was busie in his magicall invocations", but the only time Faustus 'magically invokes' Mephistopheles through ritual, only one devil appears.² When more than one devil appears in the play, they are not ritually summoned by Faustus. Furthermore, the potency of the ritual implied in this account contradicts the action of the play entirely. Mephistopheles, on his first appearance, undermines the validity of the elaborate ritual by stating that it was Faustus's denial of God, not Faustus's "conjuring speeches" that summoned him into the would-be magician's presence; his attention was caught by blasphemy, not invocation (I.iii.46).³ That Mephistopheles's first act is to expose this fraudulent ritual thus seems to have escaped the notice of either 'J.G.R.' or the Exeter audience who chased the actors out of town. So was the demonic magic of *Doctor Faustus* mere fantastical entertainment, or could it be grounded in some form of historical 'truth'? And what can we understand from Mephistopheles's demystifying voice, the paradox that the explanation for demonic activity and the exposition of fraudulent magic comes from the devil himself?

How Faustus summons Mephistopheles is not the only magic explained by the devil to the audience in the early modern theatre. In other plays featuring magic, the devil's

¹ Quoted in Chambers, pp.423-4.

² Ibid.

³ Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus: A- and B- Texts (1604, 1616)*, Revels Plays, eds. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). All subsequent references are to the A-text unless stated otherwise.

power at times seems nothing more than a convenient way to speed up the action of the play. Take, for example, the hasty acquisition of material goods. In Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (c.1592) the magician is able to summon people to him in a whirlwind. In Heywood and Brome's *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634) a witch is able to ride to London and back in a few short hours to fetch some wine, while in *Faustus* the title character is able to produce grapes from the other side of the world in a matter of minutes. In each case, the devil is called upon to fetch what is required. A devil can prevent a wedding by spiriting away the celebrant to another place very quickly; a devil can provide his witch with a bridle that, when strapped to man or beast, enables her to travel at record speeds; a devil can hastily circumnavigate the globe in order to satisfy the whims of a pregnant Duchess. These seemingly miraculous feats are, however, ways of getting around the problem at hand in the play rather than solving it directly. Faustus cannot create grapes out of nothing in the dead of winter, so he sends Mephistopheles off to circle the earth at top speed, explaining exactly how it can be achieved, for "in the contrary circle it is summer with them, as in India, Saba and farther countries in the East; and by means of a swift spirit that I have I had them brought hither, as ye see" (IV.ii.24-27). The witch Moll Spencer transforms her lover's horse into a beast that will carry them to London so he can impress his master with fine wine and spend the night with her. In these texts magic serves not as a way of fulfilling desires and satisfying whims, but rather as a shortcut to them. Neither people, nor devils, nor material objects can appear or disappear. Someone, or something, must physically travel the distance in order to obtain them. Such examples of stage magic demonstrate not only the marvels produced with demonic assistance, but also highlight the ways in which demonic power and influence were circumscribed in the early modern world. There is usually a 'logical' explanation for the feats performed, which are achieved in a roundabout rather than straightforward fashion. Even when the explanation could be straightforward, it is not. Food, riches, spirits, all must come from somewhere, or something, must be summoned or substituted, because neither the devil nor the actors can conjure them out of thin air. If anything, the supernatural displays on the early modern stage demonstrated that *not* everything is possible in magic.

In *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, Ioan P. Couliano writes that “the concept we moderns have of magic is very strange: we see it as merely a ludicrous heap of recipes and methods stemming from primitive, unscientific notions about nature”.¹ Indeed, from a post-Enlightenment standpoint, we tend to view magic as the opposite of the scientific, as something that is not confined by the laws of nature. Magic does not follow a logical understanding, and its inner workings cannot be exposed and explained for all to comprehend. Its power lies in its unknown, mysterious qualities. Consequently, this is how we regard the activities of witches, magicians and devils: as supernatural entities who defy the rules that govern the natural world, and are thus confined to the realm of the imagination, or a lost, more ignorant past. Yet for Renaissance demonic magic, the opposite is true. To say that ‘the devil did it’ as the early moderns did is by no means a simple, convenient way of explaining the unknown. Rather, the phrase draws on a complex and well-developed set of rules that dictated what was possible and what was not in the material world. In *Thinking With Demons*, Stuart Clark outlines this idea: “to attribute effects to devils *was* to know their causes – to know them perhaps uncertainly and fragmentally (for such was the problem with occult causes) but still to know them”.² To know the devil was also to have some understanding about the extent of his power in the material world and the ways in which he was restricted. The explanations provided by Mephistopheles and his hellish associates demystify the power of a devil not to expose them as fraudulent or works of fantasy but to confirm their credibility, demonstrating how such feats are compatible with a ‘natural’ understanding of how the cosmos operates.

This thesis is concerned with both the realism or perceived truth of demonic representation on stage, and the marked change from medieval drama in which the post-Reformation manifestation of the devil appears as, paradoxically, human. Set against a background of witch persecution and the widespread belief that demons were a material reality, the devil was both the subject of prevalent intellectual inquiry and a popular figure on the early modern English stage, featuring in around fifty-two plays between 1509 and

¹ Ioan P. Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, trans. Margaret Cook (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p.xvii.

² Stuart Clark, *Thinking With Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.160.

1638 with at least forty-one of those between 1570 and 1642. Many of these plays, like *Faustus* and *Friar Bacon*, enjoyed enduring popularity and were constantly performed and revised throughout the period.¹ John Cox even suggests that “in those years one could almost always have found a devil play in performance somewhere in London”.²

Underpinning this particular brand of popular entertainment is a cohesive and consistent ontological framework that dictated the extent to which the devil could – and could not – operate in the material world, entirely in keeping with the dominant demonological thought of the time. This orthodox understanding of the devil was evident in the theatrical treatment of demons, with explanations of demonic magic remaining consistent from *Doctor Faustus* in the late early 1590s to *The Late Lancashire Witches* in the mid 1630s, one of the last devil plays to appear before the theatres closed in 1642. This thesis thus confirms that early modern demonology was not an irrational superstition but a valid pre-science, a rational fixture in the perceived understanding of the natural world. This is not to say that ‘magic’ stood in for a ‘natural’ explanation, but rather that it worked within the confines of the ‘natural’ world.

On Science and Magic

Establishing where the devil and his magic fits into Renaissance ‘science’ and the beginnings of the scientific revolution is not particularly easy. Indeed, Renaissance magic and its relationship to both religion and science is such a complex and contested area of scholarship that, as Brian Vickers wonders, “who could ever hold the whole of such a vast field in his head?”.³ Magic has been inextricably linked in the history of science, with a vast body of scholarship asserting that belief in magic either hindered, aided, or operated independently from the great scientific and technological developments of the seventeenth century. Indeed, in an article published in 2012, Michael Hunter describes current debate as

¹ Peter Maxwell-Stuart, *Satan: A Biography* (Chalford: Amberley Publishing, 2011), p.114. Maxwell-Stuart specifies there were “six Satans, four Devils, three Lucifers, twelve demons, and eleven characters disguised as demons”. John D. Cox includes a list of devil plays in the appendices of *The Devil and the Sacred in English Drama, 1350-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.209-211.

² Cox, p.150.

³ Brian Vickers (ed), *Occult & Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.2.

in “something of a deadlock”.¹ Couliano demonstrates that ‘magic’ and ‘science’ can serve as explanations for the same phenomena: “magic has in common with modern technology that it claims to arrive, by other means, at the same ends: long distance communication, rapid transport, [and] interplanetary trips are some of the magician’s current exploits”.² In early modern England the lines between science, religion and magic as we know them were yet to be drawn, but this is not to say that the early moderns did not distinguish between the possible and the impossible, the knowable and the mysterious. Rather, the boundaries fell in a different place to ours.

According to the traditional view, during the Renaissance the religious dominance of the medieval world began to be discarded in favour of a secular understanding; science divorces itself from religious and supernatural associations, culminating in the Enlightenment’s triumph of rationalism and the New Philosophy. This standpoint dictates that the rise of the latter is only possible with the decline of the former. In his seminal *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904), Max Weber asserts that “the greatest historic process in the development of religion [was] the elimination of magic from the world”, later confirming in *Economy and Society* (1922) that “only ascetic Protestantism completely eliminated magic”.³ Weber outlines a clear progression from magic to religion to a secularised, modern society in a process of rationalisation or “Entzauberung”, the “disenchantment” of the world, specifying that the seeds of modernity were sown by the Protestant Reformation. Writing a few years before Weber, James Frazer, one of the founding fathers of modern anthropology, outlined a similar three-part schema of societal development in his twelve-volume study of magic and religion, *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915). Drawing on his exhaustive enquiry into culture and ritual around the globe, Frazer determined that societies naturally evolve from magic to religion to science.⁴ In Frazer’s model, discarding a ‘magical’ view of the world was necessary in order to attain a

¹ Michael Hunter, “The Decline of Magic: Challenge and Response in Early Enlightenment England”, *The Historical Journal* 22.2 (2012), p.399.

² Couliano, p.xvii.

³ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge Classics, 2001) p.61; Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p.630.

⁴ J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*, 2 vols., (London: Macmillan, 1911), vol. 1.

modern, rational society. To get from one to the other it was necessary to strip the superstitious from the rational and expose the fraudulent and unfounded claims for the existence of witchcraft and the possibilities of alchemy. In these models, magic is regarded as something in between science and religion and is consequently discredited by both; it is perceived to be grounded in optimism and irrational superstition, and in correlation mistaken for causation rather than quantifiable truth or solid logical foundation.

If we attempt to apply this model to Elizabethan England we must inevitably regard the perceived belief in the power of demons as purely irrational, a hangover from the medieval cosmos that stood in the way of real 'science'. At this time, the monarch employed the services of magician and conjuror John Dee, the law advocated the persecution of witches, and 'magic' was common enough that experimenting with the occult at university has been likened to experimenting with drugs in the 1970s.¹ Keith Thomas's authoritative *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971) which, as the title suggests, traces the decline of occult belief in early modern England, argues that the huge upsurge of belief in magic and the supernatural in the early modern period was a temporary by-product of the radical transformation initiated by the Reformation. In Thomas's view, while the line between magic and religion was impossible to draw in medieval England, by the end of the seventeenth century "we can draw a distinction between religion and magic which had not been possible earlier".² Thomas revises Weber's model by asserting that, while the seeds for modernity were sown by the advent of Protestantism, the Reformation thinking which prompted the 'decline of magic' did not actually come into effect until a century or two later. However, his argument closely echoes the long-discarded "societal advancement" models of the nineteenth century with Thomas coming, at times, "perilously close" to Frazer.³

This view on the decline of magic is fundamentally flawed, however, for this overly-whiggish theory of progress is only obtainable at the expense of the credibility of early modern intellectual culture in which the idea of magic still held a significant presence. Such

¹ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p.269.

² Thomas, p.50, p.640.

³ Stanley Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.21.

a view fails to recognise how Renaissance magic informed the later developments in science and is too dismissive of the intensely intellectual – and, indeed, empirical – nature of demonological understanding. As Hunter demonstrates, there is “not a straightforward connection of the kind once widely accepted between the decline of magic and the rise of science”.¹ It is important to acknowledge the persisting belief in witchcraft and magic present in the minds of the first ‘scientists’, many of whom were (so to speak) of the devil’s party. Isaac Newton’s long-held obsession with alchemy exemplifies this persistence, as does John Maynard Keynes’s oft-cited observation that Newton was not the first scientist but “the last of the magicians...the last great mind which looked on the invisible and intellectual world with the same eyes as those who began to build our intellectual inheritance”.² Indeed, Vickers suggests that “since Newton spent so much of his life studying alchemy...it seems to me entirely proper to call him an alchemist, without getting involved in value judgments of whether activity was ‘rational’ or ‘irrational’ – terms that have in any case outlived their usefulness”.³ Along with Newton’s alchemy we have the other magical pursuits of early modern intellectuals that have, until recent years, been brushed under the carpet: Kepler’s astrology, Boyle’s interest in *The Devil of Mascon* and collection of ‘Supernaturall Phenomena’ including serious enquiry into Scottish second sight, Henry More’s discussion of witchcraft in his 1653 *Antidote Against Atheism*, and many others. Also notable is Joseph Glanvill’s defence of the existence of witches and demons in *A Philosophical Endeavor Towards the Defense of the Being of Witches and Apparitions* (1666), and as a subject of his correspondence with Boyle and More. Focusing on the devil rather than witchcraft itself, Glanvill’s *Philosophical Endeavour* firmly identified the place and workings of the devil in nature, a thesis grounded in Glanvill’s own brand of logic. Glanvill not only outlines what was magically possible and what was not, he also takes into careful consideration the devil’s ability to affect the imagination rather than the physical transformation of matter itself. Furthermore, Glanvill argued that since there is so much that humans do not understand about the mysteries of nature, not wholly comprehending how the devil accomplished his magic did not mean he could not operate in and influence

¹ Hunter, p.400.

² John Maynard Keynes, “Newton the Man” in *Essays in Biography* (London: Mercury Books, 1961).

³ Vickers, p.15.

the material world. Schoolmaster John Webster, in his counter-blast to Glanvill's treatise, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (1677) asserted that the devil could not interact with humans in a material, physical context: The title page promises "that there is a corporeal league made betwixt the devil and the witch, or that he sucks on the witch's body, has carnal copulation, or that witches are turned into cats, dogs, raise tempests, or the like, is utterly denied and disproved".¹ However, Webster does not deny that the devil can affect humans in a psychological capacity. Like Reginald Scot writing a century before him, Webster inadvertently demonstrates how intensely people engaged with magical understanding of the world. Glanvill counter-attacked in the posthumously published *Sadducismus Triumphatus* (1681), which ran to several editions. The witch issue was thus still highly contested towards the end of the century.

In light of such an intellectual history, magic should thus be viewed as part of the advancement of scientific inquiry rather than something that must be shaken off in order to wholly comprehend the natural truths of the material world. The overlap of magic and science in early modern England began to receive serious scholarly treatment in the 1920s with the publication of Lynn Thorndike's eight-volume *History of Magic and Experimental Science* (1923-1958). In this monumental work, Thorndike asserts that "magic and experimental science have been connected in their developments; the magicians were perhaps the first to experiment; and that the history of both magic and experimental Science can be better understood by studying them together".² Thorndike's study was followed by an increasing interest not in demonism, but in Hermeticism, Neoplatonism, and the role of 'natural magic' in the beginnings of the Scientific Revolution, culminating in the work of Frances Yates. Yates's profusion of publications claim that the esoteric pursuits of Giordano Bruno, Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and the other Hermeticists instigated modern secular inquiry: "The Renaissance magus...exemplifies that changed attitude of man to the cosmos which was the necessary preliminary to the rise of

¹ John Webster (1610-1682), *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (London, 1677), p.1. Not to be mistaken for the playwright John Webster.

² Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* 8 vols., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1923), vol. 1, p.414.

science”.¹ Yates’s scholarship extended to the treatment of the magus on the Renaissance stage, finding Prospero “Shakespeare’s last word on the occult philosophy”, a “beneficent magus” who “uses his magical science for Utopian ends”.² As this thesis demonstrates, however, the links between Prospero and Neoplatonism are hard to identify, and Yates’s connection seems extraordinarily tenuous. The links between the development of modern scientific thought and the pursuits of the Neoplatonists are equally hard to establish logically. In *Occult & Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, Vickers postulates that the historiography of the science/magic question occurred in three phases with the explosion of scholarship in response to the controversial Yates thesis as the third phase, citing P. M. Rattansi, A. G. Debus, and P. J. French in supporting Yates’s claims and M. B. Hesse, Edward Rosen, Paolo Rossi, and Charles Trinkaus contesting Yates. Vickers himself finds the Yates thesis “wholly unfounded”, pointing out that the Hermeticists’ activities bear very little resemblance to empirical methods: “we do not find the Neoplatonists studying the behaviour of falling bodies, taxonomizing plants, or dissecting the human body simply to find out why these things are as they are”.³ How demonism (as opposed to Yates’s ‘white’ magic) fits into these competing models is trickier still, as Vickers acknowledges: “of all the aspects of the occult, that connected with demonology and witchcraft seems the most difficult to come to terms with...as an intellectual and social phenomenon, too, witchcraft is harder to understand than any of the occult sciences and has provoked an extensive controversy”.⁴ The pneumatological assumptions of Neoplatonism and demonism in fact have much in common. The concept of demonic spirits is a clear parallel to the Neoplatonic daemons, the magic arising from the relationship between a human and an external, non-human spirit, even though the two are polar opposites in terms of moral implication. To put it simply, demons move the human closer to hell, daemons closer to

¹ Frances Yates, “The Hermetic Tradition in Renaissance Science” in *Art, Science, and the History of the Renaissance*, ed. Charles S. Singleton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), p.255.

² Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp.187-188.

³ Vickers, p.6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.23-24.

God. Clark confirms: “natural and demonic magic were at opposite ends of the moral spectrum, but they were epistemologically indistinguishable”.¹

Whereas the Rosicrucian links to the development of the scientific method are hard to detect, demonology (the study or the ‘science’ of demons) has a clear connection to early modern natural philosophy. The rigorous scrutiny applied to demonological debate, and the rational and methodical manner in which such discourses were outlined make it, as Clark suggests, “hard to deny that the form of discussion, at least, was broadly but genuinely scientific”.² Indeed, “we would do better to associate demonology with development and, indeed, the ‘advancement’ in natural knowledge than with stagnation and decay”.³ Yes, belief in the real presence of devils in the material world eventually declined, and yes, the scientific understanding of the world did begin to rapidly increase at the end of the seventeenth century, but one did not replace the other. The two existed side by side, as Stanley Tambiah illustrates: “magical theories and preoccupations advanced the formulation of those theoretical systems that would later be seen as the triumphs of the new science: examples are heliocentrism, the infinity of the worlds (essential ideas in the Copernican – Keplerian systems), the circulation of blood (the Harvey contribution) and certain applications in mathematics”.⁴ What is of interest here is not how and why demonological inquiry was eventually stamped out, but rather how and why it persisted for so long.

As *The Tempest*, *Doctor Faustus* and other magic dramas of the early modern theatre exemplify, demonic magic had a strong presence in popular culture and its associations with religion, popular fiction, and witchcraft have made it something of an embarrassment to those who purport to establish the scholarly influence of magic on scientific thought. It is only in recent years that scholars have started to take the devil seriously in this respect. To Vickers’s model, I would add a fourth phase to this general history of magic scholarship that emerges from this third stage: when scholars started to take demonology seriously. In the past, scholars have been quick to dismiss this aspect of magical history as part of the

¹ Stuart Clark, “The Scientific Status of Demonology”, *Occult & Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.364.
Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p.152.

³ Ibid., p.156.

⁴ Tambiah, p.21.

‘decline’ of magic linked with the first ‘phase’ Vickers outlines. Emerging from histories of witchcraft persecution in early modern Europe, the recent shift to the ‘idea’ of witchcraft and the demonological philosophies that shaped early modern witch belief was instigated by Clark’s monumental *Thinking with Demons* (1997).¹ This scholarship has focused on the relationship between demonology (or lack thereof) in the decline of magic and the rise of science, outlining how they overlap, the former feeding into the latter rather than declining in order for the ‘secular triumph’ of modern scientific enquiry to flourish free of archaic superstitions. Following Clark are a host of recent scholars who stress the importance of taking demonology seriously, including Nathan Johnstone’s *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England*, Euan Cameron’s 2011 *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, & Religion*, and recent biographies of demonologists including Johann Weyer and Reginald Scot, both in 2011.²

An Anthropological Perspective

Both Vickers and Clark emphasise the importance of an anthropological approach to magic, and this insistence on understanding the rational basis for magical belief has been crucial to properly comprehending the role of demons and demonology in the early modern world. According to Vickers, in order to appreciate the Renaissance understanding of what was meant by ‘magic’, “it is in fact to the anthropologists and social historians to whom the literary critic must return, if she or he is to understand what magic was for, who used it, and why” and “the historian of the occult can learn a great deal from the work on magic and ritual of such anthropologists as Marcel Mauss, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, and S. J.

¹ For example, Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002); James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe*, (London: Routledge, 1994). Clark’s comprehensive survey was preceded by his articles, “The Scientific Status of Demonology” in *Occult & Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. Brian Vickers, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and “Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft”, *Past & Present*, 87 (May, 1980), pp.98-127. All references to Clark are from *Thinking with Demons*, unless stated otherwise.

² Nathan Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006); Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, & Religion, 1250-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Vera Hoorens, *Een Ketterse arts Voor de heksen: Jan Wier (1515-1588)* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker Press, 2011). Philip C. Almond, *England’s First Demonologist: Reginald Scot and the ‘Discoverie of Witchcraft’* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011).

Tambiah”.¹ Clark demonstrates that the anthropological understanding of the fluid and socially-determined boundaries between science, religion, and magic is key to approaching demonic rationality, stating that both the history and anthropology of science show “that the perceived boundary between nature and supernature, if it is established at all, is local to cultures and that it shifts according to tastes and interests”.² This approach to taking ‘magic’ seriously is certainly important, but almost all the configurations of magic, religion, and science drawn up by anthropologists tend to situate magic in opposition to ‘science’, a model which does not fit the demonic ‘magic’ displayed on the early modern stage. These configurations must therefore also be treated with caution for much of the earlier works assert that magic stands in opposition to science by linking it more closely with religion, with belief rather than understanding of how the natural world operates. In defining the boundaries between science, magic, and religion, many of these earlier specialists establish a dichotomy between knowledge and belief, with ‘science’ grounded in the material, the rational, the natural, or the secular, while magic and religion instead are epitomised in the metaphysical, the irrational, the supernatural, the superstitious. Indeed, some of the earlier anthropological definitions of ‘magic’ are applicable not to the kind of magic whose existence is confirmed by the devil, but to the kind of magic he exposes as fraudulent. In his *General Theory of Magic* (1902), Marcel Mauss argued for a closer bond of magic and religion rather than magic and science. Focusing on the ritual rather than its scientific qualities, Mauss asserts that the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. Yet demons in the early modern theatre have a tendency to discredit the power of ritual altogether, and their magic is much closer to ‘science’ than Mauss’s broadly-defined connection.³ Mauss, along with Wittgenstein and Bronislaw Malinowski’s functionalist perspective, emphasises the rhetorical act of magic.⁴ In his essay “Magic, Science, and Religion”, Malinowski writes: “the function of magic is to ritualize man’s optimism”.⁵ We certainly find traces of this concept in early modern drama, with the cautionary ‘be careful what you wish for’ tales

¹ Vickers, p.33.

² Clark, p.152.

³ Marcel Mauss. *A General Theory of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain (London: Routledge, 1972).

⁴ Brian R. Clack, *Wittgenstein, Frazer, and Religion* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

⁵ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science, and Religion, and Other Essays* (New York: Doubleday, 1954), p.19.

from *Doctor Faustus* to *The Witch of Edmonton*, but these plays both debunk demonic ritual. As Chapter Five demonstrates, the criminal focus in the latter is on the intent (expressed by the person) and not the action (performed by the devil).

Other magical definitions must also be approached cautiously, as the kinds of magic performed by early modern stage devils do not often fit into the ethnographic definitions of ‘magic’. The two fallacious laws in Frazer’s model upon which his definition is based – ‘flawed logic’ according to Frazer, or ‘pseudoscience’ according to Tylor, are similarly interrogated – and rejected – in devil dramas.¹ The first, “the law of contagion”, outlines that “things which have once been conjoined must remain ever afterwards, even when quite dissevered from each other, in such a sympathetic relation that whatever is done to the one must similarly affect the other”.² Contagion plays a key role in *The Witch of Edmonton*. In the play, touch – from illicit sexual relations, the dog sucking the blood of a witch, the effects of the devil’s touch before two deaths in the play, the expected results from ‘witch scratching’ and the witch commanding her familiar to ‘touch’ the life of one of her many assailants – sets off a chain reaction of disastrous events resulting in two murders and two criminals hanged, but the question of blame is left ambiguous at the play’s conclusion. While the play’s moral implications are left open, the fault is clearly with the witch as agent, not in the actual act of contagion. Frazer’s second law, “the law of similarity” stipulates that “like affects like”.³ This suggests an animistic view of the world in which everything is connected and material objects are granted more uses or abilities than afforded in the classical Aristotelian model (which distinguishes between matter, form, and spirit) on the basis that things or beings mirror the potency of that which they resemble. The Renaissance variant on the “law of similarity”, epitomised in the idea of man-as-microcosm (central to both Platonic and Paracelsian tradition) is eloquently explained by Foucault in *The Order of Things*: “[u]p to the end of the sixteenth century, resemblance played a constructive role in the knowledge of Western culture...the universe was folded in upon itself: the earth echoing the sky, faces seeing themselves reflecting in the stars, and

¹ J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*, 2 vols., (London: Macmillan, 1911), vol. 1; Edward Burnett Tylor, *Religion in Primitive Culture*, 2 vols., (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1970).

² Frazer, p.37.

³ Ibid.39.

plants holding within their stems the secrets that were of use to man”.¹ Foucault describes a world view hinted at in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, in which both vision and the power of resemblance play a key role in the expected success of the brazen head built in the image of its creator. As Chapter Two outlines, however, this view is ultimately rejected and discredited. ‘Magic’ in this play is a demystifying force which exposes fake magic without denying the supernatural altogether. As Vickers’s list suggests, it is only specific and slightly more recent social anthropological scholarship that is most helpful in understanding how magic can be understood as both rational and credible. Malinowski outlines how magic is understood as rational within its social context, a view echoed by Evans-Pritchard in his seminal essay “Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande” (1937), in which he demonstrates how the seemingly-illogical convictions and ritualised medical practices of the Zande were well-reasoned and entirely rational in Azande cosmological understanding.² In the more recent *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality*, Tambiah asserts that each system of understanding has its own scope of rationality, yet even he considers magic and science in wholly separate spheres rather than viewing ‘magic’ as operating within ‘science’.³ Renaissance demonology, however, operates within the realm of the ‘natural’ and is governed by the same natural laws and limitations as science. Anthropology, then, is helpful in emphasising the importance of taking magic seriously and understanding it as a rational entity in its context, but the rituals, invocations, causal relationships and connections through resemblance are the sort of thing exposed as false tricks by Mephistopheles.

The Science of Early Modern Demonology

Drawing boundaries between false magic and science, and magic and religion, is exactly what the early modern demonologists purported to do. Clark writes:

¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.19.

² E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937).

³ Tambiah, p.19.

the key questions faced by demonologists were thus of a causal and criterial kind: What was the exact causal status of demonic effects? What laws did they obey or disobey? What were the criteria for distinguishing between their true and illusory aspects....tackling such questions involved making distinctions that were critical for any explanation of phenomena, whether demonic or not – distinctions between what was possible and impossible, or really and falsely perceived, and between both supernatural and nature, and nature and artifice.¹

The Protestant Reformation did change the way devils were viewed, however, with a rise rather than decline in interest in the power and significance of demons in the human world in which the devil's 'magic' is used to explain a great deal more anomalies in a post-Reformation world. Luther himself was deeply interested in the devil and attributed all the seemingly miraculous to demonic tricks. Satan was thus a key component in a Protestant understanding of the devil's work and this was abundantly evident on the early modern stage. Cox writes that "Protestantism complicated the credibility of theatrical illusion not only by inverting some of the criteria for truth and falsehood but also by rejecting Catholic claims to miracle, on the grounds that 'miracles are ceased'".² Luther's declaration was compounded by the multitude of demonological texts produced immediately before and following the Reformation which detailed the exploits of witches and demons and questioned the extent of demonic power and influence. From the fifteenth century onwards, hundreds of demonological tracts were produced throughout Europe. Demonology gave the basis for understanding the mechanisms of the miracles wrought by science. The devil himself becomes an expert on the workings of nature; his skills had to assume a form of naturalism, as there was no other way in which he can interact with and beguile humans. As Clark points out, "[t]his naturalism was strengthened by comparisons that likened the devil to some astonishingly knowledgeable and adept scientist".³ Rather than questioning the existence of demons, the majority of these publications were concerned with analysing and scrutinising the extent to which Lucifer and his minions were able to interact with and influence human beings and the material world in which they inhabited. Of the multitude of these discourses, the two most extreme cases on the demonology spectrum were Reginald Scot's scathingly sceptical account of witchcraft and

¹ Clark, "The Scientific Status of Demonology", pp.353-4.

² Cox, p.153.

³ Clark, p.154.

the supernatural, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) and Jean Bodin's *De la Démonomanie des Sorciers* (1580) which, in a very legalistic style, embraces almost everything supernaturally imaginable. These cases are, however, exceptions in the demonological debate, and the vast number of discourses that fall between them are of greater importance here. These texts assessed the extent of the power of these devils, their limitations, and precisely how they were able to produce wonders or, to be more accurate, give the semblance of being able to perform miracles. The purpose of these demonological preoccupations of Renaissance intellectual culture were not merely to record the unknown and feared feats in the world over which they had no control, but the contrary; to know and understand how exactly such wonders were achieved. Clark explains: "this meant that asking which laws of cause and effect they obeyed, and which they infringed".¹ These demonologies are notable for the decidedly rational methods in which they consider the differences between natural and devilish causes, the impact of the devil on the human mind, and the extent of his abilities to delude the senses of humans, of what was possible, what was not, and how exactly he was able to administer his *maleficium*. The result is a process of demystification that exposes the inner workings of devilish ability, thus rendering it a valid and understandable epistemology.

While Scot and Bodin demonstrate the extreme polarities of demonological debate, in most cases such writings exhibit a certain continuity in the understanding of the devil's abilities, bound by several underlying assumptions regarding the ways in which his magic is circumscribed. In Britain, the most well known of these was King James VI & I's *Demonology*, first published in Scotland in 1597 and in England in 1604. Taking a conservative stance, James I's discourse was written in response to the scepticism of *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* and Johann Weyer's *De Praestigiis Daemonum et Incantationibus ac Venificiis* (1563), and best represents an orthodox demonological position. James I's attitude towards witchcraft changed dramatically on his ascension to the English throne as he became increasingly sceptical himself.² His opinions on magic and demonic interaction have had lasting influence, however, because Shakespeare followed parts of *Demonology*

¹ Clark, p.151.

² Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.231.

quite closely in his characterisation of the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*, even paraphrasing *Demonology* at times.¹ Gifford's *A Discourse of the Subtil Practices of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers* (1587) and *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes* (1593) both consider the extent of the devil's ability to affect human beings, arguing that Satan and his followers could just as easily delude people into thinking someone was guilty of witchcraft and could be the force behind the seemingly 'white' magic of the cunning folk in counter-magic operations. William Perkins's 1608 *A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft* placed particular emphasis on the demonic pact itself, asserting that this was the real crime, not the *maleficium* that resulted from the relationship with the devil, while physician John Cotta's *The Trial of Witch-Craft Shewing the True and Right Methode of Discovery* (1616) focuses on exposing fraudulent 'magic' means of curing bodily illness. The power of Satan and his devils was centred on visual deception, and often this deception was the only substantial power granted to them. As *Doctor Faustus* and *The Lancashire Witches* demonstrate, it was possible for a devil to transform or replace things to appear like something else (such as humans appearing to be animals) very quickly so it would seem as if they were appearing and disappearing; it was possible for him to speed things up (such as long-distance transport) or slow things down (like the process of ageing) and enable long distance communication. James I illustrates that the devil could carry

newes from anie parte of the worlde, which the agilitie of the spirite may easily perform...make them to please princes, by faire banquets and daintie disshes, carried in short space fra the farthest part of the world. He will guard his schollers with faire armies of horse-men and foole-men in appearance, castles and fortes: which are all but impressiones in the aire.²

The devil was able to accomplish things so quickly because, as Weyer notes, he is "not weighed down by the sluggishness of the body".³ While the precise explanations for these

¹ For example, James I asserts that witches cannot be seen when they fly not because they are invisible, but because they "thicken & obscure so the air, that is next about them by contracting it strait together, that the beames of any other mans eyes, cannot pearce thorow the same to see them". James VI & I, "Demonology" in *King James VI and I: Selected Writings*, eds. Neil Rhodes, Jennifer Richards and Joseph Marshall (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p.174. In *Macbeth*, the Weird Sisters "Hover through the fog and filthy air" (I.i.13). William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller, New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). All subsequent references are to this edition.

² James I, p.150.

³ Johann Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance: Johann Weyer, De praestigiis daemonum*, trans. John Shea, eds. Benjamin G Kohl and George Mora, (Binghamton, N.Y: Medieval & Renaissance Text & Studies, 1991), p.26.

feats were often disputed, nearly all demonologists asserted the same conclusion about where the devil's power falls short, for the wondrous abilities of the devil could not extend to the power of creation: "he cannot create even a fly...nor can any creature lay claim to this function".¹ Like the human souls he was so keen to acquire, the devil had to act *within* the natural laws because they were God's laws, and

the high prouidence of God Almighty and soueraigne rule ouer all, is set forth so vnto vs in the Scriptures, as that without him a Sparrow can not fall vpon the ground...the Deuils would hurt and destroy with bodily harmes, both men and beastes and other creatures: but all the Diuels in Hell are so chained vp and brided by this high prouidence that they can not plucke the wing from one poore little Wrenne, without speciall leaue given them from the ruler of the whole earth.²

This understanding stems from Aquinas' assertion that the devil could perform 'wonders' (*mira*) but not 'miracles' (*miracula*) and, in Protestant countries, was also drawn from Luther's contention that the age of miracles was over and anything that appeared to be so was either fraudulent or the work of the devil. As Clark suggests, 'supernatural' is therefore the wrong word to use for the devil's workings and influence, because he, like humans, is restricted to a knowledge of the material rather than the metaphysical.

'Superhuman' is a more accurate assessment of his abilities and skill, for

his angelic essence has not perished...and since, in so long a passage of time, his extraordinary observance and remarkable experience of events has increased, all are agreed that he possesses great energy, incredible cunning, superhuman wisdom, the keenest discernment, the highest degree of alertness, and incomparable skill in contriving the most destructive stratagems under the most attractive guise.³

Of course, the devil possessed superior knowledge, having been in existence for a lot longer than humans, and this fact still made him an attractive source of information for those who were driven to him either by curiosity or by revenge. The devil thus knew how to manipulate or best use the laws of nature, but was unable to break them.

¹ Weyer, p.26.

² George Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtil Practises of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers* (London, 1587), sig.A2.

³ Weyer, p.31.

Demonology in the Early Modern English Theatre

While the continuity and underlying rationality in early modern demonological thought has recently been addressed in both historical and anthropological studies of magic and witchcraft, it has largely been overlooked in theatre and literary analysis. This critical neglect is surprising, considering the popularity of devils, magic, and witchcraft on the early modern stage. The principles that governed the devil's magic in the early modern theatre were the same as those outlined by orthodox demonology: summoning but not creating; disguising but not transforming; casting temporary illusions but not implementing permanent, tangible change. The display of magic on the early modern stage serves as an arena in which to test and reject many of the irrational, popular perceptions of early modern magic. The potency of ritual, animistic spirits, metamorphosis, and demonic contracts are all scrutinised in the stage's exploration of the human-devil relationship and the power of devils, who operate not to expose 'magic' as fraudulent, as many critics of *Faustus* have stated, but to make their presence and abilities more credible by exposing their inner workings.

That there has not yet been a scholarly inquiry into the use of demonology in the early modern theatre is perhaps because magic in literature is rarely taken seriously at all. The theatre is first and foremost a source of entertainment, showing plays to amuse an audience for profit. Earnestly outlining the natural rules which dictate the extent of 'supernatural' influence is not its primary goal. As a space for performing fictions, the early modern theatre is under no obligation to adhere to occult 'truths' and, indeed, magic in fiction is usually treated very differently, fuelled by long-held faith in the need for the audience to wholly suspend their disbelief. As Freud explains, magic in fiction is regarded differently because "we adapt our judgment to the conditions of the writer's fictional reality and treat souls, spirits and ghosts as if they were fully entitled to exist, just as we are in material reality".¹ Yet the problem here is that devils *are* entitled to exist in the early modern material reality and so considering devil magic as purely fiction is problematic.

¹ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. Hugh Haughton (London: Penguin, 2003), p.156.

If we consider how ‘magic’ operates in fiction in a structuralist analysis we find, as with some of the anthropological definitions of magic, that early modern stage magic does not conform to any of the magic ‘categories’ outlined by Freud, Tzvetan Todorov and others.¹ The terms ‘the marvelous’, ‘the fantastic’ or ‘the uncanny’ come to mind, all of which can be readily applied to much later, post-Renaissance fiction. Yet one has enormous difficulty fitting early modern devilry into such categories. In Todorov’s schema, outlined in “L’étrange et le merveilleux”, the supernatural can be classified as either ‘the uncanny’ (something appearing supernatural, but later explained), or the ‘marvelous’, (the supernatural accepted in a fictional context).² There are certainly some dramas which qualify as ‘the marvelous’ – Peele’s *The Old Wives Tale* with its magic wishing-well, talking head and various other tropes typically associated with folktales, or John Lyly’s *Endymion*, rooted in classical mythology rather than rationalised demonological ‘truths’ closer to home. But to regard the ‘magic’ in *Doctor Faustus* as mere fantasy by allotting Mephistopheles into the same category as magic wells, enchanted sleep, and charmed trinkets is to deny the play any psychological depth. We have to attribute the magic in the play to some form of realism in order to engage with a central element of the tragedy, which is not that ‘magic’ does not exist, but it is not the same ‘magic’ Faustus has expected. Similarly, the concept of ‘the uncanny’ is equally difficult to apply to early modern demons. Popularised by Freud’s 1919 essay on the subject, which analyses the effect of magic in the stories of E. T. A. Hoffmann, ‘the uncanny’ (or ‘the un-homely’ if translated literally) is concerned with fright triggered by the supernatural.³ Defined more by reaction than function, Freud outlines that the uncanny “no doubt ... belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread”; it is the unease arising from the unfamiliar-yet-

¹ See, for example Pierre Georges Castex, *Le Conte fantastique en France à Maupassant* (Paris: J. Corti, 1951); Louis Vax, *La Séduction de L’étrange: étude sur la littérature fantastique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965); Roger Caillois, *Au Coeur du fantastique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965); H. P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature: As Revised in 1936* (Arlington, Virginia: Carrollton, Clark, 1974).

² Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), p.41.

³ The ‘Unheimlichen’ was coined by E. Jentsch in “Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen” [The Psychology of the Uncanny], *Psychiatrisch-neurologische Wochenschrift*, 22 (1908). Freud writes: “We can investigate the semantic content that has accrued to the German word *unheimlich* (of which the nearest semantic equivalents in English are ‘uncanny’ and ‘eerie’, but which etymologically corresponds to ‘unhomely’)”. *The Uncanny*, p.124.

familiar that is only later explained.¹ Certainly the devils could be frightening in *Faustus*, as the real devil stories suggest, but this is unlikely, given the long tradition in medieval drama of comic devils which remains consistent in the sub-plots of *Faustus* and *The Witch of Edmonton* and the main plots of *The Devil is an Ass*, *Grim the Collier of Croydon*, *If This be Not a Good Play*, *the Devil is In it* and others. *Friar Bacon* specifies just how un-frightening the manifestation of the devil can be. When Bacon's servant Miles encounters one hellish agent, he treats him as a friend and politely enquires after his mood: "Good Lord, here's one of my master's devils. I'll go and speak to him. What, Master Plutus, how cheer you" (xv.17-19).² Furthermore, in most of these devil dramas, we are often given warning before a devil appears as human, dispelling any uncertainty or unease about a character's origins before they even appear. *Faustus*, *Grim the Collier*, *If This Be Not a Good Play*, *The Devil's Charter* and *The Devil is an Ass* all depict the devils in demon form before we see them as human, while the spirit apparitions appearing as Helen of Troy and Alexander the Great in *Faustus*, Hercules in *Friar Bacon*, and Hector and Achilles in *The Birth of Merlin* are all identified pointedly as demons in disguises. Conventional modes of analysing 'magic' in literature thus fall flat when applied to Renaissance theatre devilry. In *Au Coeur du Fantastique*, Roger Caillois specifies that "the Fantastic is always a break in the acknowledged order, an irruption of the inadmissible within the changeless everyday legality".³ On the early modern stage, however, the devil is an integral part of the "acknowledged order" and thus we must view the tricks of Mephistopheles within these conventional magic-in-fiction frameworks or we could not really consider it 'magic' at all. As entertaining as they may be, these dramas are displaying magic that, while not exactly ordinary (as the manifestation of devils was probably not regarded as an everyday occurrence in the lives of most early moderns), was certainly considered possible.

It is thus important to view this magic as a form of realism, despite the fact that few scholars have afforded it this degree of credibility. The stage serves not just as an amalgamation of popular and intellectual views on magic but often uses the latter to dispel

¹ Freud, p.123.

² Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, ed. J.A. Lavin, The New Mermaids, (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1969). All subsequent references are to this edition.

³ Roger Caillois, *Au Coeur du fantastique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), qtd. in Todorov, p.41.

the former. Mephistopheles's act of exposing Faustus's summoning ritual as fraudulent is not the only example of demystification. In *The Witch of Edmonton*, the villagers test for a witch using an old superstition, believing that if burning thatch from Mother Sawyer's roof prompts her to appear on the scene, she is guilty of witchcraft – only to have the practice discredited by the Justice of the Peace who declares they are not proving Sawyer a witch but are instead proving themselves “stark fools” (IV.i.51).¹ Like the multitude of demonological discourses that examined and validated the existence and influence of devils working in nature, the display of devils on the stage also served to interrogate, explain, and demystify the workings of demonic magic.

Most critical analyses of magic dramas on the early modern stage are still heavily influenced by the outdated whiggish theories outlined by Thomas and others which claim that there is a noticeable ‘decline of magic’ in the development of devil dramas from the early 1590s to the 1640s, with the transition from *Faustus* to *Tempest* serving as a microcosm of Weber's disenchantment. This model has only been challenged fairly recently. Earlier analyses of stage magic tend to focus on the ‘white’ magic of Prospero and its alleged relationship to the scientific revolution in its apparent transcendence of the explicitly Marlovian model. As mentioned earlier, Yates herself argued that Prospero exemplified a secular, ‘white’ magus, a view later taken up by John Mebane in his *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age*. Mebane examines the role of Neoplatonism and Cabalist magic in Renaissance drama, arguing that “philosophical occultism carried to its logical extreme the humanists' affirmation of the power of human beings to control both their personalities and the world around them”, identifying the occult as a Neoplatonic force evident in the works of Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare as giving “impetus to the burgeoning enthusiasm of the period about humanity and its powers”.² The focus here is still determinedly on finding the roots of the Scientific Revolution in this alleged ‘natural’ magic. Yates's arguments surface again and again in *Tempest* scholarship which lauds Prospero as the magician-cum-scientist who explores the full potential of human control

¹ Thomas Dekker, John Ford, & William Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, eds. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge, Revels Student Editions (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). All subsequent references are to this edition.

² John S. Mebane, *Renaissance Magic and The Return of the Golden Age: The Occult Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p.3.

over the universe. Yet, as this thesis demonstrates, Prospero has a great deal more in common with the necromantic Dr Faustus than with Pico della Mirandola, Marsilio Ficino or Giordano Bruno, and there is a great deal of Mephistopheles in Ariel. Again, hellish demons play a much more significant role and have a much greater presence in early modern theatre than Neoplatonic daemons. On the rare occasion in which the latter are alluded to, such as Friar Bacon's claim that he sources power from "the cabalists that write of magic spells / As Hermes, Melchie, and Pythagoras" it is already apparent (and continually confirmed) that any magical talents Bacon possesses come solely from devils (ix.28-9). Bacon makes no attempt to hide this fact but proudly proclaims he can "strain nigromancy to the deep" and that he has "dived into hell / And sought the darkest palaces of fiends" (ii.54; xi.7-8). Other scholars have attempted to trace the process of secularization in the representation of magic on the early modern stage. In *The Medieval Stage*, Chambers postulates that a move towards the secular is evident in the progression of drama from medieval to early modern, a progression that culminates in the apparently secular Shakespeare.¹ More recently, Stephen Greenblatt has asserted that the staging of magic in the early modern theatre tends to expose it as fraudulent, focusing on the faked exorcisms and possession in *King Lear*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Comedy of Errors*: "[p]erformance kills belief; or rather acknowledging theatricality kills the credibility of the supernatural".² This view does not necessarily work, however, as Shakespeare depicts devils operating in the conventional role in the *Henry VI* plays. Such models do not account for the perennial popularity of the earlier plays, like *Faustus* and *Friar Bacon*, which were performed throughout the period.

The history of magic plays does not reveal a detectable change towards the secular, and the similarities between the magic presented in *Doctor Faustus* and *The Late Lancashire Witches* testify to this fact. When considering magic on the early modern stage, no two plays could seem further apart than *Faustus* and *Lancashire*. First performed at the very beginning of the early modern craze for theatrical magic in the early 1590s, Marlowe's play dramatises

¹ E. K. Chambers, "The Secularization of The Plays" in *The Medieval Stage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1903), pp.69-105; Cox, p.107.

² See "Loudon and London", *Critical Inquiry* 12.2 (1986), pp.326-346, and *Shakespearean Negotiation: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

the tragedy of a largely unsuccessful scholar-magician. On the other hand, *Lancashire*, penned a few short years before the theatres closed in 1642, is a rollicking comedy about four very capable witches. The former was so frightening that, as noted, audience members allegedly identified real devils in the demonic display; the latter was described by a contemporary spectator as consisting “from beginning to the end of odd passages and fopperies to provoke laughter, and is mixed with divers songs and dances”.¹ *Faustus* has enjoyed enduring popularity and has been consigned to the canon. Contrarily, according to audience member Nathaniel Tomkyns, *Lancashire* did not contain “any poetical genius, or art, or language”.² The nature of magic in both of these plays is surprisingly similar, however. It operates in the same way, serves the same purpose and is constrained by the same limitations. As well as demonstrating how the devil is able to acquire consumable goods very quickly, both plays also feature human-to-animal transformations, social disruption caused by invisible spirits, and copulation with a devil. In each play the devil is called upon to assist in public humiliation, summon up demonic spirits for the amusement or horror of onlookers, and to harass those characters who exhibit scathing scepticism about the existence of magic. Most importantly, each play attempts to offer the audience an explanation as to how the devil is able to operate and thus exposes the limitations of his abilities. Even though Marlowe’s play (particularly the A-text) exposes the emptiness of the Faustian pact fairly quickly while Heywood and Brome’s sensational comedy appears to push the boundaries of human comprehension, both plays are linked by the way in which they exhibit an understanding of the laws of demonic intervention and influence. Taking his cue from Stuart Clark, John Cox demonstrates a great deal of continuity in the way devils are represented throughout the period, although the focus of Cox’s work is on the representation of the devil in medieval and early modern drama rather than the nature and constraints of the magic itself. While there was an eventual shift of focus from the devil’s evil influence on the human to the evil of the human itself, this did not occur in the theatre, as Jeffrey Burton Russell outlines: “[i]n the arts the process of shifting emphasis

¹ This letter, penned by Nathaniel Tomkyns who saw the play at the Globe in 1634, appears in full in Herbert Berry’s “The Globe Bewitched and *El Hombre Fiel*”, *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 1 (New York: A M S Press, 1984), pp.211-30.

² Tomkyns, quoted in Berry, p.212.

from transcendent evil to the demonic immanent in the human mind was slow and irregular, and the traditional Devil continued to play an important part in literature”.¹

Robert West confirms this continuity in *The Invisible World*: “after *Faustus*, magic and daemons in tragedies, though sometimes approximate or fanciful in details, conform in general to the notions of their day about the nature of such things in the actual world”.²

Aside from Cox, West, and Russell, there are few studies which treat demons on the stage as a specific focus, and even these do not adequately explore the ‘realism’ of stage demonology. Indeed, scholars typically place ‘magic’ into separate categories and strict binaries with human characters, not demonic, at the forefront. Most scholarship on magic, witchcraft, and the devil focuses on the distinctions made between goetic and theurgic magic, and it is often divided into ‘black’ and ‘white’, ‘male’ and ‘female’, ‘natural’ and ‘demonic’. The distinctions were usually made in regards to the respective relationships the witch and the magus formulate with the devil. In *Demonology*, James I outlines that “witches ar servants onelie, and slaues to the Devil; but the Necromanciers are his maisters and commanders”, although he goes on to point out that this control the necromancer exercises over a demon is only short-term.³ Similarly, Weyer makes the distinction on the grounds that magicians deliberately seek out and employ the devil’s knowledge, whilst a witch is not given a choice in the matter but is forced into devilish coercion.⁴ Here, the motivations are the key difference between the two: the curiosity of the magus versus the witch driven to make a pact with the devil out of revenge. To the first the devil offers forbidden knowledge, to the second a source of power for the powerless. These differences are best exemplified in the dichotomy presented by *Doctor Faustus* and *The Witch of Edmonton*. When we first meet Faustus, he has exhausted all available sources of knowledge and is contemplating summoning the devil as a means of feeding his insatiable intellectual curiosity, for:

Philosophy is odious and obscure;
Both law and physic are for petty wits;

¹ Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p.91.

² Robert Hunter West, *The Invisible World: A Study of Pneumatology in Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Octagon, 1969), p.59.

³ James I, p.157.

⁴ Weyer, p.486.

Divinity is basest of the three,
 Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible, and vile.
 'Tis magic, magic that hath ravished me (I.i.108-112).

Edmonton's Mother Sawyer, on the other hand, is driven to the devil out of the desire for petty revenge on her abusive neighbour: "Would some power, good or bad, / Instruct me which way I might be revenged / Upon this churl?" (II.i.114-16). She is then compelled to forge a pact with the devil after he threatens to tear her into a thousand pieces. However, both the bargain of Mother Sawyer and that of the Wittenberg scholar prove to be empty ones, as neither the witch nor the magus is satisfied by the devil's abilities. Faustus hopes that "All things that move between the quiet poles / Shall be at my command" while Mother Sawyer seeks the death of Old Banks (I.i.58-59). Both soon discover that the devil's abilities are very much grounded in the 'reality' of the material world.

A similar taxonomy is postulated by modern theatre critics, who divide characters along the same lines of choice and force: Anthony J. Harris in *Night's Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth-Century English Drama*; Robert West in *The Invisible World*; Deborah Willis in her article "Magic and Witchcraft"; Felix Schelling in his 1903 article "Some Features of the Supernatural as Represented in Plays of the Reigns of Elizabeth and James"; Marion Gibson in *Witchcraft and Society in England and America*; and Robert R. Reed in *The Occult on the Tudor and Stuart Stage*.¹ Reed, for example, splits these 'supernatural' characters into five categories. Thus, Heywood's Wise Woman of Hogsdon is a white witch while *Edmonton's* Mother Sawyer is a black witch; *The Old Wives Tale's* Sacrapant is a wicked magician while Prospero is good. The justification for such systems is usually based on the degree of involvement with the devil, gender, the motivations or intentions behind the magic, and the way in which magic is used in the play.

While this categorisation offers a useful framework for understanding the variation in magic presentation on the early modern stage, it often fails to consider the underlying

¹ Anthony J. Harris, *Night's Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth-Century English Drama* (Manchester: University Press, 1980); West, *The Invisible World*; Robert R. Reed, *The Occult on the Tudor and Stuart Stage* (Boston: Christopher, 1965); Felix E. Schelling, "Some Features of the Supernatural as Represented in Plays of the Reigns of Elizabeth and James", *Modern Philology* 1 (1903), pp.31-47; Marion Gibson (ed), *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Deborah Willis, "Magic and Witchcraft", *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp.135-144.

similarities in the respective magic of the witch and the magus, the natural and the demonic, and consequently dissolves rapidly on closer inspection. Couliano points out that

modern scholars are convinced that there are two types of magic: Ficino's "spiritual" or "natural" magic and the "demonomagic" of Trithemius. This distinction is arbitrary and rests on no solid foundation. Since demons themselves are spirits without a body, they form the object of *spiritual* magic...we arrive at the conclusion that there are several forms of magic that can be simultaneously spiritual and demoniac, which makes that dichotomy irrelevant.¹

As it happens, Agrippa split magic into three categories, while Giordano Bruno's magic had nine. Perkins claimed that no moral distinction should be made between 'good' witches and 'bad'. Indeed, "of the two, the more horrible and [detestable] Monster is the good Witch".² Perkins also argues against a gender divide between witches and magicians as "A witch is a magician, who either by open or secret league, wittingly and willingly, consenteth to vse the aide and assistance of the Deuill, in the working of wonders".³ Such systems fail to point out the traits these characters share, namely the possession of, or access to, superior knowledge of the laws of nature by means of the devil, or at least association with the devil in some way. These classifications also place very little emphasis on the similarity of the roles these characters often occupy, particularly that of the internal dramatist who ensures that the right people end up together and the undeserving are adequately punished.

Furthermore, categorisation is also problematic because it does not allow much room for crossovers and combinations of magic. Faustus and Rodrigo Borgia in *The Devil's Charter* are both 'witches' under James I's reckoning, though both of them perform what is unmistakably ceremonial magic. Indeed, as Barbara Traister points out, Alexander's conjuration ritual, lifted wholesale from the *Heptameron*, is "perhaps the most elaborate conjuration in Jacobean drama", yet this wicked pope is one of the most ineffectual magi to appear on the Renaissance stage.⁴ In *The Witch of Edmonton*, Mother Sawyer has little control over her familiar, Dog, while the title characters of *The Late Lancashire Witches* order their familiars at will and produce fantastical displays of magic that align them more with

¹ Couliano, p.156.

² William Perkins, *A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, 1608), p.174.

³ *Ibid.*, p.167.

⁴ Barbara Traister, *Heavenly Necromancers: Magicians in English Renaissance Drama* (Columbia: Missouri University Press, 1984), p.59.

the magus who chooses and commands than the witch who is coerced and enslaved. In *John of Bordeaux*, Friar Bacon plays the role of the white magician, righting the wrongs of his nemesis, the German conjurer Vandermast, and claiming to act on behalf of God, yet his power is openly accessed from his command over devils. In Anthony Munday's *John a Kent and John a Cumber*, one of the learned magicians is mistaken for a fortune-telling cunning man, much to his indignation, while the title character of Heywood's *Wise Woman of Hogsdon* is repeatedly associated with the devil despite her constant claims to the contrary. The witch and the magus are also bound together by the legal definitions, as indicated by the very titles of the three parliamentary acts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: in 1541/2 it was against "Conjuration, witchcraft, sorcery and enchantments"; in 1563, "Conjuration, enchantment and witchcraft"; and in 1604, "Conjuration, witchcrafts and dealing with evil and wicked spirits".¹ The law itself was interested not in persecuting the practice of magic itself but in the effects it produced. As Willis points out "the act gave more weight to the ends of magic than its methods", and in drama the 'ends' are often the same for the witch and the magus.² In *The Tempest* and *Macbeth*, for example, Prospero and the Weird Sisters have very different methods, but they still seem to produce similar effects: control over the elements, apparitions, and causing storms at sea.

More recent attempts to work out a schema for magic on the Renaissance stage have allowed such categorisation to merge. In "Prospero, Agrippa and Hocus Pocus", Barbara Mowat analyses Prospero's superhuman skills, pointing out that Shakespeare is drawing on several different traditions in the characterisation of his magus: "Prospero's magic is far more complex than such an easy dichotomy would suggest".³ György E. Szönyi also permits a blend of traditions, demonstrating that "it is virtually impossible to make clear-cut distinctions among various types of magic".⁴ Szönyi does, however, draw the line at witchcraft on the grounds that "while a magus can be charged of being a witch, a *par*

¹ The Witchcraft Acts are reproduced in Gibson's *Witchcraft and Society in England and America 1550-1750*, pp.1-8.

² Willis, p.136.

³ Barbara A. Mowat, "Prospero, Agrippa, and Hocus-Pocus" *ELR* 11 (1981), p.281.

⁴ György E. Szönyi, "'My Charms are all o'erthrown': The Social and Ideological Context of the Magician in Jacobean Drama" in *Jacobean Drama and Social Criticism*, ed. James Hogg (New York & Salzburg: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), p.4.

excellence witch cannot be called a magus”.¹ Certainly, witchcraft is different in that it is not afforded the same intellectual credibility as power sourced from a large library. I would, however, argue that staged witchcraft is far more similar to such ‘male’ magic than others have assumed.

This exploration of categorisation does not suggest that the witch and the magus are the same. Indeed, they are shaped by different ideas and emerge from separate traditions. I merely wish to emphasise that there is a greater similarity between them based on the devil as a source for their superhuman knowledge and ability. On the early modern stage, categorisation between ‘types’ of magic is not the major concern for either the playwright or the audience, and the drama itself is usually bound up in the uncertainty of the magic itself. Although *The Late Lancashire Witches* and *Doctor Faustus* are usually studied in different context because of the witch/magus distinctions, the magic itself within the plays and the restrictions that govern it are, essentially, the same.

As Mephistopheles’s first lines to Faustus suggest, the early modern stage does not fuel the mystery of magic but, rather, serves to expose mysticism as false – but not all magic as false. Rather than exposing the fraudulent nature of the devil’s abilities, the staging of demonic magic validates the practice through contextualisation and intensely scrutinising the extent of the devil’s influence. The spate of plays featuring the devil, starting with *Doctor Faustus* in the early 1590s and lasting right up until the closure of the theatres reflects the continuing early modern fascination with the demonic. The dramatisation of the devil and the relationships he forges with magi and witches who seek out or are forced to comply with his power and knowledge emphasises the devil’s naturalism as much as the witch’s or the magus’s ‘supernaturalism’ because they highlight the similarities between the magical human and the superhuman servants of Satan. From the blatantly sceptical attitudes towards magic exhibited in Jonson’s *The Alchemist* and Heywood’s *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon* to the fantastical displays in Peele’s *The Old Wives Tale* and Heywood and Brome’s *The Late Lancashire Witches*, the dramatic renderings of the story of the witch or magus are bound by several underlying assumptions about what is

¹ Szönyi, p.6.

possible and what is impossible for the devil, the human, and the combination of the two. As Cox outlines, “[a]side from human beings, nothing was staged more continuously in early English drama than the devil and his minions”.¹ Not only did the devil have a strong presence in the early modern theatre but the theatre itself, in the act of staging demonic magic, both validated the devil’s magical abilities and exposed his limitations.

The theatre adds another layer of realism to the demonic power it displayed because all his ‘magic’ had to be simulated artificially by human actors. The very staging of the plays themselves demonstrates what was possible and what was not based on the extent to which the theatre was able to produce special effects to ‘create’ magic: the meta-theatricality of performing magic is inescapable. The one main power afforded to the devil was the art of illusion-making, of imitation and visual tricks – the same talents boasted by playing companies. Like ‘spirit’, ‘shadow’ was often used to denote beings or apparitions that are characterised by a certain liminality – something between a human and a ghost, a human and a devil, a copy of something or someone; but ‘shadow’ is also used to refer to actors, as in Puck’s “If we shadows have offended” epilogue to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Epilogue.1).² The parallels between magic and the theatre were not lost on the audiences summoned into the often circular playhouses to witness spectacles, evident in the prologue to the enduringly popular *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* which includes the invocation “We ring this round with our invoking spell” (Prologue.5), and in the epilogue to *The Tempest*, when Prospero informs the audience that he dwells “in this bare island by your spell” , something that can only be broken by applause (Epilogue.8).³ Like the multitude of demonological discourses, the theatre interrogates the extent of the devil’s power. It demystifies demonic magic in other ways as well because the devils are restricted to the theatrical constraints of staging which itself demonstrates the extent and limits of human artifice.

¹ Cox, p.5.

² William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, ed. Harold F. Brooks, Arden Shakespeare, 2nd Series (London: Methuen, 1979 ; repr. London and New York: Routledge, 1994). All subsequent references are to this edition.

³ *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, ed. Nicola Bennet, Globe Quartos (New York: Routledge, 2000) ; William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. David Lindley, New Cambridge(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). All subsequent references are to these editions, unless stated otherwise.

The Advent of Mephistopheles

Much of the underlying similarity in devil plays is due undoubtedly to the sheer popularity of *Faustus* itself; its influence is certainly detectable in *Lancashire* which was staged four decades after *Faustus* first appeared. As Cox suggests,

[*Doctor Faustus*] was reprinted as a play text and revived on stage many times over the next half century, and it exerted an incalculable influence on subsequent plays...it is no exaggeration to say that Marlowe's devils are the second major change in the history of early dramatic devils, the first being the Protestant Reformation.¹

Because of the enduring popularity of this play, and its repeated performances, revivals and revisions throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, it is impossible not to read a play dealing with the relationship between humans and devils and not catch (at the very least) a glimpse of Faustus and Mephistopheles and the complex power negotiations that take place between the fallen pair, for no other play scrutinises and agonises over the powers of the devil to the same extent. In fact, Mephistopheles is the single most important devil to appear in the Renaissance, not just in the early modern theatre but in the entire body of European literature, for the advent of Faustus's charismatic demon signalled a change in literary devils who were now attributed individual character, an interiority markedly different from their symbolic medieval counterparts.² This new sort of devil maintained the same power and ability as those of medieval dramas, but they are noticeably different in the way they are recognisably human. Mephistopheles is clearly a Protestant devil, dispelling the 'false' magic of Catholic-style ritual and icons, taunting the pope, and constantly pushing Faustus to focus on word alone, a brand of magic Faustus is not yet willing to accept. With this emerging 'human' devil towards which more audience sympathies are directed, the display of devils on the early modern stage emphasises the similarities between humans and devils in terms of performance, appearance, and abilities, thereby humanising the demons as much as it demonises the human.³

¹ Cox, p.110.

² Mephistopheles is first named in the 1587 German *Faustbook*.

³ The reformers themselves were some of the first people to commit the Faust myth to publication, claiming the devil and the doomed doctor for the Protestant cause. Russell writes: "In the 1540s, Luther's disciple Melanchthon wrote an account of Faustus's life allegedly based upon personal acquaintance but already heavily coloured by bias, and many early accounts were by Lutherans, including Johannes Gast, Johannes Manlius, and Wolfgang Butner", p.59.

As *Faustus* demonstrates, it is the devil, not the human, who performs the magic, sourcing news from the other side of the world, fetching banquets and dainty dishes and making impressions in the air, just as James I describes.¹ Indeed, the demonological explanations and methods described by James I, Gifford, Perkins, and Weyer are the same methods employed by the devils of the early modern English stage. Faustus has a vague idea about how some demonic magic actually works even before his first encounter with Mephistopheles:

Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please
Resolve me of all ambiguities,
Perform what enterprise I will?
I'll have them fly to India for gold
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl (I.i.81-5).

He aims to be “as cunning as Agrippa was, / Whose shadows made all Europe honour him” (I.i.119-120). The Emperor Charles is also well aware of who performs the magic: “they say thou hast a familiar spirit by whom thou canst accomplish what thou list” (IV.i.4-5). As Charles implies, the word ‘spirit’ and ‘devil’ are used interchangeably, but ‘spirit’ also refers to the apparitions themselves. *Faustus* produces the apparitions of Alexander and his paramour for Charles (with Darius thrown into the mix in the B-text) and most famously of Helen of Troy, who appears twice; first to enchant Faustus’s scholars, secondly for the magician’s personal pleasure. In *Lancashire*, the foolish Whetstone takes his revenge on his tormenters by enlisting his witch-aunt’s help. Mistress Generous, Moll Spencer and their familiar spirits summon up apparitions of the gentlemen’s alleged fathers, subsequently exposing them all as bastards. The apparitions are, in fact, the same devils in disguise, as illustrated by Mistress Generous in the father-summoning scene. First, she enlists Moll Spencer and her familiar spirit to help: “to bring a new conceit to pass / Thy spirit I must borrow more / To fill the number three or four” (IV.iv.56-58).² In the following scene, the two witches and their spirits enter, the devils appearing in the form of the alleged fathers of Shakestone, Arthur and Bantam. Similarly, the ‘wife’ Mephistopheles

¹ James I, p.150.

² Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome, *The Witches of Lancashire*, ed. Gabriel Egan, Globe Quartos (New York: Routledge, 2002). All subsequent references are to this edition.

brings in for Faustus is, as the stage directions specify, “a devil dressed like a woman, with fireworks” (II.i.s.d).

The pneumatological nature of the magic presented here is, in fact, common to all devil plays. In *The Devil's Charter*, Rodrigo Borgia's elaborate ritual magic summons the apparitions or ‘spirits’ of his children, first showing his superbly wicked daughter Lucretia murdering her husband, the second depicting the Machiavellian Caesar Borgia murdering his brother, the Duke of Candy. At this stage in the play, Lucretia and Caesar are both still living, so the devil is able to produce ‘spirits’ of the living as well as the dead. Similarly, in *The Witch of Edmonton*, Mother Sawyer is able to appease Cuddy Banks' request for Kate Carter by producing an apparition of her, though he soon discovers that the ‘spirit’ is of malicious intent and lures him into the water where Cuddy almost drowns, only to be rescued by ‘Dog’, that is, Sawyer's animal familiar, itself a ‘spirit’.

While the pneumatological simulations appear to be miraculously real, the devil's power is all but limited to representation or imitation. There are always restrictions attached to these apparitions. The audience are constantly reminded as the limitations of the devil's ability to reproduce copies of the (usually) human form, since they are usually designed to deceive the eyes alone. As Luther famously asserted, the devil was merely ‘God's Ape’. In *Faustus* we are reminded that, despite the very corporeal-looking spirits of Alexander and his paramour which Mephistopheles manages to produce, they are not what they seem, as Faustus admits: “It is not in my ability to present before your eyes the true substantial bodies of those two deceased princes, which long since are consumed to dust” (IV.i.47-50). In *Lancashire* we are made all too aware of this limitation by the constant transformation of the witches' spirits. In *Edmonton* Cuddy Banks is never able to touch the apparition of Kate Carter, and in *John of Bordeaux*, Bacon summons up the ‘spirit’ of Rossalin's husband only after specifying that “yf rossalin will vow fo^rbearance lest she touch him when he comes Ill graunt her her request” (1011-12).¹ Engaging with the spirits is limited in other ways too. Faustus warns his scholars to “be silent then” as the apparition of Helen of Troy that passes across the stage, “for danger is in words”, implying that while they are all able to

¹ *John of Bordeaux, or, The Second Part of Friar Bacon*, ed. W. L. Renwick, Malone Society Reprints, (London: Oxford University Press, 1936). All subsequent references are to this edition.

gaze upon the spirit of the long-dead beauty, the scholars are unable to converse with her (Vi.25). According to Agrippa, spirits do not usually produce sound because they are incapable of doing so in a natural human fashion. They speak not to the ear but directly to the brain: “we might doubt whether angels, or demons, since they be pure spirits, use any vocal speech, or tongue amongst themselves, or to us”.¹ Apparitions are thus restricted in the way they can affect the viewer and the ways in which the viewer can interact with them, in accordance with early modern demonological thought.

So if that engagement with spirits is limited, what are we to make of the more bodily engagement with apparitions? Faustus’s last request of Mephistopheles is “to glut the longing of my heart’s desire: / That I might have unto my paramour / That heavenly Helen which I saw of late” (Vi.83-85). What is often overlooked by modern critics of the play is that Faustus’s Helen is not the ‘true substantial body’ of the long-dead queen, but a devil in disguise *like* Faustus’s potential ‘wife’, the apparitions of Alexander and his paramour, and the spirits raised by Mistress Generous in *Lancashire*. Mephistopheles has several times revealed that he is unable to raise the real thing, so Faustus must copulate with a demon instead. Such interaction with the devil is a very uncommon feature of both magical drama and early modern English witch trials, but it does occur in *Lancashire* and *The Birth of Merlin*, and is mentioned in *The Tempest*. In the former, when questioned by Doughty about the nature of her relationship with the devil, Meg reveals that the devil came to her twice a week for six years in the form of man, “only his flesh felt cold” (V.v. 225). Presumably, Meg’s devil is visiting her while in possession of a dead human body to enable physical contact. This corporeal possession is demonstrated in Jonson’s *The Devil is an Ass* by the devil Pug, who possesses the body of a freshly-hanged criminal in order to blend in during his trip to London. In *The Witch of Edmonton* Dog explains to Cuddy Banks:

The old cadaver of some self-strangled wretch
We sometimes borrow, and appear human.
The carcass of some disease-slain strumpet
We varnish fresh, and wear at her first beauty (Vi.148-51).

¹ Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, trans James Freake, ed. Donald Tyson (Woodbury: Llewellyn Publications, 1993), p.530.

The staging of demonic magic also stresses the ‘superhuman’ rather than ‘supernatural’ nature of the devil’s ability by emphasising the similarities between humans and devils in the way they appear. Demons such as Mephistopheles and Pug are as developed as the human characters with which they interact and are equipped with their own stories and motivations. Mephistopheles appears as a Friar at the request of Faustus on the grounds that this “holy shape becomes a devil best”, so the pair appear as two humans, with the friar-devil performing the actual magic rather than the magician (I.iii.27). In the B-text, both appear disguised as cardinals. Conversely, in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, it is the friar-magician who performs the magic and wields complete command over his demonic sources of power, so much so that in the penultimate scene a devil mutters mutinously:

How restless are the ghosts of hellish spirits
 When every charmer with his magic spells
 Calls us from nine-fold trenched Phlegiton
 To scud and over-scour the earth in post
 Upon the speedy wings of swiftest winds (xv.1-5).

Because both plays appeared around the same time and were both wildly popular throughout the period, it would have been difficult not to associate the devil in a friar’s habit of Marlowe’s devil with the magic-performing friar in Greene’s play. The human magician and the devil magician are thus virtually indistinguishable. In depicting demons in human form, the early modern theatre in fact recognises the human qualities of the devil well before the law acknowledged them in a clear, if unexpected, case of ‘fiction’ getting there first. Nathan Johnstone insists that witchcraft was “an oddity among devil representations because it required the physical incarnation of the devil”, but the first reference to a devil appearing as human was in the infamous 1612 Pendle witch case, well after witch persecution rates had peaked in England.¹ The devil, in fact, had been appearing as human on stage for almost thirty years before that. The similarities between human and devil are also emphasised by the number of instances in which human characters disguise

¹ Nathan Johnstone, p.148.

themselves as demons in drama, with humans as devils or faked exorcisms and possessions featuring in at least twelve plays between 1587 and 1641.¹

The relationship between the Lancashire witches and their spirits is also closely aligned by their appearance, but unlike *Faustus*, they are not restricted to human form. Both the devil and the witches are able to transform themselves into animals for, as Dog informs Cuddy Banks in *Edmonton*, the devil is capable of appearing in “any shape to blind such silly eyes as thine, but chiefly those coarse creatures, dog or cat, hare, ferret, frog, toad” (V.i. 124-5). In order to outwit the male hunting party, Gillian Dicconson and her familiar adopt identical appearances: “I and my Puckling will a brace / Of greyhounds be fit for the race” (II.i.56-57). Such metamorphosis is usually explained in early modern demonological thought as the devil working on the eyes of the beholder rather than performing a physical transformation itself, or that the devil is able to perform lightening-fast substitution, because the devil was unable to defy natural boundaries and unable to implement permanent change. It appears in *Faustus* with an impatient Mephistopheles turning Rafe and Robin into a dog and an ape. However, as in the case of Gillian and Puckling, the transformation takes place on stage, appearing as a visual trick in which the human is still recognisable in the animal that takes its place. The temporary nature of the transformation and the limitations of its effectiveness are exposed in the B-text when Robin surfaces in a later scene and reveals that “one of his devils turned me into the *likeness* of an ape’s face” – not an ape itself, and not a lasting transformation (B-IV.v.55-6). The other *Lancashire* transformations are also temporary: when the soldier chops off the paw of one of his feline assailants, it is transformed back into the hand of Mistress Generous, thus providing some of the only physical proof of witchcraft unearthed in the play.

This incident demonstrates another parallel between humans and devils.

Identification by tell-tale appendages was a common method of recognising the devil in an otherwise human form. The Boy witness in *Lancashire* demonstrates such acts of

¹ These include Lodge and Greene’s *A Looking Glass for London and England* (1587), *Grim the Collier of Croydon* (1601), Marston’s *Histriomastix* (1599), *The Puritan Widow* (1604), Jonson’s *Volpone* (1605/6), *Wily Beguiled* (1606), Fletcher’s *Monsieur Thomas* (1610), and *The Chances* (1617), Field’s *A Woman is a Weathercock* (1609), *The Two Merry Milkmaids* (1620), Davenport’s *A New Trick to Cheat the Devil* (1624), Brome’s *The Queen’s Exchange* (1629 or 1634), Davenant’s *The Temple of Love* (1635), and Suckling’s *The Goblins* (1637).

recognition: “I looked down, perceived he had clubbed cloven feet, like ox feet, but his face was as young as mine” (Vi.83-84). The same method of identification appears, rather crudely, in *Faustus*: “There was a he devil and a she devil. I’ll tell you how you shall know them: all he devils has horns, and all she devils have clefts and cloven feet” (I.iv.55-57). In *The Devil is an Ass*, Pug in his criminal cadaver fails to gain credibility as a devil because Fitzdottrel cannot recognise him as one: “I looked o’ your feet afore; you cannot cozen me,/ Your shoe’s not cloven, sir, you are whole hoofed” (I.iii.28-29).¹ By the end of the day Pug is back in the same jail from which he sourced the body, rendered totally ineffectual because his devilish origins are not acknowledged.

The staging of demonic magic not only exposes the restrictions placed upon the devil’s ability to operate in the material world but also demonstrates what was considered completely impossible in magic. There is a stream of requests often issued to the witch or magus, or from the witch or magus to the devil, of things that are desired but never quite delivered, emphasising the limitations to the powers of both human and devil. What Faustus most desires are firstly a wife, and secondly knowledge of heaven and hell, neither of which Mephistopheles is willing or able to provide satisfactorily. The request to have someone killed by magic, which appears in both *Doctor Faustus* and *The Witch of Edmonton*, is also flatly denied. In the former, the Old Man who taunts Faustus’s conscience is out of Mephistopheles’s reach: “his faith is great. I cannot touch his soul” (Vi.79-80). In the latter, Mother Sawyer’s request for Dog to kill her tormenter, Old Banks, is denied on the grounds that he has some Godliness about him:

Fool, because I cannot.
 Though we have power, know it is circumscribed
 And tied in limits. Though he be curst to thee,
 Yet of himself he is loving to the world
 And charitable to the poor (II.i.165-69).

Although the devil has the power to beguile or coerce those who seek his power into surrendering their souls, he cannot harm those who do not solicit his attentions. In *Lancashire*, the witches realise too late that their devil-enhanced powers are no match for the

¹ Ben Jonson, *The Devil is an Ass*, ed. Peter Happé, Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996). All subsequent references are to this edition.

natural law: they are unable to summon their spirits to them to aid in a jail-break, echoing Dog's tragic abandonment of the incarcerated Mother Sawyer in *The Witch of Edmonton*.

The limitations of magic are further illustrated in those cases of what is undoubtedly the most sought-after power of the witch or the magus on the early modern stage (but not in early modern witch trials): the ability to play matchmaker, or to force one character to fall in love with another. In *The Witch of Edmonton*, Cuddy Banks wants Kate Carter; in *Friar Bacon*, Prince Edward wants Margaret, the Fair Maid of Fressingfield; in *John of Bordeaux*, Ferdinand wants the already-married Rossalin; in *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, Raymond wants to marry Millicent against the wishes of both parents; and in *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*, both Luce 1 and Luce 2 want to reunite with Chartley. All of these characters consult with the witch or with the magician in order to spark romance or, more sinisterly in the case of *Friar Bacon* and *John of Bordeaux*, to force submission. With the exception of the fairy magic in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, such attempts fail or come about in a natural, technical, or roundabout way rather than through straightforward (and therefore impossible) magic. In Greene's play, Friar Bacon agrees to help Edward acquire Margaret by showing her in his glass prospective just as she is about to marry someone else. Bacon and Edward can subsequently disrupt the ceremony. In *John of Bordeaux*, Vandermast attempts to gain Rossalin for Ferdinand by manipulating the Emperor into casting Rossalin's husband John into exile, driving his wife into poverty, ostensibly to be rescued by Ferdinand himself, for Rossalin declares "tempt me not wanton lord with straynes of sin fo^r no corruption shall inchaunt my mynd" (272-3). Vandermast reiterates, "the mynd is such a thinge as is beyonnd the reach of ani art[.] she that is chast cannot be won with charmes" (310-11). The comic musings of Rafe in *Bacon* demonstrate a similar understanding of the inability to force a woman to love, instead suggesting other methods by which the magician can provide access to the object of Prince Edwards's affections:

if thou beest a silken purse full of gold, then on Sundays she'll hang thee by her side, and you must not say a word. Now, sir, when she comes into a great press of people, for fear of the cutpurse, on a sudden she'll swap thee into her plackerd (i.103-107).

Magic is used as a technical means of transforming the person to bring them closer to the woman, rather than being used to effectively force the woman to come closer to them. In

The Witch of Edmonton, Dog produces the ‘spirit’ of Kate Carter rather than Kate herself, as the stage directions indicate: “Enter SPIRIT in shape of KATHERINE, viz:arded, and takes it off” (III.i.s.d).¹ In *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*, the right people are paired up together by wholly human means, as are the lovers in *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, despite Peter Fabel’s bargain with the devil. As it happens, magical characters, while often being title characters, usually work secondary to the love plots and thus act more like a more supernatural version of Friar Lawrence in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Thesis Outline

Magic, demonic or otherwise, thus has a firm place in early modern devil dramas. Stage magic was governed by clearly-stated restrictions that dictated the extent of its influence, rendering this ‘magic’ more technical than mysterious. These limitations outlined above will be discussed in greater detail throughout the thesis. Plays such as *Friar Bacon* and *The Tempest*, which celebrate humanist potential and ability, suggest that humans could be as powerful as devils as they have access to the same knowledge but are subject to the same natural restrictions. The depiction of more sensationalist magic in *The Late Lancashire Witches* and *Faustus* indicates how devils and humans alike are able to delude through visual manipulation. The differing master-servant relationships between humans and devils in all of these plays indicate that the question of who is in charge of whom is arbitrary and determined by the individual powers and talents of both the humans and devils. The stage’s depiction of hell and earth in *The Devil is an Ass* and similar dramas suggests that, spatially speaking, humans and devils occupy a very similar environment while also revealing that the devil occupies an odd place between human and animal in the natural hierarchies of existence. *Faustus*, *The Witch of Edmonton*, and *The Devil is an Ass* explore the possibilities of individual devils as characters in their own right with very human emotions and motivations, and distinct personalities.

¹ This stage direction is substantively that of the first edition.

In order to demonstrate both the stage's use of orthodox demonology and the emphasised similarities between human and devil, this thesis will focus on seven devil plays that span the period, with each chapter centred on one play: *Doctor Faustus*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, and *John of Bordeaux* from the early 1590s, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* of 1611, Jonson's sceptical *The Devil is an Ass* (1616), Dekker, Ford and Rowley's *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621), and Brome and Heywood's *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634). In each chapter, I demonstrate how these texts both interrogate and determine the boundaries between demonic and human causation, testing and exposing the 'myths' of false magic in order to make the devil's real power credible. The first six chapters each have a particular focus on reoccurring aspects of demonic magic on the early modern stage: summoning spirits; animism and the possibility of autonomous magical objects; demonic contracts and the complexities of the master/servant relationship between devil and human; the physics that govern how the incorporeal devil can operate in the material world, the stage's spatial acknowledgement of hell and its proximity to earth; how demonic magic challenges the boundaries between humans, demons, and animals in early modern thought, and the possibility of metamorphosis. The final chapter, on Shakespeare, challenges Chambers's and Greenblatt's case for the 'secular flowering' of Shakespeare, in which I present the case for devilish presence in *The Tempest* by demonstrating that the play is demonologically sound.

Following on from this introduction, the first chapter, "Enter Mephistopheles: *Doctor Faustus* and the First Human Devil", focuses on the use of demonic magic in Marlowe's *Faustus*, demonstrating how the play explicitly states how the magic works and defines its limitations and how this is made clear to the audience (if not Faustus himself). This chapter contextualises the play within the dominant demonological thought of the time, outlining how Marlowe was well-versed in orthodox demonology. Chapter One also addresses the advent of Mephistopheles as the first 'modern' devil in the English theatre, fleshed out as a character in his own right with his own compelling history and distinct personality. The popularity of the play on the English stage may be responsible for the uniformity in the way devils are presented in early modern theatre following the first production of *Faustus*,

and in the following chapters I illustrate how the devil plays which followed Marlowe's conform to the Mephistophelean model.

The second chapter, "The Demon in the Machine: Object Magic and Demonology in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*", considers the use of objects in devil-assisted human magic, the relationship between humans and objects, how the devil corresponds to the tools of the magus such as his staff, cloak, and books, and investigates Bacon's claims for an animistic universe. First performed around the same time as *Faustus*, Robert Greene's play features two remarkable instruments, a 'glass prospective' and a talking brazen head. The first, a seemingly-natural piece of equipment, requires demonic assistance in order to be utilised, demonstrating how the devil was part of the 'natural' understanding of how 'scientific' instruments were perceived. The second object, the talking head that Bacon has laboured over for years, suggests Bacon, through his devils, has the power to give life to inanimate objects, his claims being supported by reference to Neoplatonic 'magic'. However, the play ultimately rejects these animistic possibilities in favour of the less mysterious and wholly rationalised demonism which does not have the capacity to allow Friar Bacon to create artificial intelligence.

The third chapter, "Who the Devil is in Charge?: Mastery, the Faustian Pact, and *John of Bordeaux*" revisits the Faustian pact, contextualising Faustus's bargain within a long history of demonic contracts. In doing so, this chapter establishes *Faustus* as an anomaly because Faustus cannot trick his way out of his agreement with the devil. Focusing on *John of Bordeaux*, the third chapter also addresses the power relationship between human and devil, tackling the complex question of who is in charge of whom by considering how the devil works through an academic hierarchy. In this chapter I argue that the devil's powers are limited to the natural intellectual power of the person with whom he is in league. By emphasising the fluidity of the demonic pact depicted in *John of Bordeaux* and other devil plays, "Who the Devil is in Charge?" asserts that the pact is invalid and usually not adhered to by both human and devil in early modern drama.

Chapter Four, "Is the Devil Really an Ass?" focuses on the individualised demons in plays which dramatise human-devil interaction from the devil's point of view. Along with

Faustus, there are three other plays that exhibit a kind of interiority usually only afforded to human characters on the early modern stage: Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass*, the anonymous *Grim the Collier of Croydon*, and Dekker's *If This Be Not a Good Play, The Devil is in It*. Focusing primarily on Jonson's sceptical drama, this chapter considers both the human and animalistic qualities of devils and the forms they take in the material world. As well as focusing on the devil as human or animal and the similarities in power and appearance of humans and devils, this chapter also discusses the use of hell on the early modern stage and how it sits in relation to the stage 'earth'.

Shifting from magicians to witchcraft, the fifth chapter "Is Every Devil Mine?" investigates the question of human or demonic agency in the murder plots of Dekker, Ford, and Rowley's *Witch of Edmonton* (1621). In this play, the demon Dog does not behave like the typical familiar of a witch. Instead he pursues his own agenda, independent of the witch's influence. This chapter illustrates the importance of understanding how the devil works in determining who is to blame for the two murders in the play. "Is Every Devil Mine?" considers whether the crime lies in the human intent to do harm or in the demonic action which commits the crime, ultimately showing that the human is culpable because of the natural limits imposed on the devil.

Continuing with the witchcraft theme, the sixth chapter, "Things Transcending Nature?: Demonism and Metamorphosis in *The Late Lancashire Witches*", investigates the use of demonology in Heywood and Brome's Caroline drama. Based on a sensationalised contemporary witch trial and first performed before the verdict of the trial had been reached, this play contains some of the most far-fetched claims of witchcraft, including metamorphoses, impotency, the bewitchment of music and food, and instantaneous transportation. Yet, like *Faustus* and the other devil plays, this magic is performed only with disclaimers and careful explanation that outlines its limitations. Focusing on the possibilities of demonic metamorphosis, this chapter also revisits the fluidity of animal/human/devil boundaries discussed in Chapter Four.

The concluding chapter "All the Devils are Here" outlines the case for demonism in *The Tempest*. This chapter takes seriously the many claims for demonic magic uttered in the

play that have been largely overlooked in scholarship in favour of viewing Prospero's magic as 'white' or 'secular'. "All the Devils are Here" considers the demonic associations of Ariel, Caliban, and Prospero himself. This chapter demonstrates that, when viewed alongside other devil dramas, the demonic nature of Prospero's magic becomes clear. This chapter ultimately proves that Shakespeare's play is rooted in orthodox demonology.

"The Devil in the Detail" casts new light on the question of how early modern stage magic should be perceived by identifying the underlying realism evident in the way demons were portrayed in the theatre. In *Thinking with Demons*, Clark emphasises the inherent rationality in demonological belief, consequently changing the way historians view belief in the material existence of demons in the early modern era, but such revolutionary research has not been extended to theatrical devils until now. As I outline in the following chapters, the underlying rationalism that characterises early modern intellectual inquiry into demons is also discernible in the treatment of devils of the early modern theatre. I thus demonstrate that the 'science' of demonology was not restricted to early modern intellectual culture but was also understood by and disseminated through popular culture. If the playwrights were not familiar with the exact details of early modern demonologies, they were certainly aware of the predominant theories of demonology and understood the natural restrictions placed upon the devil's ability to operate in the material world.

This thesis is original in showing how an adherence to orthodox demonology is evident in the demon dramas across the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline periods. While early modern magic has frequently been the subject of literary scholarship, such studies focus on the people performing the magic rather than the magic itself, and female witchcraft and male necromancy are often explored in isolation or contrasted, but not compared. In this thesis I demonstrate that the magic of witches and the magic of necromancers were regarded as the same on the early modern stage; they were simply different means to the same ends. Both are grounded in the same pneumatological principles, governed by the same natural restrictions, and sourced from the same devils. This thesis also breaks new ground in recognising the prominent role of the devil in *The Tempest*. The demonic source of Prospero's magic has never been adequately addressed in

scholarship. This is perhaps because it has often been read in isolation, or because Prospero has been regarded as a foil for Faustus rather than as his colleague. Examining these plays side by side reveals that the display of demonic magic across the period is entirely consistent. *Doctor Faustus* tells us a great deal about *The Tempest*; *The Late Lancashire Witches* tells us a great deal about *Doctor Faustus*.

By acknowledging the ways in which the devil was restricted by the laws of nature, the early modern theatre also acknowledges the similarities between demons and humans. In this thesis I also emphasise the very human qualities attributed to stage devils. Just as the human may have demonic intent, the devil can experience human emotions and exhibit human reactions. As the accounts of real devils appearing in *Faustus* indicate, detecting the difference between demons and humans was difficult at times, but often the differences were irrelevant. In terms of character, intellect, motivations, emotional response and even in appearance, humans and devils are often depicted in the same way. Renaissance drama not only focuses on the individual rather than the everyman, it also focuses on the individual devil. The early modern theatre does not present the devil as a representative symbol of evil. Rather, the playwrights explore the devil as an individual character: the devil in the detail.

CHAPTER ONE

Enter Mephistopheles

Doctor Faustus and the First Human Devil

It is important not to underestimate the significance of the moment when Faustus's devil first walked onstage in human form. If, as Russell asserts, Faustus is the most popular character in the history of Western Christian culture after Christ, Mary, and the Devil, then Mephistopheles is certainly the most important demon.¹ The Faust story, the runaway bestseller of early modern Europe, was tailor-made for both Renaissance and Reformation sensibilities, shaped by both humanist aspiration and Protestant anxiety about the supernatural. Yet Marlowe's version of the story is not so concerned with demonic power as it is with demonic limitation. In *Doctor Faustus* it is made very clear that the magic operates within the confines of the material world and barely touches on the metaphysical; Mephistopheles deals more in the natural than the supernatural. With *Faustus* comes a very 'natural' demon who is able to articulate eloquently the plight of the damned, signalling a shift in interest from the human to the devil. As Russell illustrates, "the character of Mephistopheles begins a transformation of the Devil's character: he is at least a little sympathetic with his victim, and he shows some small signs of introspection, including a hint of regret for his own rebellion".² With the advent of Mephistopheles came the human devil.

In "Enter Mephistopheles" I establish that *Doctor Faustus* conforms to an orthodox view of the way demons operated in the material world. Each instance of magic that appears in the play is grounded in a careful understanding of how the demonic magic worked, demonstrating that the devil could not transcend the laws of nature. In fact, Marlowe takes particular care to expose the limits of demonic ability throughout the play. While the vast body of scholarship on *Doctor Faustus* is characterised by a multitude of ambiguities and contradictions, Marlowe's adherence to orthodox demonology provides a clear and irrefutable certainty about the text. In exposing the devil's limitations, *Doctor*

¹ Russell, p.58.

² Ibid., p.64.

Faustus also exposes the devil's humanlike qualities, and this humanness is enhanced by the portrayal of the demon as a character in his own right. As discussed in the introductory chapter, the devil dramas of the early modern period do not evidence a separation of the human and the demonic worlds. Rather, they endorse co-mingling, a convergence of earthly and hellish characters and circumstances that rendered humans and devils virtually indistinguishable. While devilish humans appeared in the popular plays of the time (Iago, Richard III, Barabas), humanoid devils are also commonplace in the early modern theatre. Such devils exhibit very human, introspective qualities and invoke audience sympathy. Post-Reformation theatrical devils thus took on a new significance, no longer occupying an antithetical role in dramas and serving as a foil to human virtue but instead appearing as something infinitely more complex. These Renaissance devils occupied a precarious position between human and animal, natural and supernatural. This position is best exemplified by the *Faust* myth, a story that has continued to perplex and preoccupy the popular imagination.

Little about Marlowe's *Faustus* is certain. Anyone trying to grapple with the multitude of arguments put forth about the date, source, authorship, as well as the theological complexities and contradictions of the play can appreciate the protagonist's desire for spirits to "resolve me of all ambiguities" (I.i.83). Inevitably, contradictions and conflicting points of view have arisen. In fact, "few plays have called forth such a divided response",¹ and Faustus's anxieties about ambiguity are taken on by those who wish to gain any sort of insight into the play: Which date? Which version? Which author/s? Which adaptation? Is Marlowe projecting a secular, humanist view or an orthodox Christian view or both?² Like

¹ Bevington and Rasmussen, p.15.

² It is fitting that *Faustus* has spawned such an overabundance of equivocal scholarship for the play itself is self-consciously open-ended. On top of the textual indeterminacy are the debates about the suggested framework through which to view the play. Are we supposed to take an traditional view of Faustus's theological dilemma, or should we focus more on the humanist aspirations of Faustus' desire for knowledge? In the mid-twentieth century, influential scholars such as Leo Kirschbaum and Harry Levin established two distinctly opposite approaches to Marlowe's problematic play. The first, Orthodox, view emphasises Marlowe's adoption of the style of a Christian morality play in which the sinner is punished for daring to defy his God. See Harry Levin, *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954), and Leo Kirschbaum, "Marlowe's *Faustus*: A Reconsideration", *RES*, 19 (1943), pp.225-251. The theological philosophy of the play differs greatly between the A-text and the B-text. In her article on textual indeterminacy in *Faustus*, Leah Marcus suggests that the A-text exhibits a very Protestant outlook whilst the B-text is shaped by more Anglican or Anglo-Catholic sensibilities. See "Textual Indeterminacy and Ideological Difference: The Case of Doctor Faustus", *Renaissance Drama* 20 (1989), pp.1-29.

Faustus's own story, the scholarship surrounding the play is plagued by irreconcilable differences that arise not only from the text but also from the criticism itself.¹ No wonder J. B. Steane likened the scholarship of *Faustus* to "a monster, flourishing its three heads and involving the eyesight in a formidable commitment".²

Considering *Doctor Faustus* contains so many conflicts and contradictions, it is perhaps surprising to learn then that the demonology of the play is relatively coherent and unambiguous, and consistent with the demonological ideas outlined by James I, William Perkins, George Gifford, Agrippa, and even Johan Weyer. In fact, its demonological framework and the restrictions which govern the workings of Faustus's magic are one of the few certainties the play offers us, and may indeed offer a means of resolving some of the contradictions presented elsewhere in the play. While Mephistopheles is initially rather misleading in regard to the extent of his magical skill and what Faustus can achieve from their association, it is made absolutely clear to the audience what he cannot achieve, for Marlowe's tragedy makes a sharp distinction between what is possible and what is not. West asserts that "the demonology is so plentiful...so self-consistent that not to take it seriously as an index to meaning is to dismiss the play as we have it".³ The magic produced in Marlowe's play is, in fact, rationalised and contained, adhering to the laws of nature, for while Faustus begins with grandiose ideas of magic's possibilities he is never able to realise these fantasies. On deciding that "a sound magician is a mighty god", Faustus embraces the demonic in the hope of transcending the natural limits of the subjects he has exhausted but the Devil, it seems, can do little better (I.i.64).⁴ While we must be cautious about

¹ More recent criticism has suggested we try and encompass all and view *Faustus* as a play caught between two irreconcilable extremes, focusing instead on the contradictions. Dissecting the play through differing opposing forces is the prominent mode of *Faustus* scholarship in the last thirty years: Dollimore contends the play is caught between Medieval and Renaissance sensibilities; in *The Subject of Tragedy* Belsey identifies the conflict between different modes of knowledge (empirical and discursive); Diehl suggests that Faustus is caught between a need for Catholic visual engagement and his own Protestant sensibilities. See Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* 3rd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity & Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985), and Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theatre in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). Words such as 'paradox', 'ambiguity', 'contradiction', 'dichotomy', and 'polarity' appear so frequently in *Faustus* scholarship that we must embrace it for its ambiguities and contradictions, for *Faustus's* ambiguity is one of its defining features.

² J. B. Steane, *Marlowe: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p.117.

³ Robert West, "The Impatient Magic of *Doctor Faustus*", *ELR* 4 (1974). p.221.

⁴ Or "Demi-God" in the B-text.

accepting the ‘realism’ of *Faustus* as the introductory chapter illustrates, the play itself allows for the very possibility of demonic magic as a genuine occurrence in the physical world. In dramatising the legendary Wittenberg doctor’s long process of disillusionment, *Doctor Faustus* is quick to expose the limitations of the devil’s abilities. The would-be magician learns that his newfound source of power is more or less restricted to visual displays and petty tricks, insubstantial manifestations that only allow for a very limited engagement with some well-disguised devils.

A New Kind of Devil

That Faustus’s devil is honest about his limitations is somewhat surprising. Such honesty soon became a precedent for early modern stage devils. It is also the most important, for as Cox outlines, Marlowe’s seminal work is the second major change in history of the devil on the English stage, and all that follow more or less adhere to the laws and conventions of demonology established in this play: “if Marlowe aimed to challenge the values that gave rise to stage devils in the first place, it would be in his interest to present his devils as compellingly as possible, and the perennial popularity of the play before the closing of the theatres suggests that he was successful”.¹ The devils of earlier, medieval dramas are symbolic foils to either angelic or human goodness and their names are duly representative rather than personal. The mystery plays are populated by ‘Bad Angel’ and ‘Lucifer’, ‘Satan’, and ‘Diabolus’². In fact, ‘Bellial’ and ‘Tutivillus’ are the only named devils apart from Satan and Beelzebub to appear in Medieval drama.³ Bellial, a name of Hebrew origin, was the

¹ The first being the Protestant Reformation, Cox p.110; John D. Cox, “Devils and Power in Marlowe and Shakespeare, *Yearbook of English Studies* 23 (1999), p.48.

² For example, ‘Bad Angel’ Digby’s *Mary Magdalen* (1480-1520), ‘Angeli Mali’ in the fifteenth-century N-Town cycle, and ‘I Angelus Deficiens’ in the York cycle. Lucifer appears in The York Cycle (*Fall of Angels*), *Wisdom*, the N-Town plays, the Towneley plays, and the Chester Cycle. Satan appears in the York plays (*Fall of Man* and *Harrowing*), in *The Castle of Perseverance* (1380-1425), The N-Town 23 *Parliament of Hell* and 31 *Pilate’s Wife*, and the Chester Cycle (17 *Harrowing*) as well as Bale’s *Temptation of our Lord* (1538), Ingelend’s *Disobedient Child* (1559-77), Lupton’s *All for Money* (1559-70), and Garter’s *Virtuous and Godly Susanna* (1563-69); ‘Diabolus’ (or an unnamed devil) appears in The York plays *Fall of the Angels*, *Temptations*, *Pilate’s Wife* and *Judgement*; the N-Town *Creation of Man* and *Judgment*, Digby’s *Mary Magdalen* (1480-1520) and The Chester Cycle’s *Temptation*.

³ Bellial features in the York and N-Town cycles, *The Castle of Perseverance*, and Digby’s *Conversion of St. Paul* (1480-1520) while Tutivillus appears in The Towneley cycle and *Mankind*. See Cox’s Appendix ‘Devil Plays in English, 1350-1642’ for a full list of demons in Medieval and Early Modern drama, pp. 209-211.

devil “created immediately after Lucifer” according to Scot’s “Inventory of demons”, and is summoned by Wagner in *Faustus*.¹ The mysterious Tutivillus seems less like a traditional devil than Bellial, displaying “more of the traits usually associated with the burlesque Vice than with ... the devil of the Mystery plays”, “a jester rather than a devil”, and while individually named, Tutivillus does not seem to be a uniquely individual devil.² While Lucifer features far more prominently in medieval plays than the lesser demons do, the latter occupied a crucial role as a threat to or antithesis of human society, jeopardising the spiritual wellbeing of individuals and consequently enforcing the need for spiritual discipline. These demons were bestial in appearance, a motley composition of animal parts, and this ‘hybrid’ concept continues in Renaissance drama. While such dramatic devils symbolise external evil, they were often highly comical, disrupting the action through bumbling incompetence rather than devilish cunning. Margaret Jennings observes that “despite his supernatural character, [the devil] acquired the tone and habits of a village ruffian or buffoon, and from the thirteenth century onward devil portraits began to be parodic and derisive, exhibiting the characteristics of the grotesque as well as those of the ludicrous”.³

Although aspects of such comic buffoonery certainly surface in *Faustus* and in later devil plays, Marlowe’s demon is markedly different from the hellish clowns and vices of his medieval forbears. While demons have been a key feature of dramatic literature since the Middle Ages, the devil Mephistopheles is purely a Renaissance invention. In this case, the Renaissance emphasis on individual character extends to devils as well as humans, and that this devil is supposed to enable access to greater sources of knowledge and learning makes Mephistopheles a fittingly humanist devil. From his very inception, Mephistopheles has been associated with curiosity, with intellectual and artistic advancement at whatever cost, serving as an unlikely mirror for the desires and ambitions of every age. He is also a

¹ Scot, Reginald, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed. Montague Summers (London: John Rodker, 1930; repr. New York: Dover, 1972), p.220.

² Emmanuel Bock, “If no Divells, no God: Devils, D(a)emons and Humankind on the Mediaeval and Early Modern English Stage”. Doctoral thesis, Durham University, 2010. Durham E-Theses Online: <<http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/750/>> [Accessed 28 September 2013] pp.108-9.

³ Margaret Jennings, “Tutivillus: The Literary Career of the Recording Demon”, *Studies in Philology* 74.5 (1977), pp.7-8. Cox notes that Tutivillus is “noted for his engaging garrulousness and verbal facility”, p. 29.

Reformation invention. Although Mephistopheles was not mentioned by name until the 1587 German *Faustbuch*, both Luther and Melanchthon wrote about Faust's relationship with a devil in the mid sixteenth-century, as noted in the Introduction.¹ The origins of the name are as complex and multifaceted as the character himself, and its etymology has baffled philologists for centuries.² Parts of the name translate into Hebrew, Persian, Greek, or Latin, all with relevant meaning.³ In Greek, the components 'me', 'phos/photos' and 'philos' translate as 'he who is not a lover of light', 'Mephitis' in Latin translates as 'pungent, sulfurous, stinking', while the Hebrew word 'tophel' means 'liar', all of which are entirely appropriate for a servant of Satan.⁴ It is also possible the name derives from Theophilus of Adana, who allegedly sold his soul to the devil as well. As Russell points out, "that the name is a purely modern invention of uncertain origins makes it an elegant symbol of the modern Devil with his many novel and diverse forms".⁵ But although this new character's name derives from uncertain origins, Mephistopheles himself offers us some very clear certainties. In creating a sympathetic devil very similar to the human protagonist, Marlowe's play suggests a crossover of human and demonic qualities and abilities, a crossover that is often overlooked in *Faustus* scholarship.

Mephistopheles's human form is particularly significant. In depicting the devil in human form, *Doctor Faustus* takes care to emphasise the human/demon similarities rather highlighting the differences. The play thus bridges the gap between man and devil in both appearance and behaviour. In doing so he – and Marlowe – acknowledge the human qualities of the devil rather than emphasising his more animalistic characteristics. Such a transformation forces the audience to take the devil seriously and produces an interesting effect in which audience attention is redirected to the devil's very human concerns. The material presence of the devil is particularly important for the success of the magic; as Clark points out, "nothing at all could happen unless incorporeal and invisible spirits

¹ Originally spelt 'Mephostophiles' in the *Faustbook*. In the 1604 version of Marlowe's play he is 'Mephostophilis' or 'Mephistophilis'. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Pistol refers to 'Mephostophilus'. The spelling 'Mephistopheles' was first used in Goethe's *Faust*.

² Julius Goebal, "The Etymology of Mephistopheles", *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 34 (1904), p.148.

³ E. M. Butler, *The Fortunes of Faust*, pp.131-2.

⁴ Russell, p.61.

⁵ *Ibid*.

assumed bodily forms”.¹ The fact that Faustus requires Mephistopheles to appear human is telling; in commanding his devil to adopt the same form as himself, Faustus implies that he would rather be dealing with a human sort of evil than a demonic sort.

This human appearance is a marked change from the bestial devils of medieval drama and popular imagination. According to the *English Faustbook*, the inhabitants of hell are made up of an odd assortment of body parts: Bellial is a bear “with curled black hair to the ground”, Beelzebub with “curled hair of horseflesh colour, his head like the head of a bull, with a mighty pair of horns...and two wings on his back, with pricking stings like thorns...his tail was like a cow’s”; Astaroth is “in form of a worm, going upright on his tail...having many bristles on his back like a hedgehog”.² Another devil has the head of an ass, the tail of a cat and claws like an ox, another “a head like a dog, white and black hair, in the shape of a hog...with two feet, one under his throat, the other at his tail...with hanging ears like a bloodhound”, the rest in the form of “unsensible beasts, as swine, harts, bears, wolves, apes, buffes, goats, antelope, elephants, dragons, horses, asses, lions, cats, snakes, toads, and all manner of ugly, odious serpents and worms”.³ As for Lucifer himself, he “sat in manner of a man, all hairy, but of a brown colour like a squirrel, curled...I think he could crack nuts too like a squirrel”.⁴ In this episode of the *Faustbook*, Lucifer reveals to Faustus that it is only on earth that devils can appear to transform themselves: “we cannot change our hellish form, we have showed ourselves here as we are there; yet can we blind men’s eyes in such sort that when we will we repair unto them as if we were men or angels of light, although our dwelling be in darkness”.⁵ This rather comic episode acknowledges restrictions placed on demonic appearance, and even on the stage not all devils can be transformed into humans. The other devils in the play, the ‘spirits’ who frequent the stage at Mephistopheles’s command, retain the bestial appearance. According to a 1620 report:

men goe to the *Fortune in Golden-Lane* to see the tragedie of Doctor *Faustus*. There indeed a man may behold shagge-hair’d Devills run roaring over the Stage with squibs in their mouthes, while Drummers make

¹ Clark, p.185.

² F., P., Gent. *The English Faustbook: A Critical Edition Based on the Text of 1592*, ed. John Henry Jones, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; repr. 2011), p.117-18.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Jones, p.118.

Thunder in the Tying-house and the twelve penny Hirelings make artificial lightning in their Heavens.¹

In Marlowe's play and subsequent devil dramas, the identification of the devil by his more beastly qualities is usually a hallmark of a foolish character: Robin, the Clown, describes them with "vile long nails! There was a he-devil and a she-devil. I'll tell you how you shall know them: all he-devils has horns, and all the she-devils has clefts and cloven feet" (I.iv.55-57).² Faustus already knows the devil can shape-shift and commands that Mephistopheles adopt the guise of a friar on the grounds that "that holy shape becomes a devil best" (I.iii.27).³ In depicting the devil in human form, Marlowe forces the audience to consider things from the devil's point of view. The effect is twofold: while Faustus's partnership with Mephistopheles alienates the would-be magician from audience sympathies, it also serves to bring the devil closer to them. The more exasperating Faustus seems, the more compelling his devil becomes.

Indeed, Mephistopheles's human guise reinforces the striking similarities between himself and Faustus. In ability and appeal, however, he closely resembles Astaroth, the devil Scot describes in his "Inventory of demons" as a devil that will make one "most learned in the liberal sciences".⁴ He certainly proves to be an intellectual challenge for Faustus as the pair struggle to gain power over each other. The devil-magus and devil-witch plays that follow *Faustus* further explore the power struggle between human and devil, in which the human is often far more successful in mastering the devil, demonstrating that whoever is in charge is often arbitrary and based on personality and command rather than whether one is devil or human. In *Faustus* the human and devil are well-matched for they

¹ John Melton, *Astrolagaster* (London, 1620), p.31.

² In *Paradise Lost*, Milton suggests that devils can make themselves either sex: 'Those male, / These feminine. For spirits when they please / Can either sex assume, or both; so soft / And uncompounded is their essence pure' (1.422-25). *The Major Works*, eds. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). All subsequent references are to this edition.

³ Accounts of demons impersonating monks were fairly common, featuring in the popular *Friar Rush* myth which was dramatized by Thomas Dekker in his *If This Be not a Good Play the Devil is in It*. Georgius Sabinus writes of one in *Elegy 3* and his father-in-law, Philip Melancthon wrote of a monk who came to Luther's house and argued with him until Luther "noticed that the monk's hands were not unlike bird's claws...the demon departed, indignant and muttering to himself with a noisy breaking of wind, the foul stench of which filled the parlour for many days". Weyer, p.156.

⁴ Scot, p.221. Astaroth appears in other plays of the period, including *John of Bordeaux* (1590s), *The Devil's Charter* (1607) and *A Knack to Know a Knave* (1592). A devil named 'Asnath' features in *2 Henry VI*, and Milton mentions 'Ashtaroth' and 'Astareth' in *Paradise Lost*. (1.422, 438-9). A devil named "Ashtaroth" also appears in the B-text of *Faustus*. In "the Life of St. Bartholomew" in Jacobus De Voragine's *Golden Legend*, Astaroth is the name of an idol worshipped in India.

also have similar interests and abilities. Much of the scholarship surrounding *Faustus* is quick to point out how Mephistopheles dominates Faustus through dispute, but it is important not to forget that Faustus not only *likes* to argue but that he has been good at it himself. We are told in the Prologue that Faustus has in fact risen up in the world via his rhetorical skill, “Excelling all whose sweet delight disputes/ In heavenly matters of theology” (Prologue.18-19). On being told that “this is hell, nor am I out of it”, Faustus later admits to enjoying it: “How? Now in Hell? Nay, and this be hell, / I’ll willingly be damned here. What? Walking, disputing, / etc” (I.iii.78; II.i.141-3). In fact, Faustus and Mephistopheles are leading oddly parallel existences, for both are fallen characters, and by offering the audience teasing glimpses of his past, Mephistopheles proves himself as worthy of sympathy as his human counterpart:

Thinkest thou that I, who saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
In being deprived of everlasting bliss?
O Faustus, leave these frivolous demands,
Which strike a terror to me fainting soul (I.iii.79-84).

Mephistopheles not only admits that he himself is irredeemable, but also that he regrets his own Faustian pact made when he supported Lucifer. This unexpected honesty is difficult to overlook. In speaking of his own sorry fall from grace, Mephistopheles inadvertently issues a warning to Faustus, although this is, of course, ignored. As Russell observes, we feel naturally compelled towards Mephistopheles: “Marlowe adds psychological depth to this traditional view of the Devil’s character. Mephistopheles is not entirely evil, for he regrets his loss of felicity; moody and introspective, he is far from the stupid, clowning Devil of the medieval stage and in some ways prefigures the Romantic Satan”.¹ That the devil can be “not entirely evil” confirms the multi-dimensional character of Marlowe’s devil, a sort of demonic self-fashioning. In reminding the audience that he is a fallen angel, Mephistopheles acknowledges that he is – or once was – capable of angelic goodness. Consequently, Faustus must assume some of the malicious intent himself in order for the partnership to work. Their association is not initiated by an innate demonic evil but by Faustus’s own hellish desires. That Faustus does not learn from Mephistopheles’s mistakes,

¹ Russell, p.65.

or even offer the devil sympathy, highlights the Doctor's wilful ignorance while simultaneously emphasising the devil's plight. Mephistopheles's human credibility is thus achieved through the loss of Faustus's.

In terms of human emotions and motivations, it is at times hard to tell the difference between Faustus and Mephistopheles. In keeping with the equivocal nature of the play, the wording of the contract itself is ambiguous. The pronoun 'he' is used so frequently that it is not easy to discern whether it is referring to devil or doctor. This is fitting, for the play itself depicts an unusual merging of a human and a devil whose stories parallel each other. As each attempts to assume ownership of the other, they begin to take on the other's qualities. In the last lines of the contract Faustus stipulates that Mephistopheles is entitled to "full power to fetch or carry the said John Faustus, body and soul, flesh, blood, or goods..." (II.i.111). The signing over of Faustus's body as well as his soul results in an odd union as each can claim ownership of the other's body, as Faustus thinks he will have the command of Mephistopheles' 'body' during his twenty-four years of power. Indeed, the contract implies a sort of marriage between the pair. For this reason, Faustus is not allowed a wife once he has bound himself to Mephistopheles. The devil claims that "Marriage is but a ceremonial toy" and then adds the rather cryptic "if thou lovest me, think no more on it" (II.i.154-6). These comments imply that Faustus's desire to marry would break his allegiance to the devil. In the English *Faustbook*, the reason why Faustus cannot marry is more explicit. In a chapter entitled "How Doctor Faustus would have married and how the devil had almost killed him for it", Mephistopheles refuses to allow Faustus a wife on the grounds that Faustus has "sworn thyself an enemy to God and all creatures...thou canst not marry; thou canst not serve two masters, God and my prince: for wedlock is a chief institution ordained of God, and that hast thou promised to defy".¹ Their partnership is formalised by a contract, and then 'consummated' with Faustus's blood, and later with the devils disguised as concubines Faustus sleeps with.² This marriage of human and demon is not only bound by Faustus's desire for magic and Mephistopheles's need for a human soul for enlarging Satan's kingdom. The connection between the two is more profound because

¹ Jones, p.101.

² See Nicholas Kiessling, "Doctor Faustus and the Sin of Demoniality", *SEL 1550-1900*, 5.2 (1975), pp. 205-211.

they essentially want to be each other. Mephistopheles wants the possibility of redemption that Faustus may (or may not) have, while Faustus wants to be able to possess the same kind of magical skill Mephistopheles is supposed to have; Faustus wants to be a devil, as the contract suggests, despite the many warnings he is issued. Faustus opts to be damned, Mephistopheles wants to be saved. Mephistopheles's concerns thus seem far more compelling than Faustus's.

“Mine Own Fantasy” and The Devil’s Magic

The humanlike qualities exhibited by Mephistopheles are also underlined by the fact that his devilish abilities barely surpass the natural abilities of a human. While Mephistopheles often masks the limitations of his abilities to Faustus, he takes care to emphasise these restrictions to the audience. He thus dispels Faustus's grandiose ideas about magic by both asserting what magic can – and cannot – achieve. Indeed, Faustus's whole understanding of magic seems entirely invented. It is Faustus's choice: he solicits the devil, not the other way around, and his path to Mephistopheles is one fuelled by his excessive solitary study, suggesting the oft-mentioned link between melancholy and the supernatural, or the belief that a melancholic disposition made one predisposed to supernatural experiences, either real or imaginary. When Faustus exhibits growing anxiety towards the end of his twenty-four years, one of his students speculates that “belike he is grown into some sickness by being over-solitary” (V.ii.7-8). The connection between solitary study and the ‘sickness’ of approaching the demonic is encouraged by Valdes and Cornelius earlier in the play who emphasise the need for solitude, stating that Faustus must study in “some solitary grove” and “Faustus may try his cunning by himself” (I.i.155; 162). When he first meets the enigmatic pair, Faustus admits that he is compelled towards the demonic by “not your words only, but mine own fantasy” (I.i.105). His “own fantasy” seems to direct his initial relationship with Mephistopheles. Faustus demonstrates a fair knowledge of the workings but nothing of the precise detail. He knows that spirits will fetch things and tell him things; that God has to be denounced in the ritual to summon the devil and that a pact needs to be

made. However, all this is so overwhelmed by the superfluous detail – the ritual itself, and Faustus’s grand conceits about what magic will bring him – that the true understanding of Mephistopheles’s workings are lost in a quixotic tale of self-delusion. The tension between Faustus and Mephistopheles is really between the former’s imagined idea of magic and the reality of the latter’s limited tricks. As Malinowski famously asserts, magic “ritualizes man’s optimism when there is a hiatus in man’s knowledge, that magic is involved and practiced to fill in the gap of anxiety and uncertainty when the limits of technological control are reached”.¹ *Faustus* illustrates the anthropologist’s point perfectly. As Faustus is caught between so many opposing forces and ideologies, his magical aspirations seem to be a way of overcoming so many irreconcilable differences, re-imagining his own world to override the inconsistencies in the one he knows.

In his initial discussion of heaven and hell with Mephistopheles, Faustus dismisses the Christian afterlife based on the needs of his own imagination: “Think’st thou that Faustus is so fond / To imagine that after this life there is any pain? / Tush, these are trifles and mere old wives’ tales” (II.i.136-138). Poole terms Faustus’s more classical-inspired magic “Ovidian physics”, a metamorphic magic that predates the demonological magic of Mephistopheles.² Faustus is thus trying to break out of a Christian framework altogether. He creates his own version of the afterlife to avoid the consequences of the pact. In the place of hell he wants a pre-Christian fate: “This word ‘damnation’ terrifies not him, / For he confounds hell in Elysium. / His ghost be with the old philosophers!”, thus planning to instead inhabit the limbo assigned to the pre-Christian thinkers (I.iii.60-62). Here Faustus adopts a different set of beliefs, much like Horatio in *Hamlet* who, when contemplating suicide hopes to be “more an antique Roman than a Dane” in order to escape the damning consequences of his actions (V.ii.320).³ The spirits Faustus summons – Helen, Alexander, Homer – are all from a classical rather than Christian past; unable to know Heaven, Faustus instead rides a dragon-yoked chariot to “Olympus’ top” to unveil the secrets of astronomy “graven in the book of Jove’s high firmament” thus finding a classical source for

¹ Malinowski, p.21.

² Poole, p.47. “Ovidian physics” are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

³ William Shakespeare. *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, ed. Philip Edwards, New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). All subsequent references are to this edition.

cosmology far easier to access and adopting it as his own (III.Chorus.3-4). Faustus's idea of magic also fits Keith Thomas's distinction that "magic, unlike science, never learned from failure but simply explained it away", the would-be magician dismissing or not really taking on board the limited scope of Mephistopheles's abilities.¹ This desire to avoid hellish consequences by appealing to a pre-Christian past continues right up to Faustus's eleventh hour: "Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis, were that true, /This soul should fly from me and I be changed / Unto some brutish beast", although at this point it seems more like wishful thinking than self-delusion(V.ii.107-9).

Thomas's statement is incorrect, however, and neither this view of magic nor Malinowski's can be applied to the whole play, just to Faustus's delusional ideas of magic. It is Faustus who does not learn from his earlier failures. Faustus does not need to be fooled by Mephistopheles; most of the time, he fools himself. The idea of magic in the play itself does not simply explain away failures. It presents the limitations of the craft and diverts the delusory character away from its shortcomings but it certainly does not divert the more discerning audience. As Poole illustrates, "[u]ltimately the universe is not, as Faustus would have it, pliant to his will, but absolute and unwavering".² While Belsey suggests that "knowledges in conflict produce the tragedy of *Doctor Faustus*, who, from inside the framework of a predominantly discursive knowledge, repudiates its promise of salvation and seeks the worldly fruits of empirical knowledge", we really should view this not as knowledges in conflict, but Faustus's fantastical ideas about magic in conflict with the restrictive truths of demonic magic, imagined 'miracles' versus the real 'wonders' of Mephistopheles's art.³ 'Magic' does exist, as Mephistopheles demonstrates, but such magic is grounded in solid demonological 'truths', not ancient mythological stories. The devil has to work within the laws of nature, and his art can never live up to Faustus's expectations of the marvelous.

Faustus is at least correct in some of his assumptions about magic. He knows that the magic he will access once sealing a hellish covenant will be performed by demonic spirits, not Faustus himself, as outlined in the introductory chapter. In his initial monologue

¹ Thomas, qtd. in Tambiah, p.21.

² Poole, p.48.

³ Belsey, p.71.

in which he imagines what he will do once granted supernatural abilities, the Wittenberg doctor demonstrates some pneumatological knowledge:

Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,
Resolve me of all ambiguities,
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?
I'll have them fly to India for gold,
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl...(I.i.81-5).

Indeed, it appears that James I had been reading Marlowe, for his description of the workings of spirits serves as an apt description of the spirits in *Faustus*.¹ James I's description of the magician's devil's powers is uncannily similar to *Faustus*: Mephistopheles is able to carry news very quickly, enable Faustus access to royal courts (and the Vatican), transport food from the farthest part of the world and conjure illusions. Here Faustus outlines that spirits offer a shortcut to riches, but also that such riches must already exist and be fetched from their current locations.

Faustus acknowledges that the spirits will make his fame and reputation, not the magician himself. He aspires to be "as cunning as Agrippa was / Whose shadows made all Europe honour him" (I.i.119-120). Here Faustus speaks of a desire to be admired for his demonic skills but, also like Agrippa, Faustus's initial interest in magic comes from a desire for knowledge. James I outlines that in order to acquire the soul of a learned scholar "[Satan] will oblish himselfe to teach them artes and sciences, which he may easelie doe, being so learned a knave as he is".² In *Faustus*, magic is initially established as a new way of accessing and experiencing knowledge not 'naturally' available, and for Faustus magic seems to be about sensual engagement with knowledge. While he is led there by books, he believes that his newfound power will offer him knowledge and experiences which will transcend the written word he so readily tosses aside; he believes the next step will provide him a more a sensory experience than merely reading. Tired of theory, Faustus wants practice. He wants to:

have [spirits] read me strange philosophy
And tell the secrets of all foreign kings.
I'll have them wall all Germany with brass
And make swift Rhine circle fair Wittenberg (I.i.88-91).

¹ Quoted in the Introduction, p.23.

² James I, p.150.

He wants to taste food from the far corners of the world, hear “blind Homer sing”, and make Helen his paramour, for “’tis magic, magic that hath ravished me” (II.iii.26; I.i.112). Faustus desires the very physical experience of engaging with knowledge beyond word. The spectacles of Helen, Homer, Alexander the Great and “he that built the walls of Thebes / With ravishing sound of his melodious harp” are all classical figures Faustus would have initially accessed through books (II.iii.29). By commanding Mephistopheles to make these personages materialise in front of him and make the mythical past a reality, Faustus is quite literally attempting to bring books to life. As Laurie Maguire illustrates in *Helen of Troy*, Faustus’s engagement with the mythical past is “in many respects, a humanist project: the bringing of the past into the present, resurrecting the classics through translation”.¹ However, the way in which Faustus uses these ‘books’ – as entertainment for emperors and kings, his scholars, and for himself – is not exactly the kind of behaviour typically ascribed to the Renaissance man: “he translates Helen of Troy into the present not for the purpose of study but for sex”.² The Revels editors highlight Faustus’s “slothful intellectual habits and logical short circuits”, describing Faustus as a “bad humanist”, and it is clear that Faustus has not researched the subject of demonic magic extensively.³ The references to Roger Bacon and Agrippa in the play seem quite out of place, since it is evident that Faustus has not read the works of either properly. Much of Bacon’s work was concerned with ‘natural’ magic, and he denied involvement in black magic, while Agrippa’s *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* present a view of magic more aligned to Mephistopheles’s skills than Faustus’s fanciful ideas.⁴ It seems likely, then, that the ‘Agrippa’ and ‘Bacon’ Faustus refers to here are the works falsely attributed to these alleged magi – the *Fourth Book of Agrippa* which became a notorious grimoire, and the many manuscripts given Bacon’s name to lend them scholarly authority even though they had little connection to Bacon’s own writings. If Faustus had actually read the real scholarship of Bacon and Agrippa, he would know that the devil cannot do very much for him at all.

¹ Laurie E. Maguire, *Helen of Troy: From Homer to Hollywood* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p.152.

² Ibid.

³ Bevington and Rasmussen, p.17

⁴ Agrippa’s *On the Vanity and Uncertainty Of Arts and Sciences* presents a significantly more sceptical view of magic. An English translation was published in 1676.

The discrepancy between the fanciful magic of Faustus and the actual Mephistophelean magic is evident from the first time Faustus attempts to summon the supernatural. Faustus's idea of ritual is ineffectual, and the actual method of successfully summoning the devil is far more prosaic than he imagines. Having carefully studied the books proved by Valdes and Cornelius, Faustus performs the elaborate ritual to raise a spirit, only to be told by Mephistopheles on his arrival that it was word alone that summoned him:

For when we hear one rack the name of God,
 Abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ
 We fly in hope to get his glorious soul
 [...]
 the shortest cut for conjuring
 Is stoutly to abjure the Trinity
 And pray devoutly to the Prince of hell" (I.iii.46-55).

In the following scene, Faustus's servant Wagner manages to summon up a pair of devils by just saying their names. The foolish Rafe and Robin summon the devil without really understanding what is being said or done: Robin declares "O, this is admirable! Here I ha' stol'n one of Doctor Faustus' conjuring books, and, i'faith, I mean to search some circles for my own use" although as Rafe points out "Thou canst not read" (II.ii.1-3, 15). As demonstrated in *The Witch of Edmonton*, simply blaspheming can call a devil: "O have I found thee cursing? Now thou art mine own" (II.i.128). In *The Devil is an Ass*, Fitzdotterel's elaborate ritual to conjure a devil is undermined by Lucifer, who in a previous scene tells Pug that the human in question is looking for a devil long before the conjuration is staged. The ritual to 'exorcise' the unseen Mephistopheles and Faustus after they disrupt the papal feast is similarly ineffective, serving only to increase the demonic activity rather than expelling it. In keeping with more Protestant sensibilities, word is always more powerful than image and ritual in the play, though word, especially written word, is what Faustus is trying to transcend.¹ He is proven a fool for doing so: "with the inconsistency of a shallow mind, Faustus resurrects the logic he has just buried to discard both medicine and law: the one, because it cannot sustain life indefinitely or enable him to raise the dead; the other

¹ See Huston Diehl's discussion of the Protestant/ Catholic conflicts in the play in her chapter on the "Wittenberg tragedies" in *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage*, pp.67-93.

because he considers it fit only for a mercenary drudge”.¹ It is merely the same, however. Faustus is handed books that contain the knowledge he wants to know and the instructions for what he wants to achieve; in order to “raise the wind or rend the clouds”, he is given a book to help him “bring whirlwinds, tempests, thunder, and lightning” (I.i.61; II.ii.165); he is given a book that will enable him to “behold all spells and incantations, that I might raise up spirits when I please”, but rather than raising spirits to read him ‘strange philosophy’ and other secrets, he is handed the secrets of “the characters and planets of the heavens” and “all plants, herbs, and trees that grow upon the earth” in books, at his own request (II.ii.170-79). However, the rituals inscribed in the books, the “framing of this circle on the ground” to summon the spirits required, have already proven futile, disproved by Mephistopheles’s insistence that it was word alone that brought him to the doomed doctor’s study (II.ii.164). In fact, considering we never hear or see of Faustus doing these things, we cannot be sure if Mephistopheles is providing Faustus with valid information. Faustus seems immediately disappointed, turning to each book, as indicated by the stage directions, Faustus simply utters the words “O, thou art deceived” (II.ii.181). What Faustus imagines magic can do, what he requests of Mephistopheles, and what he actually gets are all very different things. Things are promised, but we can assume they cannot happen because Mephistopheles is restricted by some very clear ground rules.

Demonology and *Doctor Faustus*

Firstly, the devil cannot create. *Doctor Faustus* makes this absolutely clear. While Mephistopheles can fetch, replace, substitute or transform, he cannot produce something from nothing. As Clark outlines, “creatures cannot, by definition, control creation’s laws”.² William Perkins’s *A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft* confirms that creation is beyond the capabilities of demonic spirits: “the working of a miracle is a kind of creation, for therein a thing is made to be, which was not before. And this must needs be proper to

¹ Joseph T. McCullen, “Doctor Faustus and Renaissance Learning”, *MLR* 51.1 (1956), p.10.

² Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.124.

God alon[e]”.¹ This is established even before Faustus signs over his soul to the devil, for when his blood congeals Mephistopheles offers to “fetch thee fire to dissolve it straight” (II.i.63). Even fire, which one would think comes naturally to a devil cannot be pulled out of thin air; it must be fetched. This is both reinforced and explained in Act Four with the visit to the Duke of Vanholt when Faustus agrees to provide the Duchess with “a dish of ripe grapes” (IV.ii.12). The audience know that the grapes have to be brought on; they do not just appear, but have a natural origin, in a hotter clime than a German winter. As outlined in the Introduction, Faustus willingly explains to the Duke and Duchess that “the year is divided into two circles over the whole world; that, when it is here winter with us, in the contrary circle it is summer with them, as in India, Saba, and farther countries in the east, and by means of a swift spirit that I have, I had them brought hither, as ye see” (IV.ii.22-27). Although Faustus has confused seasonal differences between hemispheres with going further East, it is otherwise a perfectly natural explanation. Similarly, the incident with the cuckold’s horns given to the doubting knight in the court of Charles V illustrates how the devil must source objects naturally. The knight must go off stage in the A-text in order for the horns put on, as the stage directions indicate: “*Enter the KNIGHT with a pair of horns on his head*” (IV.i.s.d). Like the grapes, Mephistopheles has to acquire the horns from somewhere. They are evidently pulled off on stage, however, clearly not a permanent anatomical transformation but a temporary trick to ridicule the Knight’s scepticism over Faustus’s alleged abilities. Mephistopheles simultaneously proves to the Knight that demonic magic exists and to the audience that it is governed by natural restrictions, for the Knight’s incredulity is mocked and undermined as much as Faustus’s misconceptions over the limits of magic. Here the devil finds himself inadvertently establishing the ‘truth’ of magic’s reality. Weyer illustrates how the devil works through a combination of ‘real’ magic and artifice:

being of a fine substance they can, with God’s permission, understand and do many things (some truly, some through trickery), by means of their fineness, their subtlety, their incredible speed, the keenness of their senses, and the brighter light of their nature (in all of which

¹ Perkins, p.15.

qualities they far surpass the awkwardness of earthly bodies and the sluggishness of earthly senses).¹

Here this seems to be because the devil is physically different and his superior abilities suggest that demonic speed is not a question of the supernatural but of physics, since devils are not slowed down by “the sluggishness of the body”.²

The ‘truth’ of the devil’s magic, that he is only the means to an end rather than the end itself, is emphasised (often rather crudely) in the comic sub-plot. Foolish though they may be, the clowns Rafe and Robin (or Dick and Robin in the B-text) are in little doubt that demonic spirits merely assist; they do not provide. Devoid of any lofty humanist aspiration for knowledge, the ambitions of the pair are comparatively straightforward: food and women. As Wagner says of Robin, “he would give his soul to the devil for a shoulder of mutton, though it were blood raw” (I.iv.9-10). When Robin steals one of Faustus’s magic books, his first thought is to satisfy his carnal desires: “Now will I make all the maidens in our parish dance at my pleasure stark naked before me, and so by that means I shall see more than e’er I felt or saw yet” (II.ii.3-6). Here Robin echoes the previous scene in which Faust asked Mephistopheles for a bride because he is “wanton and lascivious and cannot live without a wife”, but unlike his master Robin does not expect the devil to provide him with women out of nowhere, for the parish maidens already exist (II.i. 144-145). Robin and Rafe’s desires for food are granted by Mephistopheles who does not even bother to fetch them sustenance but simply transforms them into the appropriate guises of an ape and a dog, forms that will make the pursuit of their desires and scavenger tendencies more acceptable as they happily acknowledge: “how, into an ape? That’s brave! I’ll have fine sport with the boys; I’ll get nuts and apples enough” and “thy head will never be out of the pottage-pot” (III.ii.41-42, 44). That magic is a shortcut to the object one desires, a means to an end not the end itself, is made clear throughout the play.

Mephistopheles is also limited by the natural laws that govern time and space. While Faustus delights in the fantasies of conversing with figures from the past and accessing knowledge of things to come, Mephistopheles cannot breach the boundaries of past and

¹ Weyer, p.26.

² Ibid.

present; nor can he predict the future. While there is a great emphasis on “bringing the past into the present”, as outlined by Maguire, Marlowe is careful to specify that the apparitions of Alexander the Great and Helen of Troy are merely copies, cleverly disguised devils, as Faustus freely admits to the emperor: “it is not in my ability to present before your eyes the true substantial bodies of those two deceased princes, which long since are consumed to dust” (IV.i.47-50). Demonologically speaking, raising the dead is impossible. Agrippa explains that the power of resurrection also belongs to God alone: “by what influences the body may be knit together again for the raising of the dead, requireth all these things which belong not to man but to God only”.¹ Perkins also confirms resurrection is impossible for devils: “[the Devil’s] power is not so large as to create a bodie, or bring again a soule into a body”.² Although Faustus aspires to “cursed necromancy”, what he is actually asking Mephistopheles to do in summoning spirits is ‘sciomancy’; the former deals with dead bodies, the latter with summoning shadows (Prologue.25).³ For Faustus, the long-dead past is unobtainable, unknowable except through careful imitation. The future is equally inaccessible, for statements made in the play regarding what will happen are sketchy and never substantiated. If anything, Mephistopheles’s vast number of unfulfilled promises suggest the opposite. While there is no specific emphasis on Faustus desiring to know how future events will unfold in his lifetime, his anxiety over the uncertainty of his eventual fate implies that he cannot get a believable, straightforward answer from the devil; the contradictory statements of the Good Angel and Bad Angel demonstrate that Faustus can in no way be certain about what is to come. If Mephistopheles has misled Faustus about everything else in the play, we have every reason to suspect he has lied to Faustus about his fate. Indeed, there is nothing in the text to indicate that Mephistopheles actually has the ability to predict the future for certain.

Much to Faustus’s dismay, Mephistopheles’s knowledge, or at least that which he can share with Faustus, is grounded in the physical, knowable, material world, for Faustus cannot have knowledge beyond that of the human world and understanding. This

¹ Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, p.606.

² Perkins, p.31.

³ Agrippa, p.607.

knowledge is accumulated from extended time on earth but doesn't extend beyond it.¹ When he asks about Heaven, Faustus is met with refusal, as Mephistopheles claims that such a subject does "strike a terror to my fainting soul" (I.iii.84). Later he is met with sheer defiance:

Faustus: I am not answered. Tell me who made the world
Mephistopheles: I will not. (II.iii.66-7)

Similarly, when Faustus meets Lucifer, the latter is equally sketchy about such information, advising Faustus to "talk not of paradise, nor creation, but mark this show. / Talk of the devil, and nothing else" (II.iii.105-106). When asked about hell, Mephistopheles gives vague, enigmatic answers and never offers Faustus concrete information: "Why this is Hell, nor am I out of it" and "Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed / In one self place" (I.iii.77; II.i.124-5). Belsey outlines, "the discourse of evil cannot tell him anything he does not already know".² As Faustus himself says, "Tush, these slender trifles Wagner can decide" (II.iii.49). These natural limits are half-acknowledged by Faustus in his initial monologue when he hopes that "all things that move *between* the quiet poles / Shall be at my command (I.i.58-9)". The knowledge Mephistopheles does give Faustus carries the same natural restrictions as the disciplines he tossed aside at the beginning of the play, both in nature and form, for the information Mephistopheles hands him in books will enable Faust to "bring whirlwinds, tempests, thunder and lightning", show him "all characters and planets of the heavens, that I might know their motions and dispositions" and give him knowledge of "all plants, herbs, and trees that grow upon the earth", all very much grounded in the physical, natural world, not beyond (II.ii.165-179). Demonic knowledge is thus characterised as inherently natural, like that of humans.

What Mephistopheles *can* do is work through visual deception and this proves the basis for disguising or distracting Faustus away from all the devil's shortcomings. When Faustus, on the verge of signing the contract, is distracted by the words "Homo, fuge" on his arm, Mephistopheles draws his attention away, purporting to "fetch him somewhat to

¹ Perkins writes "the devil is by nature a spirit and therefore of great understanding, knowledge... where skill hath been confirmed by experiences of the course of nature, for the space of almost six-thousand years. Hence he hath attained to the knowledge of many secrets", p.19.

² Belsey, p.74.

delight his mind” (II.i.82). This sets the course for the rest of the play, as Faustus and his royal patrons are provided with insubstantial pageant after insubstantial pageant. James I asserts that such displays are always illusory:

Which are all but impressiones in the aire, easilie gathered by a spirite,
drawing so neare to the substance himselfe: And in like maner he will
learne them manie juglarie trickes at Cardes, dice, & such like, to deceiue
the mennes senses thereby...And yet are all these thinges but deluding of
the senses, and no waies true in substance.¹

The audience is thus privy not only to the limitations of Mephistopheles’s (and subsequently Faustus’s) abilities, but also how exactly things are done. As Clark notes in *Vanities of the Eye*,

He was thus virtually a deity in the sense of being almost one – a fact that hinted often at an unwelcome and certainly unintended Manichaeism – but actually a creature and so confined within the bounds of nature and its realities. His role in traditional Christianity was to attempt to hide this deficiency and his own evil intentions by *appearing* as God’s equal.²

The devil could “radically [undermine] any attempt to maintain human cognition... [with] the power, for example, to suddenly displace objects so that they seemed to become invisible [or] the power to adopt any bodily form or shape whatever”.³ In *Malleus Maleficarum*, Kramer speculates that devils could change appearances by using an ointment made from the body parts of children, while other demonologists postulated that the devil could manipulate the air around an object to change its appearance or interfere with the cognitive processes of sight.⁴ Mephistopheles’s visual tricks may fool the onstage characters, but they do not fool the audience, and nor are they meant to. When Mephistopheles takes Faustus traveling it is only as a sightseeing trip, to the point where Faustus has to beg to be involved in the magic itself, pleading “then in this show let me an actor be” when the pair visit Rome (B-III.i.75). His rhetorical devices, like his visual displays, are only ever temporary. He cannot influence Faustus’s mind permanently. Mephistopheles thus keeps fighting for his soul long after the pact is forged.

¹ James I, pp.164-65.

² Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, p.123.

³ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁴ Kramer, Heinrich, and Jakob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. P. G. Maxwell-Stuart (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p.135. While two authors are listed on the text, it is widely accepted that Kramer wrote most (or all) of *Malleus Maleficarum*. All subsequent references will thus be attributed to Kramer.

The temporality of Mephistopheles's magic is best demonstrated with the horse-courser episode. When sold a horse that has been transformed from a bottle of hay, having been warned against taking the horse near water, the courser does so out of curiosity and nearly drowns. The devil's transformations are temporary, and dangerous: "I was no sooner in the middle of the pond but my horse vanished away and I sat upon a bottle of hay, never so near drowning in my life" (IV.i.153-55). As Clark points out, "Where [the devil's] power to produce real effects gave out – where he came up against the ultimate boundaries of nature – his ingenuity in camouflaging his limitations took over".¹ Thus, when confronted with unanswerable questions, Mephistopheles quite literally averts Faustus's eyes, not with fantastical magic but with effective demonic stagecraft.

Human Devils and Devilish Humans

While Mephistopheles's natural limitations make the devil seem more humanlike, *Faustus* also blurs the human-demon distinction by emphasising the very devilish qualities of some of the human characters. What is often overlooked by critics is the fact that Faustus is tempted into goetia not by a devil but by two people, Valdes and Cornelius. Faustus states that the pair talked him into it: "know that your sweet words have won me at last to practice magic and concealed arts" (I.i.103). But who are they? According to W. W. Greg, one of the few scholars to contemplate the existence of the two mysterious characters, "the precious pair [are]...merely the devil's decoys luring Faustus along the road to destruction. They serve their purpose in giving a dramatic turn to the scope of his temptation, and except for a passing mention by students, we hear no more of them".² The name 'Cornelius' links them to Agrippa, who Faustus hopes to emulate, and like Agrippa they appear to be another pair of the German "wayward geniuses and intellectual vagabonds so common in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries" Thorndike describes.³ The scholars indicate that Valdes and Cornelius are widely renowned for their dabbling in the occult (I.ii.33-34). Greg argues that the influential magicians have not, in

¹ Clark, p.166.

² W. W. Greg, "The Damnation of Faustus", *MLR* 41.2 (1946), p.99.

³ Thorndike, p.126.

fact, taken that fatal step of selling their respective souls as they urge Faustus to do: “they have been careful not to forfeit their salvation for supernatural gifts” but we cannot really know for sure.¹ Their tempting words do not merely ‘lure Faustus along the road to destruction’ but in fact open the gate and lead him in, rather devilishly. Wagner is a similarly mysterious character who exhibits some very devilish behaviour. His words and actions suggest that he has been reading Faustus’s books more closely than his master and is consequently more versed in demonological lore. It is not clear whether he can see Mephistopheles or not but his demonic exchange with Robin immediately following the conjuration scene suggests that he was witness to it: “leave you jesting and bind yourself presently unto me for seven years or I’ll turn all the lice about thee into familiars and they shall tear thee in pieces” (I.iv.26-28). In that same scene with Robin, Wagner summons devils by calling their names, and offers to “teach thee to turn thyself to anything, to a dog, or a cat, or a mouse, or a rat, or anything”, all such low forms as discussed by the Dog and Cuddy Banks in *The Witch of Edmonton* (I.iv.61-62). Lucifer later gives Faustus a book that will help him “turn thyself into what shape thou wilt”, but if Wagner can indeed live up to his metamorphic claims then he is the demon servant Faustus is looking for, not Mephistopheles (II.iii.173). Faustus talks to Mephistopheles in his presence when Wagner comes to fetch him to visit the Duke and Duchess of Vanholt, suggesting that Wagner is able to see the devil, and in Act Three Wagner appears as the Chorus, suggesting he is privy to some otherworldly information. Faustus also regards Wagner as his heir. At the opening of Act Five Wagner announces: “I think my master means to die shortly/ For he hath given me all his goods”, indicating that Wagner, who already exhibits so many demonic qualities, will follow in his master’s footsteps (V.i.1-2).

From Wagner the demonic interest is transmitted to Robin, who follows suit: “Here, I ha’ stolen one of Dr Faustus’s conjuring books, and i’faith I mean to search some circles for my own use” (II.ii.1-3). Devils are humans and humans are devils, for as demonstrated here, in this play the demonic influence is passed not from devil to human but from human to human, a chain effect where the man-made idea of magic initially supersedes the devil’s

¹ Greg, p.93.

real magic, which is limited and restricted to the workings of the material world that all these characters are trying to surpass. But this is Faustus's story. Of all the demonic interactions in the play, he is the only one who expresses concern over the fate of his soul, and his soul is in turn the only one that Mephistopheles fights for. He exhibits no desire to gain the souls of Rafe and Robin for his kingdom, appearing irritated rather than hopeful at the prospect of engaging with them: "How am I vexed with these villains' charms! / From Constantine am I hither come / Only for the pleasure of these damned slaves" (III.iii.32-33). This humanlike devil expresses annoyance, his sardonic humour lost on the lesser mortals who summoned him. He is only interested in particular bodies and particular souls. But the 'human' Mephistopheles, a key part of the Faust myth, comes at the expense of Faustus's body too, for in this unlikely marriage the adoption of a body by one ensures the disintegration of the other's body. He also 'possesses' Faustus's body as well for he seems to take charge of it and makes threats of violence in order to curtail his repentant thoughts: the Evil Angel tells Faustus "If thou repent, devils shall tear thee in pieces", threatening physical harm to outweigh the permanent harm done to the soul and its final destination (II.iii.80). Faustus's body becomes no longer his own; as the play progresses, the once substantial body begins disintegrate. In both texts, the horse-courser is able to pull off the sleeping doctor's leg, much to his horror, and the trick is repeated in the B-text with a false beheading. For the trip to the Vatican, Faustus is made invisible, an act that renders his body redundant. His body is ultimately torn to shreds, as the B-text includes a horrifying scene in which the students find his body "all torn asunder by the hand of death" (B-V.iii.7). This grisly episode is taken directly from the *English Faustbook*, which includes a much more graphic description: "all the hall lay besprinkled with blood, his brains cleaving to the wall: for the devil had beaten him from one wall against another, in one corner lay his eyes; in another his teeth, a pitiful and fearful sight to behold".¹ In *The Myth of the Magus*, Butler observes that the disconcerting state of his remains are a common feature of the Faust legend, with sinister reports claiming that the (otherwise

¹ Jones, p.180.

intact) corpse kept turning face down, despite repeated attempts to turn it back, or that the head was found twisted to face the opposite direction to his body.¹

The Faust story is equally mutable, and different versions of the human-demon partnership are dramatised in subsequent plays. Several of these dramas feature magicians who are more powerful and manage to overcome the devil rather than being dragged to hell when the (self-made) contract has expired; the tragedy of Faustus is rendered even more tragic by the plays which followed it, because Faustus, one of the most famous of Renaissance magicians, is also one of the least powerful. In the B-text revisions, however, Faustus gains a greater command of Mephistopheles in keeping with the much more powerful stage magicians Friar Bacon, Prospero, and Peter Fabel. The B-text is far more sensational, requiring a much larger cast, more special effects, more props, more comic scenes, and more scenes requiring magic. However, the magical additions to the text do not necessarily present new material but merely enhance or exaggerate the sort of magic already present in the A-text for comic or visual value. The alterations to the B-text, the increased magical scenes and comic episodes, demonstrate a demand for such displays on the early modern stage, but the essence of the story – and the demonological ‘truth’ – remain the same.²

While Chambers, Greenblatt, and others have argued for an “incremental secular evolution” of Renaissance drama that culminates in Shakespeare, this trend towards the secular is not easily discernible from 1576 to 1642 unless a great number of plays are discounted.³ While there was an eventual shift of focus from the devil’s evil influence on the human to the evil of the human itself, this did not necessarily occur in the theatre, as Russell outlines: “[i]n the arts the process of shifting emphasis from transcendent evil to the demonic immanent in the human mind was slow and irregular, and the traditional Devil continued to play an important part in literature”.⁴ It is impossible not to see the Faustian influence on the magic in *The Tempest*. A host of plays featuring the devil appeared well after Shakespeare’s last play was first performed including *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The*

¹ E. M. Butler, *The Myth of the Magus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948; repr. 1993), p. 124.

² For this reason, this thesis focuses primarily on the A-text.

³ See Cox’s discussion, p.107.

⁴ Russell, p.91.

Late Lancashire Witches, both of which more or less adhere to the demonological ground rules established by Marlowe's play. Viewing the whole body of plays about the devil across the early modern period as a coherent and accurate account has to be done with some caution, but it is possible that many of the unresolved ambiguities of *Doctor Faustus* – about the magic at least – could be solved when the play is placed in context with other devil dramas of the period. The Faustian themes are certainly echoed in the devil dramas that followed as subsequent plays, both comedies and tragedies, plays about magicians, witches, and devils themselves, continued to explore the confusion of demonic and human characteristics while at the same time conforming to the natural limits of demonology.

Mephistopheles's first entrance in human form thus came with an acknowledgement that humans and devils were evenly matched. As this chapter has outlined, Marlowe's demon is humanlike in appearance, character, and temperament, subject to God's autonomy, and confined by the laws that governed the workings of the natural world.

Doctor Faustus's adherence to the dominant demonological thoughts of the time demonstrates that Marlowe was well-versed in the subject. Indeed, the restrictions dictated by orthodox demonology prove crucial to the tragedy itself. In the case of *Doctor Faustus*, ignorance of the devil's true abilities proves to be fatal. The close-knit, almost symbiotic partnership established between Faustus and Mephistopheles emphasises their similarities, humanising the demon as much as it demonises the human. While we may remain uncertain about Faustus's fate as the play progresses, we can be certain that Mephistopheles is irredeemable. In this respect, the devil is a greater figure of tragedy than Faustus himself, worthy of our sympathy because he is recognisably human.

CHAPTER TWO

The Demon in the Machine

Object Magic and Demonology in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*

In an unexpectedly devastating scene in Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, a disembodied brass head utters seven words and then self-destructs. The enigmatic utterances "Time is", "Time was" and "Time is Past" have little to do with the action of the play itself, yet this peculiar piece of stage magic seems to have been the most memorable part of Greene's drama. Nearly fifty years after *Friar Bacon* was first performed, the physician and natural philosopher Thomas Browne complained that "every ear is filled with the story of Frier Bacon that made a brazen head to speak".¹ Constructed over seven years, the infamous talking head represents the pinnacle of early modern esoteric achievement: the creation of an autonomous device that relocates the site of intellectual power from the human and supernatural spirit to an object constructed of inanimate matter. Once invested with the gift of speech, the head will "unfold strange doubts and aphorisms", build a wall of brass around England, and deliver a lecture on philosophy (ii. 26). As Browne indicates, the talking head lingered in seventeenth-century popular imagination. It was also mentioned by Thomas Nashe, Margaret Cavendish, William Prynne, Ben Jonson, John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, Samuel Butler, and a host of others.² Both Nashe and Jonson refer to the head as a superhuman source of wisdom, the former

¹ Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, 2 vols., ed. Robin Robbins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), vol. 1, p.598.

² These include: "The Fable of the Satyr and the Sword" in an edition of *Aesop's Fables* printed in 1675, in which the head on a sword pommel speaks: "My brazen head hath spoke, Time will be past, this day for my redemption is the last". John Ogilby, *Aesopicks: or, a Second Collection of Fables* (London, 1675); p.45; Vincent Alsop's *Melius Inquirendum* (London, 1678): "Such elegant orations have we penn'd about Time was and Time is, that I suspect they were indited from Frier Bacon's brazen head-piece", p.19, "and for the *Brazen Head*, it fell down and dash'd out its Brains", p.20; The anonymous *Humble Petition of Richard Cromwell* (London, 1659): "for if the present Lord Mayor had as much wit as Friar Bacon's *brazen head*, and would but say 'Time is', the business would be done, and the whole City be freed from oppression", p.1; by Samuel. Hunton: "Then may you, (like the Brazen Head) cry that time is", *The Golden Law and Empirical Principle*, (London, 1656), p.13; by John Lightfoot in a 1684 sermon: "There is a critical time, when there is a season opportune for the good of the souls, and the clock strikes Time is, but foolish men too commonly take so little notice of it, that the brazen head cries Time is past, and breaks to pieces", *The Works of the Reverend and Learned John Lightfoot*, (London, 1684), p.1238; by Nathaniel Ingelo in 1660: "I suppose Roger Bacon's brazen head was some such thing", *Bentivolio and Urania in Four Books*, (London, 1660), p.158; William Terilo's *A Piece of Friar Bacon's brazen-heads Prophecie* (London, 1604), p.1; Nathaniel Wanley in *The Wonders of the Little World, or, A General History of Man in Six Books* (London, 1673), p.560, and John Wilkins in *Mathematicall Magick, or, The Wonders that may be performed by Mechanical Geometry* (London, 1648), p.176.

asserting that such objects “give up sudden extemporall answers”, the latter as a discerner for fools, while Samuel Butler characterised the head as not more but less than human.¹ Puritanical Prynne compares the brazen appearance of the head to the “blushless” immorality of theatre-goers, while Rochester focuses on the devastation felt by Bacon at the head’s destruction.² Browne and Cavendish, both eminent names in the New Philosophy, sought to explain the mysterious device not as an unlikely legend of implausible magic but as a natural object operated by human intervention. Browne himself claimed that the talking head had been misunderstood, and that the ‘head’ was actually meant to be a giant cauldron used for alchemical practice, while Cavendish dismissed such devices as “nothing but sleights and juggling tricks”, asserting that “the Brazen-head which spake these words, Time Was, Time is, and Time is Past, and so fell down; Which may easily have been performed by speaking through a Pipe conveyed into the said head”.³ Some viewed the brazen head as fantastical magic, others as a machine. However, these writers fail to mention that the source of power behind the brazen object is not just human; Greene makes it clear in *Friar Bacon* that the devil had a hand in its making. Yet the devil has nothing to do with fantastical magic in this play.

First performed around the same time as *Faustus* and twenty years before Prospero began to weave his magic over Jacobean audiences, Greene’s play not only depicts the tragedy of a man who has been driven too far by his curiosity; it also devotes particular attention to the magician’s power with – and possibly beyond – the devil. The play places particular emphasis on the importance of the magus’s instruments, not just the brazen head but also on two other remarkable objects: a ‘glass prospective’, a supernatural seeing device that works in a similar way to the telescope, and Bacon’s library, a set of powerful

¹ Nashe writes “we shall see I have every one of them in the most straight, and give up sudden extemporall answers, as Pope Sylvester’s or Friar Bacon’s brazen head”, *Have With you to Saffron – Walden. Or, Gabriel Harvey’s Hunt is Up* (London, 1596), p.19.; Ben Jonson’s *Every Man in His Humour* includes the line “Oh, an my home were the Brazen Head now, faith, it would e’en cry ‘More fools yet!’”(V.iii.54-55), *Every Man in His Humour*; Revels Plays, ed. Robert S. Miola (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Butler writes “Quoth he, my *Head’s* not made of *brass*, as Frier Bacon’s noddle was”, *Hudibras*, (London, 1684) p.253.

² Prynne, *Histro-Mastix*, p.515. In his characteristically scathing tone, Prynne writes that the immoral “whores, adulterers, whore-masters and the like” who frequent the playhouse are “as blushless as Friar Bacon’s Brazen-head.”; Rochester writes: “Where missing you, I stampt and star’d / Like Bacon, when he walked and heard / His Brazen head, in vain had spoke, / And saw it lye in pieces broke”. *Poems on Several Occasion* (London, 1680), p.80.

³ Margaret Cavendish, *Philosophical Letters, or, Modest Reflections Upon Some Opinions of Natural Philosophy*, (London, 1664), p.299.

volumes which enable access to spirits. The brazen head in particular hints at an animistic world view not often found in demonological writings, for unlike the books, staff, garments, and other objects typically associated with the early modern magus, the head seems to be designed to operate independently of both the human and the demonic. While the three magicians in this play claim Neoplatonic and other kinds of magical inspiration, it is made absolutely clear that the devil is responsible for all the magic actually displayed. But is the devil really able to allow his human clients to create artificial intelligence by bewitching objects to think for themselves?

The creation of a talking, autonomous object suggests the friar is tapping into an animistic universe that defies the traditional Aristotelian divisions of matter, form, and spirit since the inanimate material from which Bacon and his demon construct the head will be imbued with something resembling soul. The intended use of the objects and the function of the brazen head imply that a greater force is behind them; Bacon's belief that he can create a talking head indicates that something in the material itself must have some sort of spirit in order for the object to be autonomous. The term 'animism' is itself anachronistic, coined by Edward Tylor in the nineteenth century in relation to anthropological investigation, yet *Friar Bacon* certainly seems to explore an animistic understanding of the universe for those initiated through learning. Tylor identifies such belief as a 'primitive' world view, but early modern variants of Tylor's animism are, paradoxically, some of the most sophisticated ideas to emerge from this period, drawn from a confusing and often contradictory mix of influences: obsolete Catholic practice that had filtered down into the murky world of 'magic' since banishment from the Church in the Reformation; inspiration from the Renaissance Neoplatonic revival and study of occult philosophy brought in from Italy and Central Europe; Paracelsian ideas about occult sympathies and antipathies that affected man's relationship to the material world; and new ways of thinking about man and the machine brought on by the beginnings of the Scientific Revolution. These ideas act on the assumption that some sort of power resides in the objects themselves, not just in the human or spirit utilising the objects. While devils frequent Bacon's study throughout the play, Bacon alludes to many other branches of

occult belief including Neoplatonism, Alchemy, and Cabbala, and his status as a friar also gives him a clear connection to medieval Catholicism. Greene thus sets up a variety of competing ideas as not all of these branches of magic are restricted by the same limitations as early modern demonological thought. These competing ideas make deciphering the head's workings problematic, particularly because demonology did not accommodate animistic convictions.

Yet demonology is key to understanding not only the brazen head but also the play's place in and importance to the history of science. The brazen head in particular occupies a curious position in the history of magic and science, a unique conundrum which both looks back to medieval legends of magical talking heads and animated matter, and forward to a mechanistic understanding of the body and the use of automata, an awkward mix of archaic legend and emerging scientific thought. Yet the former often eclipses the latter in how the play is read. Wildly popular in its day, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is now most often studied in relation to its magic as a contrast to the serious and ultimately tragic magic of *Dr Faustus*.¹ Its whimsical subplots, variety of magic, and comic tone are misleading, however, for they mask the true demonological realism which informs all the practical magic performed in the play. Like *The Tempest*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* has often been linked to the rapid rise of scientific enquiry in the seventeenth century; as discussed below, many scholars have postulated that Bacon's aim to create an autonomous magical object anticipates the rise of mechanical objects. This is entirely erroneous. While the play flirts with alternative explanations, it ultimately rejects them, for demonology is the only sort of 'magic' grounded in realism in the early modern theatre.

This chapter illustrates how the actual 'magic' in the mechanisms of the objects in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* can only be accounted for in demonic (and therefore rational) terms, confirming firm limitations on both human and demonic ability as neither can

¹ Henslowe's papers indicate that *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* enjoyed the same sort of popularity as *Faustus*. The earliest record of the play is a performance at the Rose in January 1592 although it is not noted as new. It was performed at least six more times that year, and quartos of the play were printed in 1594, 1630 and 1655. In 1602 Middleton was commissioned to write an epilogue and prologue (now lost), for a Christmas performance for the queen, and a letter written sometime between 1611 and 1615 by a Florentine ambassador details how a dissatisfied audience at the Curtain demanded the company perform 'Friars, friars' instead of the play they were actually performing which, as Chambers suggests, probably refers to *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. See E. K. Chambers, "Elizabethan Stage Gleanings" *RES* 1.2 (1925), p.186.

transcend the laws of nature. If, as Clark outlines, we understand demonology as a discerning and rationalised field of study and thus a key factor in early modern science, then we can situate the brazen head not as something from a quaint legend from the past but as an object whose workings are rooted in early modern natural philosophy which placed a firm distinction between the possible and the impossible. Demonology is the only way through which we can understand how the brazen head and other objects in the play operate in any kind of realistic context, for it separates the magic in the play from other, less plausible, brands of magic. By rejecting these more fantastical and esoteric ideas, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* confirms the rationalised role of the devil in early modern thought, illustrating that demonology was integral part of the Scientific Revolution rather than running counter to it. A demonological reading of *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* not only clarifies how we should understand the talking head, it also demonstrates how Greene's play in fact dispels the marvellous. The talking brazen head is not made from animated matter imbued with a mind of its own; it is an inanimate device operated by a demon in the machine.

The Famous History of Roger Bacon

This demonic-yet-natural explanation for the infamous talking head is not immediately discernible in *Friar Bacon* analysis since most studies situate Greene's Renaissance retelling of an old story firmly within the long pre-history of the play rather than within early modern intellectual culture. *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is loosely based on the story of Roger Bacon (c.1214 -92), the thirteenth century Oxford philosopher and proto-scientist. Greene borrowed the story from an anonymously published prose romance, *The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon. Containing the wonderful things he did in his Life: Also the manner of his Death; With the Lives and Deaths of the two Conjurers, Bungye and Vandermast*, and the play itself is the result of this long progression and transmutation of the story of the real Roger

Bacon.¹ Known throughout Europe as ‘Doctor Mirabilis’, Bacon, both in his day and after his time, was regarded as an intellectual authority on magic. Standing as a forerunner to both the scholarly Renaissance man and the modern scientist, Roger Bacon was remarkably ahead of his time. He suggested that England switch from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar three hundred years before this change took place, and his *De Secretis Operibus Artis et Naturae et de Nullitate Magiae* (written between 1248 and 1257) contains the first ever written reference to gunpowder. As Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park outline, “Bacon developed the notion of what he called experimental (or experiential) science. This aimed to harness the hidden powers of nature in order to produce startling and useful effects”.² In his *Opus Majus* (c.1267), Bacon predicts the inventions of flying machines and steam ships, and he devoted much of his time to experimenting with optics and glasses, describing instruments similar to the microscope and the telescope which are alluded to in the form of the supernaturally-powered glass prospective in Greene’s play.³ Yet Roger Bacon’s studies were centred on the observation and exploration of the natural world. Rather than entertaining thoughts of supernatural creation and transformation, Bacon was more interested in the possibilities of manipulating the material world in a much more natural fashion. In *De Secretis Operibus Artis et Naturae et de Nullitate Magiae*, Bacon writes that “nature is powerful and wondrous, nevertheless, by using nature as its instrument, art is stronger than natural power, as we see in many things”, thus setting up a marked comparison between nature and artifice or imitation.⁴ In Greene’s play, it appears that Bacon’s art, in creating the brazen head, is attempting to transcend natural limits, despite – or because of – demonic assistance. In fact, the real Roger Bacon vehemently denied the existence of black or goetic magic, claiming instead that “whatever is beyond the operation of nature or of art is either not human, or is invented and usurped by fraud”.⁵ However, involvement in black magic is paradoxically what Roger Bacon was most well known for,

¹ *The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon. Containing the wonderful things he did in his Life: Also the manner of his Death; With the Lives and Deaths of the two Conjurers, Bungye and Vandermast* (London, 1627). This is the earliest surviving copy, although the original was probably written in the middle of the sixteenth century. See Lavin, p.xiv.

² Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), p.94.

³ Roger Bacon, *The “Opus Majus” of Roger Bacon*, ed. John Henry Bridges (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1964).

⁴ Translated by Barbara Traister in *Heavenly Necromancers*, p.4.

⁵ *Ibid.*

both in his day and by posterity, and Greene's play is no exception. Bacon was supposedly imprisoned for over ten years under the orders of Pope Clement IV, and in *The Myth of the Magus* Butler writes that "there can be little doubt that Bacon's experiments made no small stir in his own day, and were accountable for the unenviable reputation of dabbling in magic".¹ Although his experimentation was regarded with deep suspicion in his lifetime, it was only after his death that his reputation for necromancy began to take shape in the popular imagination. By the Renaissance, Bacon had taken on a new significance as a past master from which many could learn the secrets of the universe.² Reynolds and Turner term this power "affective presence", a lasting influence and authority: "among English writers, no figure was more representative of the mysteries and promise of magic and mathematics than the historical persona of Roger Bacon, who had long been an outstanding figure in the various occult traditions that had grown out of medieval Arabic manuscripts such as the *Picatrix*".³ One doesn't have to look very far to find reference to Bacon in Renaissance texts. He is referenced several times by Agrippa in his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* in relation to mathematics and optics and the power of reason over the imagination. He is also mentioned for falsely having a reputation as a necromancer, achieved by others writing goetic discourses under the name of the medieval scholar, which offers some explanation as to how the 'science' of the historical Roger Bacon became the goeticism of Greene's Friar Bacon. Bacon is similarly referenced as a necromantic expert in *Faustus*. In preparation for sealing his fatal pact with Mephistopheles, he is advised by Valdes to "bear wise Bacon's and Albanus works" (I.i.156). Unable to access Bacon's esoteric writings, 'magic' quickly replaces the 'natural' or 'scientific' processes Bacon describes as a convenient way of explaining the unexplainable in the popular imagination, and as Couliano points out, the substitution of 'magic' for 'scientific study' is perfectly understandable to the modern mind.⁴ *Friar Bacon*, which draws on some of Bacon's own

¹ Butler, *The Myth of the Magus*, p.149.

² Amanda Power writes that "representations of Bacon say at least as much about the age from which they come as they do about Bacon himself", p. 675. Accordingly, Greene's Friar Bacon is a quintessential Renaissance magus, despite his Medieval setting. "A Mirror for Every Age: The Reputation of Roger Bacon", *EHR* 121.492 (2006), p.675.

³ Bryan Reynolds and Henry S. Turner, "From Homo Academicus to Poeta Publicus: Celebrity and Transversal Knowledge in Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*" in *Writing Robert Greene*, eds. Edward Gieskes and Kirk Melnikoff, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p.79.

⁴ Couliano, p.xvii.

writings via the anonymous prose romance Greene used as source material, similarly provides a 'supernatural' explanation for Bacon's otherwise inexplicable exploits. But this 'magic' is achieved, like Faustus's, by the aid of a cohort of demons under the command of the scholarly Friar. The magic in no way 'unnatural', as it too is governed by clear restrictions. As the name 'Bacon' continued to take on new significance in the centuries following his death, Roger Bacon transformed from a medieval scholar to the Renaissance magus to match the reputations of his early modern successors such as Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa, men whose aims were, for the most part, scientific, but who came under increasing suspicion from religious and secular authorities as their reputation for black magic became widespread. Bacon became "a distinct discursive cultural force or vitalizing authority who men such as Dee...could imitate as they sought to define their own intellectual identity".¹ Thus, due to the developments of two and a half centuries worth of speculation, Roger Bacon, for all his scientific work and non-demonic protests, occupies an entirely different need in the Renaissance imagination. However, the necromantic association remains true to Bacon's original convictions. The employment of demons in intellectual inquiry does not contradict the 'natural' aims of Roger Bacon or Agrippa, since early modern natural philosophy rendered demonic magic entirely plausible because it had to work within natural boundaries. We must therefore regard Greene's Friar Bacon not as an instance of medieval nostalgia but as an attempt to fashion a Renaissance magus. In doing so, Greene situates the play's discourse of 'magic' not within fanciful myths of the past but within demonological controversies contemporary to the later sixteenth century.

Magic Things

Like most Renaissance magi, Friar Bacon's possessions are of singular importance to his intellectual (and supernatural) abilities. Faced with the reality of eternal damnation, Faustus makes a last minute plea to burn his books. In *The Tempest*, Caliban tries to destroy Prospero's library in an effort to overthrow the magician's authority, and Prospero's

¹ Reynolds and Turner, p.81.

eventual renunciation of magic includes the destruction of his possessions. In Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale*, the Sorcerer Sacrapant is destroyed and his magic reversed when Venelia destroys a glass light that had been carefully hidden away in a hill. Early modern magic plays thus suggest that the magus's power resides not within his body, but within the relationship he has forged with his instruments, a supernatural connection between human and object in which the magician extends his powers to his possessions. This implies that the relationship with spirits enables access to an animistic universe, that the object is not merely a prop or symbol of power but the actual source of the power. In Greene's play, Friar Bacon's books, his glass, his brazen head all offer a shortcut to knowledge. The purpose of all three is to uncover the secrets of the universe for their master. While the brazen head and glass prospective represent both the height of Bacon's achievements and his reasons for renouncing his demonic activities, it is Bacon's books that are of primary significance to his craft, since the books enable engagement with spirits in the first place. They are the essential tools that enable him to achieve this supernatural connection with nature. It is through his esoteric volumes that Bacon can access the secrets of the earth, command spirits, and advance his studies. In *John of Bordeaux*, Bacon acknowledges this to an impressionable student of Vandermast's, telling him that the only ways to advance his scholarly (and magical) interests are to "read and thinck and thincking read agayne" (732). Bacon enters almost every scene with an armful of books, and, according to the woodcut on the title page of the 1627 edition of the play, his study is furnished with several tomes of occult philosophy. The books are key to the magus's power, as Barbara Mowat illustrates: "[f]or the magus, even an emperor magus like Rudolf II – the magic books which open to the adept the secrets of the universe are properly valued above mere mortal power and station".¹ This is certainly true of Prospero, who claims "my library / Was dukedom large enough" (I.ii.110-11). Caliban, in his effort to overthrow Prospero's authority on the island, identifies the library as the source of the magician's power, instructing Trinculo and Stephano "Remember / First to possess his books; for without them / He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not / One spirit to command" (III.ii.83-6).

¹ Barbara A. Mowat, "Prospero, Agrippa, and Hocus Pocus", *ELR* 11 (1981), p.283.

Prospero's promise to renounce his magic comes in the form of him swearing to "drown my book", echoing Faustus's eleventh hour plea (V.i.57). When the magus employs their knowledge, they are no longer objects but spirits to command in a different form. Mowat argues that Prospero's book is "the magical instrument that enables him to control the spirits who come from their confines when Prospero calls, who torment Caliban and keep him obedient, and who assure, as needed, the shapes of Greek mythological figures or ridiculous hunting dogs".¹ The same is true of Bacon who "can *by books* / Make storming Boreas thunder from his cave / And dim fair Luna to a dark eclipse" (ii.46-8, my emphasis). Indeed, the spirits that Prospero and Bacon command quite literally come out of the books. The magus's library thus serves as a convenient place for storing spirits that can be released on demand; the books are holding units for the subjects of Bacon's own Dukedom.

Talking Heads

This concept of 'holding units' must be extended to the other objects Bacon utilises in the play, and we should regard the brazen head as an object in which some sort of ready-made demonic spirit can be trapped. The brazen head is, essentially, a book in another form, a talking book that will save Bacon the bother of reading obscure tomes. Such magic suggests a dependency on the power of similitude, a Paracelsian understanding of the universe which imbues objects with the qualities of what they resemble. If Bacon's creation resembles a human head it can, when the right skill and knowledge are applied, take on the qualities of a real human head, that is, think for itself and communicate its ideas through speech, a portable microcosm emphasised by its spherical shape. Bacon is effectively speeding up the process of learning by creating an embodiment (or lack thereof) of his power itself, a synthesis of 'human' ability and inanimate material combined completely outside of the magus's body. The desire to create a talking object is, however, by no means unique to Greene's jolly friar. It was a practice commonly associated with medieval

¹ Barbara A. Mowat, "Prospero's Book", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52.1 (2001), p.1.

necromancers, with limited success. The first medieval magus to do so, according to legend, was Gerbert (Pope Sylvester II 999-1003), one of the many popes who gained a posthumous reputation for black magic with the onset of the Reformation. Gerbert's head allegedly provided answers to any question, but such utterances were always ambiguous. Similarly, Virgil was said to possess a talking head whose ambiguous utterances led to its owner's death. When told to watch out for his head, Virgil assumed the warning referred to his artificial head and thus failed to protect his natural one.¹ Bacon's necromantic contemporary Albertus Magnus allegedly devoted thirty years of his life to the construction of a talking head, only to have his prized creation destroyed by a student: not a bumbling servant like Bacon's Miles, but by the much more esteemed Thomas Aquinas.

In a wider context, Bacon's plans to create life artificially is a variant of the possession of – or giving life to – a copy of the human form, ranging from statues (a skill boasted of by the biblical Simon Magus of Samaria and demonstrated by Paulina in *The Winter's Tale*), the creation of fully-formed metal beings, such as Talus in *The Faerie Queene*, the Promethean-like legends of bodies constructed from clay (such as the Cabalistic experiments of Rabbi Loew which created the golem), and the repossession of dead bodies themselves, a skill Shakespeare took from Ovid and gave to Prospero who claims that “graves at my command / Have waked their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth / By my so potent art” (V.i.48-50). Indeed ‘necromancy’, in the true sense of the word, is divination through the dead, a skill attributed to John Dee's collaborator Edward Kelley, who was “rumoured to have exhumed a newly buried corpse, and, by his incantations, to have enforced answers to questions about the future”.² Paracelsus claimed to be able to bring people back to life with laudanum and devoted much time to creating homunculi, or miniature human beings in the laboratory, brought to life through “the fecund alchemical process of putrefaction, acting in some sense via the occult force of magnetism”.³ The

¹ Butler, *The Myth of the Magus*, p.102.

² *Ibid.*, p.164.

³ Philip Ball, *The Devil's Doctor: Paracelsus and the World of Renaissance Magic and Science* (London: William Heinemann, 2006), p.344.

homunculi were allegedly ‘grown’ from a mixture of semen and human blood, left to gestate not in a womb but instead in a pile of manure.¹

Although Friar Bacon uses metals and demonic assistance to create the head rather than Paracelsus’s employment of rotting materials, the aim in making the head of brass reflects the same desire to reproduce artificially. Bacon is driven not only by curiosity but also by his reputation and the desire to be remembered long after his death. This reflects a patriarchal need to pass on everything to a son, an option not available to Greene’s Franciscan Friar. As Butler illustrates, the magus does not usually marry or have children, given that “love-interest plays no great part in the lives of magicians, who usually had more urgent things on their minds”.² The magus’s skills were usually passed on instead to an apprentice. Faustus nominates Wagner as his heir, but Miles proves himself unworthy of such secrets when he witnesses the destruction of Bacon’s prized experiment. When Bacon reveals the purpose in constructing the brazen head – to create something that will deliver lectures in philosophy and uncover strange truths about the earth – he is more likely trying to create something that will do his job for him. He is immortalising his skills by placing them wholly outside his body and into an object that will last a lot longer than Bacon. The brazen head’s third task, to encircle England in a wall of brass, while hailed as a patriotic act in the play, also hints of Bacon’s desire to increase the extent of his powers.³ The protective wall, a boundary to prevent others from harming those within it, is a variant of one of the most well known features of ritual magic: the magus’s circle. This is pictured, most famously, on the woodcut of the 1616 edition of *Doctor Faustus*, who stands within the circle as the horrific form of Mephistopheles rises up from the floor. Scot writes that the purpose of the circle is not to aid the summoning of such hellish fiends, but stands as a protective measure, as any demon that materialises will not be able to cross the boundary.⁴

¹ Ben Jonson alludes to the powers of putrefaction in *The Alchemist* when Subtle claims: “Art can beget bees, hornets, beetles, wasps, / Out of the carcasses and dung of creatures”. Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, ed. Elizabeth Cook, New Mermaids, (London: A & C Black, 1991).

² Butler, p.4.

³ Faustus has a similar aim to “wall all Germany with brass” (I.i.90), as does Merlin in *The Faerie Queene* (III.iii.10). The ‘brazen wall’ was often mentioned in early modern sermons and is biblical in origin: “For behold, I have made thee this day a defined city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the Kings of Judah, against the powers thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land” (Jeremiah 1:18, KJV).

⁴ Scot, p.44.

Therefore, the head does not need to have a body, as it will not be required to protect itself. In protecting his bodiless creation, Bacon is ensuring that his reputation will persist long after he has died through the skills and knowledge in the brazen creation. The brazen head experiment, if successful, will make Greene's magus so famous that "Oxford shall in characters of brass / And statues such as were built in Rome / Eternise Friar Bacon for his art" (ii.41-3). Paradoxically, he wants to imprison his own abilities into an inanimate imitation of life so that he himself can become a statue, consequently stripping his image of all things human. Bacon's construction of the brazen head is therefore an attempt to divide himself into two, separating his knowledge and skills from his mortal body in order that his power influences generations to come. However, it seems that the only way to inject life into something inanimate is to first lose a bit of his own. Bacon attempts to split subject from object, to divorce the head, which traditionally symbolises the manifestation of the spirit, from his body, which symbolises matter, the mortal substances from which Bacon is moulded.

Neoplatonism and *Friar Bacon*

Such ambitions set Bacon apart from Prospero, Faustus, and other stage magi for he aspires to transcend the natural limits imposed on man and demon alike. Bacon does lay claim to other, older types of 'magic' not constrained by Protestant demonological convictions: Neoplatonism, alchemy, Cabbala, and Catholic belief in the power of images and icons. These alternatives perhaps allow for the creation of artificial life because they each suggest an animistic understanding of the universe and thus a markedly different relationship between human and object. The continual references to alternative magic throughout the play at first glance confuse the demonological focus of Bacon's supernatural pursuits. Perhaps the strongest contender is Neoplatonic 'magic', which emphasised the spiritual connections between everything in the universe. The 'necromantic dispute' between Bungay and Vandermast is riddled with references to Neoplatonic concepts and texts. The Neoplatonic revival in Italy during the Renaissance was brought

about by the likes of Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Giambattista della Porta, Giordano Bruno and other hermeticists who drew from an older, non-Christian tradition of understanding the physical world, often tied up with the notion of a *prisca sapientia* pre-dating the canons of established learning.¹ Drawing on the teachings of and teachings attributed to Pythagoras, Malchus Porphyry and the mythical Hermes Trismegistus, Neoplatonic theory taught that the world was alive, made up of a moving mass of elemental spirits; the material world was not mere inanimate matter but was made up of the same spirits and material that made up the body of the human being, and there existed a natural harmony between the two. Nature held the key to understanding the workings of the human body, for “an individual man was believed to mirror the world in miniature”, the human a microcosm, a perfect model of the universe.² The same concept informs the basis for galenic medical theory. As the famously polymathic Leonardo Da Vinci asserted, “man has been called by the ancients a lesser world, and indeed the term is rightly applied, seeing that if man is compounded of earth, water, air and fire, this body of earth is the same”.³ These elemental spirits who peopled the world were thought to “manifest all kinds of occult influences and sympathies”.⁴ They were not thought to be demonic in origin, but bore the name ‘daemons’ to distinguish them from their hellish counterparts. As everything was made up of different combinations of these living spirits, everything (animate and inanimate) was connected through a series of relationships, as Thomas outlines: “the cosmos was an organic unity in which every part bore a sympathetic relationship to the rest”.⁵ The magus, as one who was adequately equipped to understand and interpret the secrets of the earth, was primarily concerned with manipulating these different relationships through their supernatural skills, and using their minds to control nature. The microcosm thus directs the macrocosm in the construction of his artificial head. Miranda hints of Neoplatonic influence in *The Tempest*, but Greene’s play is unique in making the Neoplatonic connection absolutely explicit. In the ‘necromantic dispute’ Bacon’s two

¹ See Martin Mulrow, “Ambiguities of the *Prisca Sapientia* in Late Renaissance Humanism”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65 (2004), pp.1-13.

² Thomas, p.265.

³ Leonardo da Vinci (MS. A. 54), quoted in K. D. Keele, “Leonardo da Vinci and the Movement of the Heart” in *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 44 (1951), p.210.

⁴ Thomas, p.265.

⁵ Ibid.

magical counterparts debate whether geomancy (that is, the powers and abilities of earthly daemons) is greater than pyromancy (the powers of fire daemons). The long debate before the magic show demonstrates a seemingly-detailed knowledge of how the Neoplatonic world operated, citing the authority of “Hermes, Melchior and Pythagoras” (ix.29). The debate acknowledges the supernatural, animate forces that make up the material world: “I tell thee German”, Bungay says

Magic haunts the grounds
And these strange necromantic spells,
That work such wondering in the world,
Are acted by these geomantic spirits
That Hermes calleth *terrae filii* (ix.46-50).

In this respect, Bacon’s brazen head could work through command over elemental spirits, with no demonic input whatsoever. Bacon could, in theory, be directing elemental spirits in the forging of the brazen head, manipulating an animistic universe to form a new creation. While Frances Yates has emphasised these esoteric references and their impact on early modern English intellectual culture, and James McCallum has gone as far as claiming that the dispute was based on Giordano Bruno’s visit to Oxford in 1583, the Neoplatonic connection to the magic itself is in reality tenuous at best.¹ While the magicians do not refer to devils explicitly in the ‘dispute’, Bungay does acknowledge that he is using “strange necromantic spells”, a telling reference to the fact that the human cannot access power beyond the devil (ix.47). The Neoplatonic references have absolutely nothing to do with the ‘magic’ the magicians go on to perform; the ‘practical’ part of the debate which, the Emperor indicates, the audience has all been waiting for, involves conjuring illusions with the help of demons, including a demon dressed up as Hercules. The Neoplatonic discussion is all theoretical nonsense, with no connection to the actual magic used in the play. Furthermore, the presence of Neoplatonic influences in a Protestant theatre is problematic, and it is unsurprising that the devil has an even stronger role to play in

¹ Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago, 1964); James Dow McCallum, “Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*”, *Modern Language Notes* 35 (1920), p.212; Mordechai Feingold has recently illustrated how little impact Bruno’s visit to Oxford had, given both the “disastrous” circumstances of the trip and the fact that Bruno was only in the early stages of intellectual career as well as the lack of any kind of evidence of a serious response to his work: “in 1583 Bruno was only beginning to formulate his natural philosophy, and the reputation he had hitherto garnered was that of an expert in mnemonics with unsettled religious views...upon his arrival in England, in fact, insofar as cosmology and natural philosophy were concerned, Bruno was as much a learner as he was a teacher”. “Giordano Bruno in England, Revisited”, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 67 (2004), p.330.

Bacon's craft. While Neoplatonism and Paracelsian theories dominated the European intellectual scene, kept alive through an unusually strong series of university networks, they were not so influential in English popular culture. While Dee's library contained the works of Ficino, Cardanus, Pico della Mirandola, Paracelsus, Hermes Trismegistus, and Agrippa, the owner of these volumes was more well-known for his mathematics, prophecies, and conversations with angels. Yates has demonstrated the influence of European occult philosophy in England, but as later scholarship has pointed out, this influence is usually confined to the world of university study and failed to penetrate early modern society in a significant way.¹ In the debate itself, however, Vandermast and Bungay try to distinguish their magic, elevating it to a higher level by claiming the other's miracles are the work of devils and basic conjuration:

Therefore such gross and earthly spirits do serve
 For jugglers, witches, and vild sorcerers;
 Whereas the pyromantic genii
 Are mighty, swift, and of far reaching power" (ix.68-71).

Accusations of demonic involvement are thus used as a rhetorical device, as devilish aid is made out to be a cheap way, or cheating way, for power which, as *Doctor Faustus* demonstrates, is severely circumscribed. Yet no magician in the play is able to surpass these limits. Bacon's claims to Cabbalist magic are similarly unfounded and not at all in keeping with the practical magic he performs. Although the construction of the brazen head might echo the central European myths of the golem, built from clay by the infamous Rabbi Loew, such myths had no currency in England until a much later date.² Alchemy, too, has no solid basis in this play. Although Bacon was famed for alchemical experiments, and the head itself is constructed from base metal and is set to undergo a transmutation of sorts, Greene does not connect one with the other. The references to other types of magic in the play are little more than meaningless jargon; in fact, Subtle's appropriation of esoteric

¹ Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, (London: Routledge, 1999); For example, Feingold, "Giordano Bruno in England, Revisited", pp.329-346, and Brian Vickers, (ed), *Occult & Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Vickers (p.6) challenges the 'Yates thesis' by pointing out the absence of a clear connection between the Neoplatonists and the New Science of the seventeenth century: "we do not find the Neoplatonists studying the behaviour of falling bodies, taxonomizing plants, or dissecting the human body simply to find out why these things are as they are".

² William R. Newman, *Promethean Ambitions: Alchemy and the Quest to Perfect Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p.166.

terminology in *The Alchemist* is far more convincing. In *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* the only cogent occult philosophy exhibited is the highly rationalised and discerning demonology and it is thus necessary to view the brazen head through a demonological lens.

Demonology and *Friar Bacon*

Contextualising *Friar Bacon* with other magus plays of the period, namely *Doctor Faustus*, emphasises the significance of demonism in the play. It is unclear whether *Friar Bacon* predates *Faustus*.¹ Regardless of which text appeared first, it is immediately obvious that the one takes a lot from the other. While *Faustus* is a tragedy and *Friar Bacon* a comedy, and the latter magician is clearly a much better scholar than Faustus, their stories follow a similar pattern. Despite the individual humanist aspirations professed by both, they are treated as entertainers by royal patrons who request magic shows and want help with acquiring food and women, not intellectual fulfilment; they are called on for their services rather than their knowledge. Both Faustus and Friar Bacon initially engage with magic through books and individual study, and both are accompanied by foolish servants who meddle unsuccessfully in their respective masters' craft. Like Faustus, Bacon is an academic whose hunger for knowledge and power has led him to strike a bargain with the devil, although he is much more successful than Marlowe's doomed doctor. He leads a monastic lifestyle, unmarried, and although he is called upon frequently by visitors and colleagues to exercise his magical abilities, he maintains a certain amount of distance and secrecy. Bacon is devoted to his studies and his quest for knowledge, looks down upon those who are less able, exists on

¹ Bevington and Rasmussen suggest that *Faustus* was most likely written before *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, as Greene had a habit of copying Marlowe's plays, p.1. *Alphonsus, King of Aragon*, for example, draws heavily from *Tamburlaine*. If Prynne's account of the performance of *Faustus* at the Belsavage Inn is correct, then *Faustus* was first performed in the late 1580s since that theatre was closed in 1589. However, that *Friar Bacon* seems particularly patriotic leading some critics to date the play as early as 1588 in the wake of Britain's triumph over the Spanish Armada. New Mermaids editor Lavin points out that this is "notoriously untrustworthy" as "although the patriotic flavour of *Friar Bacon* suggests that it was written some time after the defeat of the Armada in July 1588, it is hardly conclusive evidence, particularly since there is no specific allusion to the Armada in the play". Lavin, p.xii. *Friar Bacon* is a Queen's Men play, and many of these plays finish with a patriotic flourish; see Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth Maclean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Lavin still maintains that *Friar Bacon* predates *Faustus*, however, as does the Regents Renaissance editor Daniel Seltzer. Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, ed Daniel Seltzer, Regents Renaissance Drama Series (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 1963), p.ix. Unsurprisingly, most *Faustus* editors assert that *Faustus* came first.

the edges of society, and keeps his most important work private. Only his bumbling servant Miles knows what Bacon is really up to. There is also a Faustian figure of sorts in this play too, the German scholar-magician Vandermast who is not quite as clever as Bacon and becomes his academic rival. Even the language in *Friar Bacon* is similar to *Faustus* and it is clear that one is paraphrasing the other at times. Both are characterised as overreachers: Faustus's "waxen wings did mount above his reach" and condemned him to a fall rather more headlong than that suffered by Icarus (Prologue.21); Bacon "roves a bow beyond his reach" (ii.75). They also look alike. On the covers of the 1616 B-text of *Faustus* and the 1627 printing of *Friar Bacon*, each magician is pictured in the same room, surrounded by books and instruments and dressed in identical academic garb; they even have matching moustaches. Bacon is more successful in commanding his devils, however. The devils are merely servants here, and this is a key difference between the plays. Not only is Bacon more adept at mastering spirits, he also maintains his humanist aspiration to greater knowledge throughout the play, whereas Faustus quickly loses his in favour of more sensual pursuits and empty spectacles. The magic in both plays is, however, heavily informed by orthodox demonology, and *Friar Bacon's* similarity to *Doctor Faustus* reinforces the demonological realism of Greene's play and thus dictates how we should understand Bacon's magic objects.

While none of the devils in *Friar Bacon* are given anything like as much stage time or dialogue as Mephistopheles, the demonic presence is evident throughout the play and it is clear that Bacon has both entered into some sort of Faustian pact and that he is attended by one devil in particular, Belcephon.¹ This name seems unique to the play, although Lavin suggests it could be derived from 'Baal-zephon', mentioned in Exodus and Numbers.² Belcephon has helped Bacon hammer out the brazen head, and Bacon summons him with the command "Per omnes deos infernales" in his first scene (ii.55, 115). Later, in the 'necromantic dispute', the devil disguised as Hercules declares that Bacon "bridles

¹ There is no explicit reference to a pact in the play, prompting many critics to assert that Friar Bacon's magic is 'white'. However, Bacon is clearly employing devilish spirits throughout the play and his formal disengagement with magic towards the end of the play, much like Prospero's 'Ye Elves of Hills' speech, serves as a confession in which Bacon acknowledges how dark his magic is. He also does this openly, boasting of his command of devils to all who visit Oxford. The sequel, *John of Bordeaux*, references a formal pact Bacon has made with the devils.

² Lavin, p.15. Seltzer confirms that the name is "not found in occult books", p.13.

headstrong Belcephon and rules Asmenoth, guider of the north”(ix.141-2).¹ In the scene where Bacon reveals the brazen head, he tells Miles he has “dived into hell / And sought the darkest palaces of fiends; / That with my magic spells great Belcephon /Hath left his lodge and kneeled at my cell” (xi.7-10). These comments imply that Bacon has formed a relationship with a high-ranking demon and has benefited from his superior knowledge. However, Belcephon is also used to perform Bacon’s natural, manual labour as well, with no apparent distinction between asking the devil for information, getting him to ‘hammer out’ a brazen head, and summoning him to transport human characters from place to place very quickly.

This demonic transport or ‘transvection’, was a particular concern for demonologists, and was usually discussed in reference to how witches could fly to the devil’s Sabbath. That the devil could move very quickly though the air, not weighed down by the “awkwardness of earthly bodies and the sluggishness of earthly senses” was generally agreed upon, but that devils could transport humans with them is a different question altogether. The suggestion that an ‘incorporeal’ body could carry a corporeal human is problematic, yet not impossible since devils were believed to have superhuman strength.² James I outlines that it is possible because the devil is able to manipulate the air around the person he’s transporting: “a mighty winde, being but a natural meteore to transporte from one place to an other a solide bodie, as is commonlie and dailie seene in practise”.³ But this too is limited to certain distances: “but in this violent form they cannot be carried, but a short boundes, agreeing with the space that they may reteine their breath: for if it were longer, their breath could not remaine unextingushed, their bodie being carry in such a violent & forceable maner”.⁴ The more sceptically inclined Weyer also states that the devil is able to transport humans, specifying that this is only possible that people can be transported

¹ ‘Astmeroth, lord of the north’ also appears in *John of Bordeaux* and is probably connected to ‘Astaroth’.

² Weyer, p.26

³ James I, p.173.

⁴ Ibid.

“through suitable spaces only”.¹ Early on in *Friar Bacon*, Rafe the fool provides a rather whimsical description of aerial transportation:

I'll send to the Isle of Ely for four or five dozen of geese, and I'll have them tied six and six together with whippcord. Now upon their backs will I have a fair field-bed with a canopy; and so, when it is my pleasure, I'll flee into what place I please. This will be easy. (v.7-11).

While no magic at all is needed for Rafe's alleged transportation, demonic transport seems slightly easier. Greene was particularly fond of staging such demonic transportation and it occurs on four occasions in *Friar Bacon*. The physicality of an actor carrying another actor off stage is certainly treated as a source of comedy at the expense of the person being transported: all four incidents of transportation are meant to be humorous. For Bungay and Vandermast it is humiliating; for Miles it is welcomed; for the hostess it is bewildering. While a human disguised as a demonic Hercules carrying off an actor dressed as a friar bears little resemblance to the airy and graceful descriptions of transvection outlined by demonologists, the experience itself seems rather relaxing. The hostess declares:

No sooner had I pried upon the yard
But straight a whirlwind hoisted me from thence
And mounted me aloft unto the clouds.
As in a trance, I thought nor feared naught,
Nor know I where or whither I was ta'en (ii.128-32).

This ‘whirlwind’ that ‘hoisted’ her hence echoes James I's explanation. Demonic transportation is thus bewildering but not unpleasant, and does no permanent damage for, like the Knight's horns in *Faustus*, demonic effects are not permitted any kind of permanency.

Other magic in the play follows the demonologically sound magic of *Faustus* too. A chief concern in the play is food, as with the Robin-Rafe plot of *Faustus*, and Belcephon actually brings in a shoulder of mutton with the hostess at Henley when Bacon summons her.² When Bacon commands Miles to prepare a feast of delicacies after the “frugal cates” of the “friar's feeble fare” are rejected by the royal visitors (ix.226, 235), the magician lists

¹ Weyer, p.201. *De Praestigiis daemonum* includes chapters on “Whether and how and when the Devil can carry bodies through the air” and “The body can be carried through suitable spaces only and cannot be in different places at the same time” (pp.197-200, 201-203). See also *Malleus Maleficarum* “How they are actually transported from one place to another”, pp.134-9.

² As Lavin writes, food seems especially important in this play: “The first scene opens with references to venison, ale, and milk, and food is mentioned frequently thereafter; no fewer than nine of the sixteen scenes conclude with invitations to eat or drink”. Lavin, p.xxxi.

the food's origin, implying that, as when Mephistopheles fetches the grapes of the Duchess of Vanholt, devilish spirits must be sent to different corners of the earth to fetch the feast:

The Afric dates, myrobalans of Spain,
 Conserves and suckets from Tiberias,
 Cates from Judea, choicer than the lamp
 That fired Rome with sparks of gluttony,
 Shall beautify the board for Frederick (ix.259-63).

It is impossible for Bacon to create such delicacies. They must be sourced from their natural environments and brought to Oxford through demonic transport, not conjured out of nothing.

While these very real items of food are attainable, the spirits of the dead are not and, also like the shows Mephistopheles produces, the 'Hercules' conjured up in the practical part of the 'necromantic dispute' is merely a devil in disguise. Vandermast clarifies to Bungay that the figure is a "fiend appearing like great Hercules", and the 'spirit' is commanded to transport Vandermast back to Germany in the same way that devils transport the hostess, Bungay, and Miles in other parts of the play (ix.99).¹ The transformative aspects of demonological magic – again, temporary illusions rather than permanent changes – are what Bacon is known for. In the first scene, Rafe claims he can "make women of devils" and "juggle [change] cats into costermongers" (i.94-5).² In a similar fashion to the allusions to Ovid's flea in *Faustus*, Rafe jokes that transformation into a purse or a smock would enable one access to a woman's body.³ Such musings are, of course, mere whimsy, and neither Bacon nor the devils are able to achieve this degree of magical effect in the play. In regards to his devil-powered magic, then, Bacon is no different from any other stage magician whose magic is limited by the natural restrictions ascribed to demonological belief.

¹ This demonic transport clearly irks Vandermast. In *John of Bordeaux* the German magician is still bitter about it.

² Lavin points out this is the earliest use of the word 'juggle' meaning 'change', p.9.

³ "Then she'll put thee into her chest and lay thee into lavender, and upon some good day she'll put thee on, and at night when you go to bed, then being turned from a smock to a man, you may make up the match" (i.111-14).

The Demon in the Machine

Since neither Bacon nor his devils can create life artificially and all alternative animistic explanations have been rejected, the only possible way to explain the head experiment is that Bacon is trying to trap a demon in the brazen object. It will not operate autonomously at all. Rather than drawing from archaic magic theory and medieval legends, the actual ‘magic’ of the head itself instead anticipates a more technological understanding of the world, a machine designed for an internal demon to operate it. *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* was first performed at a time where the idea of automata was slowly gaining currency in Western culture, but the concept could not escape malevolent association. Brazen heads, and even full-bodied artificial beings (the reanimated Hermione statue in *The Winter’s Tale*, for example), were often connected to devilish influence. As Jonathan Sawday writes in *Engines of the Imagination*, “automata, in these stories, are seldom seen as benign figures. Rather, they are malignant, even demonic devices, constructed with the aid of magic and sorcery”.¹ For all Bacon’s allusions to ‘natural’ or Neoplatonic inspiration, the devil is certainly involved in the forging of the brazen head, and the head carries with it malevolent connotations in keeping with the other legends of talking heads. The demonic influence was present at the head’s conception. Indeed, Lucifer’s followers provided the very material for the head’s creation, as Bacon freely admits “I made Belcephon hammer out the stuff” (ii.56). Miles, who barely reacts when a devil crosses his path and willingly rides a demon to hell, is wary of the powers of the brazen head and arms himself to the teeth when ordered to guard the precious creation, despite it having no physical body for Miles to strike. Like Dr Frankenstein’s monster, the gift of life comes with fire, with a jolt of electricity in the form of thunder and lightning; the stage directions indicate “with this a great noise the head speaks” and “Here the head speaks and lightning flashes forth” (xi.sd). However, thunder and lightning are always used to signify the demonic on the early

¹ Jonathan Sawday, *Engines of the Imagination: Renaissance Culture and the Rise of the Machine* (London: Routledge, 2007), p.193.

modern stage.¹ The head's demonic connections are inescapable. The devil must be behind all the magic in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* because there is no other plausible or acceptable explanation. The magic performed is achieved through the command of devils, working within the confines of natural laws rather than exhibiting a transcendence of the laws of nature or an animistic alternative. At no point does Bacon attempt to hide his trafficking with hell; in fact, he boasts of his demonic connections throughout the play. Thus, the magical objects can – and must – be understood in demonological terms. The devil enables superhuman knowledge through the glass, and a demonic spirit is required to inhabit the brazen head in order for it to work.

While some magic objects used in early modern plays are purely fantastical, Friar Bacon's admission that both objects are associated with devils requires a more rational, demonologically 'true' explanation for their workings.² The head is not meant to be understood as an autonomous object at all, but rather, a demon is making it move. The head thus symbolises the permanent presence of a demon in the room, the brazen contraption serving as a cage or a host. If we consider the head to be a 'true substantial body' made for some spirit or demon to occupy (like *Faustus's* demon Helen, for example), then Bacon is not attempting to create life. He is attempting to copy, to imitate through illusion. Yet to get the spirits to talk is a different matter. In *Faustus* they cannot. Mephistopheles makes it clear that spirits he summons cannot talk, as does Bacon himself in *John of Bordeaux*. In *Faustus*, words actually break the illusion, and Prospero similarly suggests that sound can dispel the apparitions in *The Tempest*.³ Elsewhere in *Friar Bacon*, spirits can only talk to the person controlling them and such apparitions or disguised devils are only temporary. To get devils to talk within an object is infinitely more complicated. Bacon claims it has taken him seven years.

¹ Dessen and Thomson assert: "Thunder and lightning...most often the effects are linked to a supernatural figure such as a devil, spirit, ghost, witch, magician, or god, and accompanying descents through the trapdoor into the underworld; on the few occasions when thunder and lightning signals a storm, divine or satanic energy is usually assumed." Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.230.

² The magic traveling hat and bottomless purse in Dekker's *Old Fortunatus*, for example.

³ Before they see the spirit disguised as Helen of Troy, Faustus commands the scholars to "be silent, then, for danger is in words" (A-V.i.25). Before Iris appears, Prospero tells Miranda and Ferdinand "No tongue! All eyes! Be silent" and later explains "hush, and be mute, or else our spell is marr'd" (IV.i.59, 126-27).

Zakiya Hanafi's *The Monster in the Machine* demonstrates a shift in perceptions of the monstrous from actual monsters to mechanical devices in Renaissance Italy, observing that "the monster became a machine", and it is similarly evident that something monstrous is expected to inhabit Bacon's brazen head.¹ The head itself is already constructed, initially devoid of 'supernatural' power, and the fact that Miles arms before guarding the immovable object demonstrates the feared power of the spirit expected to inhabit the creation. As Hanafi outlines, "but what makes an automaton monstrous is not the arrangements of its parts...rather, it is the fact that matter formed by artificial means and moving of its own volition would seem to be endowed with spirit".² The concept of trapping spirits in inanimate objects was not particularly unusual. In fact, a spirit encased in the inanimate head is how the 'brazen head' story was explained even before Bacon's time. Kevin LaGrandeur illustrates how this was a way of understanding the workings of Gerbert's head: "Cardinal Benno...claimed that Gerbert had a 'familiar spirit' encased in a human head" and "by 1216, oral versions of the tale depict Gerbert possessing 'a demon enclosed in a golden head, which enlightened him on difficult problems of arithmetic'".³ A 1688 text suggests a similar scenario with a head owned by Pope Gregory VII who went "to his Domestick God, that dwelt in a Brazen head in his closet; and Inquired what should be made of his success in the war; But the spirit [gave] him an ambiguous answer".⁴ Humans trapping spirits in inanimate objects was often associated with witchcraft, best exemplified by Ariel's entrapment in the cloven pine by Sycorax in *The Tempest*. Weyer mentions "people who carry about a captive demon in a finger-ring or glass", and in his *Gynaikeion*, Thomas Heywood writes about objects given magical power by the spirits enclosed within them, including a ring that could speak, alluding to a person who "had a speaking Ring, in which was a Familiar or a Deuill; That kind is called *Vdromanteia*, as also *Dactylionamanteia*, A Ring wherein spirits are worne".⁵ In *The Birth of Merlin*, Merlin manages

¹ Zakiya Hanafi, *The Monster in the Machine: Magic, Medicine, and the Marvelous in the Time of the Scientific Revolution* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2000), p.viii-ix.

² *Ibid.*, p.54.

³ Kevin LaGrandeur, "The Talking Brass Head as Symbol of Dangerous Knowledge", *English Studies* 5 (1999), p.412.

⁴ *Sodom Fair: Or, the Market of the Man of Sin* (London, 1688), p.18.

⁵ Weyer, p. 482; Thomas Heywood, *Gynaikeon: Or, Nine Bookes of various history: Concerninge women inscribed by ye names of ye nine Muses* (London, 1624), p.401.

to trap his devil-father into a rock to prevent him causing further mischief, and the smashing of the glass light in *The Old Wives Tale* which ends Sacrapant's reign of terror likewise signals the release of the demonic spirit that enabled Sacrapant's magic. Even *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* includes several chapters on summoning spirits into crystals, evidently a fairly complicated process.¹ Like almost everything else in *Discoverie*, Scot equates spirits trapped in objects with Catholic superstition; the marginal notes include "A popish supplement" and "Mark how consonant this is with poperie, &c."²

Scot's connection between objects and Catholicism is particularly telling, for Bacon's worship of his brazen head is inescapably iconographical while the destruction of both the head and the glass is undeniably iconoclastic. This connection between Catholicism, magic, machinery, and friars was by no means unusual. Rob Iliffe writes that "Popes and friars were also linked in early modern Europe to mechanical cunning, a discourse which was a powerful resource for Protestants at the end of the sixteenth century", and the iconographic association is made evident by Bacon himself.³ When he invites the Prince to view the glass, he states:

Now frolic Edward, welcome to my Cell,
Here tempers Friar Bacon many toys:
And holds this place his consistory court,
Wherein the devil pleads homage to his words (vi.1-4).

Like *The Devil's Charter*, which equates the Pope with the antichrist, Bacon's 'inverted' devil-religion is modelled on Catholic practices. Iliffe explains that " 'Toys' were high up on the list of codewords for popish deceit which were emblazoned in the minds of the godly", and Power confirms that "the association between Catholicism and suspect sciences probably underlay the popular mythology of Bacon, even if Bacon was presented as a virtuous friar".⁴ The destruction of Bacon's objects represents not a break from Neoplatonic inquiry or even demonic pursuits, but from obsolete Catholic practice. The presence of the devil is essential to this magic, however non-demonic the origins of the

¹ Scot includes chapters entitled "How to enclose a spirit in a christall stone (pp.238-40), "To make a spirit appeare in a christall" (p. 245), "A bond to bind him to thee" (p.247-9) and "This bond as followeth, is to call him into your christall stone, or glass, &c", (p.249).

² Scot, p.249, 246.

³ Rob Iliffe, "Lying Wonders and Juggling Tricks: Religion, Nature, and Imposture in Early Modern England", *Everything Connects: In Conference with Richard H. Popkin, Essays in his Honor*, eds. James E. Force and David S. Katz, (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1999), p.203.

⁴ Iliffe, p.206.; Power, p.665.

debate, because Greene's play is written for a Protestant audience; Bacon repents his 'follies' of his false religion, Catholicism and demonism being indistinguishable here. The forced destruction of the brazen head and the voluntary destruction of the glass release whatever spirits were supposed to be contained in them in a formal, iconoclastic act. The release of spirits through the destruction of their inanimate cases thus both acknowledges the limits of the 'magic' and signals a disengagement from interaction with demons. Such a public act of repentance is endorsed by Weyer, who specifies that "On the same principle, the crystal, the glass, and all the other instruments dedicated to this nefarious purpose should be solemnly condemned and publicly shattered".¹ Like the magus's books, the brass head is merely a device for containing spirits.

The Glass Perspective

This understanding, that these natural, inanimate objects are built to house spirits, is confirmed by Bacon's other magical device: the glass perspective. Appearing less than two decades before Galileo starting experimenting with the primitive refractive telescopes invented in the Netherlands, like the brazen head, Bacon's glass is rooted both in old superstitious lore and new scientific advancements, another object poised somewhere between old magic and new science. It is both a variant of the crystal ball and anticipates the telescope. Yet Greene's treatment of the glass object makes it clear that the magic involved in the creation and operation of the glass is entirely of the demonic (and therefore natural) kind. Glasses and reflection have been ascribed magical properties for centuries. Mirrors, crystals, even puddles of water were all thought to enable access to supernatural knowledge. John Dee owned one, now in the British Museum, which allegedly enabled him to converse with spirits. The change from 'perspective' to 'prospective' subtly changes the definition from something sounding more scientific to something connected to the occult. Magic glasses are used in several other plays, often connected with prophecy. In *Macbeth*, the line of kings apparition conjured by the witches calls for the last to "have a

¹ Weyer, p.484.

glass in his hand” (IV.i.s.d), the glass revealing the unbroken line of kings from Banquo to James I, as Macbeth comments: “And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass / Which shows me many more” (IV.i.119-20). Chapman’s *The Gentleman Usher* demonstrates that glasses reveal hidden things: “Humilitie hath raisde me to the starres; in which (as in a sort of cristall globes) I sit and see things hidde from humane sight” (IV.iii.61-63); a magic glass is also used in Munday’s *John a Kent and John a Cumber*, and another glass contains the ‘light’ of Sacrapant’s power in *The Old Wives Tale*; Alexander Borgia uses a glass to spy on the outside world in *The Devil’s Charter*, while in *The Travels of The Three English Brothers*, the eponymous characters use a glass at the end to stay in touch.¹ The stage directions read: “Fame gives to each a prospective glass: they seem to see one another” (Epilogue.s.d.).² This glass, unlike the others listed here, suggests that the brothers can see each other in the present – ‘perspective’ rather than ‘prospective’.³ This is how Bacon’s operates too, the eyepiece depicting events from afar as they are happening, as he explains to the lovesick Prince Edward: “Within this glass perspective thou shalt see / This day what’s done in merry Fressingfield” (vi.5-6). This glass perspective seems to function as the early modern equivalent of a web camera, depicting the present but not the future or the past. It is a purely natural, scientific object enabled by the devil and operated by a devil dwelling within.

Bacon willingly offers the services of his glass to those who wish to use it, and so it is used by Edward to spy on Lacy and Margaret in Fressingfield, and by two young scholars, the sons of Margaret’s other suitors, Lambert and Serlsby. The way in which the glass is used is demonstrated first by Edward, whose impatience alarms Bacon who fears the destruction of the fragile object. The friar anxiously hovers over Edward as he spies on Lacy, telling him repeatedly to sit still. Edward is instructed to “keep the crystal in your eye”, indicating that the glass is very small (vi.15). It produces pictures nonetheless; Edward is so angered by what he sees that he becomes convinced the vision is happening directly in

¹ George Chapman, *The Gentleman Usher, All Fools and the Gentleman Usher*, ed. Thomas Marc Parrot (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co, 1907).

² John Day, William Rowley, and George Wilkins, “The Travels of the Three English Brothers”, *Three Renaissance Travel Plays*, ed. Anthony Parr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

³ Thomas Blount defines ‘telescope’ as “an instrument enabling one to see afar off: a Prospective glass”, *Glossographia, or, A dictionary interpreting all such hard words of whatsoever language now used in our refined English Tongue*, (London, 1661). However, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* predates Galileo’s telescope by several years.

front of him instead of miles away in Fressingfield. He cannot merely observe, and moves to act immediately, admitting that the emotions roused in him “made me think the shadows substances” (vi.130). He tries to stab his friend through the glass. The same rash behaviour is exhibited by the young scholars Lambert and Serlsby, who “hearing that your worship kept within your cell a glass prospective wherein men might see whatso their thoughts or hearts’ desire could wish”, come to Bacon’s cell to look upon their respective fathers, also in Fressingfield (xiii.26-8). On seeing his father engaged in mortal combat over Margaret, each student avenges his father’s death by fatally stabbing the other.

The historical Roger Bacon famously experimented with optics, and the ‘magic glass’ was a firmly engrained feature of Bacon legends well before Greene penned the play. Amanda Power cites one of the first references to Bacon’s glasses by Franciscan chronicler Peter of Trau, in 1385.¹ Trau writes that Bacon had two mirrors, the second of which enabled students “to see what people were doing in any part of the world”.² These early experiments in optics proved too distracting, however, and the university broke the mirrors since “by experimenting with the first, students spent more time in lighting candles than studying books; and seeing, in the second, their relatives dying or ill or otherwise in trouble, they got into the habit of going down, to the ruin of the University”.³ Such supernatural shortcuts to knowledge are feared for a reason. The shows produced by the glass prospective do not cause any damage to Bacon, but they have a devastating effect on anyone else who wishes to gaze into the magical device. The glass itself gives knowledge, but its transmission of information is incomplete. It produces images, but they are not accompanied by sound, and the viewer can only speculate about what is really happening. They are, to borrow a dichotomy from Shakespeare’s Theseus, apprehending things without wholly comprehending their significance, bringing to mind that the standard Latin term for mirror (*speculum*) is the etymon of the verb ‘to speculate’. Such speculations over illusions or images brought about by magic is perhaps more closely related of the devil’s power than the play initially suggests.

¹ Power, p.660.

² Peter of Trau, quoted in Power, p.660.

³ Ibid.

So Fade the Glass

The use of each object is disastrous for different reasons, the first because it brings about the end of Bacon's individual pursuits and experiments, the second because its use brings about a major misunderstanding in the love plot, and results in the death of two students. Although Bacon is devastated by the loss of his brazen head, it is the use of the glass that triggers his attempt to abandon magical inquiry. Over the bodies of the murdered students, Bacon laments "this glass prospective worketh many woes; / And therefore, seeing these brave, lusty brutes, / These friendly youths did perish by thine art" (xiii.76-8). Confidently stating "So fade the glass, and end with it the shows / That nigromancy did infuse the crystal with", he breaks the dangerous seeing device in a bid to end his supernatural soliciting (xiii.82-3). Here, Bacon admits the devilish influence in the glass, that the 'shows' were created by demonic spirits able to access the relevant knowledge of the events and cast the information as 'illusions' or 'shadows' in the glass. Although the glass does seem like an ordinary, 'natural' scientific object, given it can only depict events as they are happening and only show events happening in England – something like a telescope or a camera obscura – the demonic association is still relevant and necessary as the devil, too, is confined to human limits, since he cannot know the future.¹ Thus, the 'nigromancy' that infused the crystal either produced the knowledge to construct the 'unmagical' device, or an actual devilish spirit is confined within the glass and casts the illusions. This 'natural' object powered by the devil thus demonstrates Clark's point that "the 'natural' and the 'demonic' were not yet alternative categories of explanation".² The brazen head similarly links devilish skill with 'natural' technological practices. In his discussion of the head, Todd Andrew Borlik suggests that Bacon's claim that he "contrived and framed" the head while Belcephon performed the construction "literally demonises technological experimentation, resisting contemporary attempts to efface the stigma attached to the mechanical arts" (ii).

¹ The *Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon* specifies that the glass can only show events happening within a fifty mile radius.

² Clark, p.256.

56).¹ The head is made ‘naturally’ yet this natural labour is performed by a devil; one is not distinctly different from the other.

This is not to say that by destroying his objects, Bacon is freed from the spiritual repercussions of dealing with the devil, however, since the material object merely serves as a containment device. Spirits can easily be summoned again, for any power here lies in the human or the devil, not in the magician’s possessions, and the promises made by Bacon, Prospero, and Faustus to destroy their objects signals a symbolic end of their demonic engagements rather than actually destroying any kind of power they had. The last scene of the play questions the validity of Bacon’s repentance, and its effectiveness. Despite specifying to the King that he is “repentant for the follies of my youth, / That magic’s secret mysteries misled” (xvi.36-7), he happily produces a prophecy to bless the marriage of Edward and Eleanor, a prediction so complicated that all Henry can respond with is “This prophecy is mystical” (xvi.63). Bacon is quite clearly still able to perform magic; the link he has forged with the devil seems unbreakable and irreversible. Bacon may give up his magical instruments, but he cannot escape the fact that he still has the ability to reforge this link, and his reputation for magic continues to live after he has formally renounced his demonic dealings – clearly no concern to the King and his court. Bacon’s repentance is then completely undermined by *John of Bordeaux*, sequel to *Friar Bacon* and the subject of the following chapter, which questions the validity of the demonic pact in the first place.

As this chapter has demonstrated, every magical feat performed in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is an instance of demonic magic. Since demonism is the only ‘real’ form of magic properly demonstrated in Greene’s play, and the play clearly adheres to orthodox demonology throughout, there is no other plausible way to explain how the brazen head operates. Bacon’s infamous device is neither a triumph of Neoplatonic skill nor an autonomous object whose existence transcends the laws of nature. The head is merely a cage in which to trap a ready-made demon, and such a feat can only be accomplished for a few seconds. The magical object remains a prop, with no power of its own. *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* thus confirms the natural limitations of humans and demons alike. Such

¹ Todd Andrew Borlik, “‘More than Art’: Clockwork Automata, the Extemporizing Actor, and the Brazen Head in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*”, *The Automaton in English Renaissance Literature*, ed. Wendy Beth Hyman (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), p.131.

limitations verify an Aristotelian understanding of the universe in which 'spirit' cannot be created within matter through artificial methods; matter can only be used to trap a demonic spirit who, though lacking a corporeal body, already exists. The devil may be able to give the appearance of transcending the natural laws of the universe, but he is unable to break them. None of Friar Bacon's brazen experiments can prove otherwise.

CHAPTER THREE

Who the Devil is in Charge?

Mastery, the Faustian Pact, and *John of Bordeaux*

In the centuries following the Renaissance Faust stories, the term ‘Faustian pact’ has come to denote a long-term moral price or sacrifice made in exchange for immediate gain; an irrevocable, damning deal. Indeed, when Faustus enters into the seemingly irreversible bargain, he knows he will most likely be damned for it. It thus seems surprising that, towards the end of *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, Bacon believes he can emerge from his demonic dabbling completely unscathed. After acknowledging that he “must be damn’d / For using devils to countervail his God”, the Friar changes his mind, declaring to Bungay that “Sins have their salves. Repentance can do much” (xiii.95-6, 99). Although it is evident that Bacon himself has entered into some kind of pact with the devil, the Friar is confident in his chances of salvation. While this distinctly un-Faustian surety of evading his promise to the devil might seem rather naive, Bacon proves he knows exactly what he is talking about. In the anonymous sequel to Greene’s play, *John of Bordeaux*, Friar Bacon manages to defy the devils who come to take his soul by simply offering a more effective counter-command that overrides their claim and re-establishes the demons as his servants. This scenario may seem unusual but it is, in fact, Faustus’s adherence to the conditions of his pact, not Bacon’s successful evasion of hell, that goes against the sixteenth-century popular and demonological understanding of the diabolical bargain.

While the inherent theological ambiguities of *Doctor Faustus* make it impossible to say for certain whether he has a chance of salvation, we can nevertheless ascertain whether or not the pact itself damns Faustus. If we leave aside the unanswerable eschatological conundrums posed in the play and instead focus on the more material concerns – the contract itself, and the devil’s limited abilities – we can better understand Faustus’s predicament. We cannot know about God, and Faustus’s chances of Heaven; we can, however, know about the devil. *Doctor Faustus*’s adherence to orthodox demonology, and the resulting homogeneity of humans and demons, meant that Faustus’s hellish fate could be avoided simply by mastery. “Who the Devil is in Charge” considers the demonic bargain

itself, demonstrating that Marlowe's play is an anomaly among devil dramas because Faustus is unable to evade the conditions of the pact. By highlighting the discrepancy between the terms stipulated in the contract and the services Mephistopheles does perform, and contextualising *Faustus* within the long history of demonic pacts including other early modern narratives and dominant demonological thought, this chapter demonstrates just how unusual the conclusion of *Doctor Faustus* is. This chapter will first consider the terms and conditions of the Faustian pact itself, demonstrating that, since Mephistopheles does not live up to his end of the bargain, Faustus has no obligation to surrender his soul to hell at the play's conclusion. The ineffectiveness of the pact is confirmed by other tales of demonic pacts, which cast Marlowe's play in a different light. The concept of the demonic pact predates the birth of the historic Faust by a millennium, and in these earlier stories the human was almost always able to escape the consequences. This understanding is adhered to in other early modern dramatic renditions of the human-devil relationship. *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, *John of Bordeaux*, and many other devil dramas are linked by a common theme of overcoming the devil through natural human ingenuity. In most of these stories, the pact is evaded not by superior theological knowledge but by simple trickery. *John of Bordeaux* in particular offers new insight into the validity of the written agreement. Like the demons in *Friar Bacon* and *Faustus*, the devils in this anonymous play are also limited by the natural restrictions outlined in orthodox demonology, yet the nature of the human-devil relationship is not dictated by the pact. As well as exemplifying a more typical early modern story of a diabolical pact, *John of Bordeaux* also provides a greater insight into devil-human power play by emphasising the importance of human mastery in the partnership. In doing so, the representation of the human-demon relationship in *John of Bordeaux* throws *Doctor Faustus* into sharper relief, prompting us to re-evaluate the Faustian scenario. The question of who is in charge of whom is far more complicated than Faustus originally bargained for. In fact, the relationships between the most well known of the early modern theatre magicians – Friar Bacon, Peter Fabel, Prospero and Faustus himself – and their respective spirits

suggests that the power relationship between human and devil is constantly shifting as the pair battle for control.

This chapter ultimately demonstrates that the ending of *Doctor Faustus* is by no means typical; nor is it determined by the pact itself. In a wider context, “Who the Devil is In Charge?” emphasises the naturalism of the demons in the material world by demonstrating the apparent lack of distinction between human cunning and devilish craftiness. If devils, like humans, must rely on trickery and establish their own authority, then the tension surrounding the Faustian pact is not a symbolic struggle of God and Lucifer for one man’s soul. The tension instead arises from the more personal, immediate struggle between humans and their individual devils. The narrowing of distinction between humans and demons in terms of motivations and ability suggest that they were evenly matched. In fact, more often than not, the human came out on top.

The Faustian Pact

When contemplating the extent of the magical abilities that Doctor Faustus assumes he will acquire on signing a hellish covenant, he confidently imagines that he shall “make spirits fetch me what I please” and “Perform what desperate enterprise I will” (I.i.81, 83). Faustus is in no doubt that he will be in complete control of the demonic spirits he summons and this notion of demonic servitude is written into his contract with Mephistopheles: the second clause stipulates that the demon will “be his servant, and at his command” (II.i.99). Such control of the devil distinguishes the powerful magician from the powerless witch, as James I outlines: “they say, that the Witches ar servantes onelie, and slaues to the Devil; but the Necromancers are his maisters and commanders”.¹ The relationship between human and devil is thus defined in terms of control, a question of whether the devil is an instrument of the human’s magic or the human is an instrument of the devil’s malice. Even then, the necromancer’s command is only temporary, for “[the devil] oblices himself in some trifles to them, that he may on the other part obtaine the

¹ James I, p.157.

fruition of their body & soul, which is the onlie thing he hunts for”.¹ The relationship, as James I suggests, is grounded in the fact that each has something the other wants: the person entering into the demonic pact desires access to supernatural abilities, while the devil wants the soul of the human to enlarge Satan’s kingdom. Faustus is therefore acting on the assumption that one will be exchanged for the other, a balance of power determined in an agreement set in stone.

While screeds of scholarship have been devoted to considering Faustus’s chances of repentance and whether or not the act would dissolve his pact with Mephistopheles, very little has been said about the terms of the demonic contract itself.² In the written document that forges a formalised understanding between man and devil, Faustus signs over his soul on condition that Mephistopheles complies with certain terms. The Faustian pact is thus an issue of contract law as much as it is a theological concern. Drawn up by an over-eager Faustus, this document is intended to outline the power relations between the two, with Mephistopheles at the Doctor’s disposal. The following action of the play suggests otherwise, however, with Mephistopheles, as James I outlines, merely obliging Faustus over “some trifles”, not the tangible satisfaction and forbidden knowledge he craves. It is highly significant that Faustus, not Mephistopheles, writes the terms of the contract. Eager to do things by the book, Faustus draws up his own agreement to sign in his blood, but it is important to note that Mephistopheles’s input is only to tell Faustus that he “must bequeath it solemnly and write a deed of gift with thine own blood”, and that he must stab his arm “courageously” (II.ii.34-5). Mephistopheles’s main concern is the blood, for he never discusses the terms of the contract. While Mephistopheles requests that he

¹ James I, p.157.

² See, for example: Max Bluestone, ‘*Libido Speculandi*: Doctrine and Dramaturgy in Contemporary Interpretations of Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*’, Norman Rabkin, ed, *Reinterpretations of Elizabethan Drama* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp.33-88; Lily B. Campbell, “*Doctor Faustus*: A Case of Conscience”, *PMLA* 67 (1952), pp. 219-39; T. W. Craik, “Faustus’ Damnation Reconsidered” *Renaissance Drama* 2 (1969), pp.189-96; William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1930); Roland M. Frye, “Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*: The Repudiation of Humanity,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 55 (1956), pp.322-28; W. W. Greg, “The Damnation of Faustus” *MLR* 41.2 (1946), pp.97-107; Leo Kirschbaum, “Marlowe’s *Faustus*: A Reconsideration” *RES* 19 (1943), pp.225-41; Paul H. Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe: A Study of His Thought, Learning, and Character* (North Carolina: Chapel Hill, 1946); M. M. Mahood, *Poetry and Humanism* (London, 1950); Joseph T. McCullen, “Dr. Faustus and Renaissance Learning,” *MLR* 51 (1956), pp.6-16; J. B. Steane, *Marlowe: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964); Susan Snyder, “Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* as an Inverted Saint’s Life”, *Studies in Philology* 63 (1966), pp.565-77; Robert Hunter West, “The Impatient Magic of Doctor Faustus” *ELR* 4 (1974), pp.218-40.

must bestow his soul as a present, Faustus's soul is not a gift for he has signed to certain conditions, as lawyer Daniel Yeager outlines: "the agreement really is no 'deed of gift' since the transfer of Faustus's soul is not absolute but conditioned on Mephistophilis's performing his end of the deal".¹ Like the conjuration ritual, it has no real effect beyond Faustus's imagination.

Consider the conditions of the pact:

- 1). That Faustus may be a spirit in form and substance.
- 2). That Mephistopheles shall be his servant, and at his command.
- 3). That [Mephistopheles] shall do for him and bring him whatsoever.
- 4). That [Mephistopheles] shall be in his chamber or house invisible.
- 5). That [Mephistopheles] shall appear to the said John Faustus at all times in what form or shape soever he please. (II.i.96-105).

Almost all of these conditions are proved impossible by the subsequent action of the play. Firstly, Faustus cannot be a spirit "in form and substance". If he was, he would be able to perform the magic himself. Furthermore, the Good Angel and the Old Man would not try so hard to persuade him to spurn the demonic, for, as West points out: "[p]act or no pact...spirit wills are by nature fixed".² While the term 'spirit' is potentially ambiguous (although it is often synonymous with 'devil' on the stage), Faustus undoubtedly means 'devil'. The *English Faustusbook* makes this clear: "Doctor Faustus gave him this answer...that his request was none other but to become a devil, or at the least a limb of him".³ Secondly, Mephistopheles only pays lip service to Faustus, adopting the manner of a servant in order to dominate. The third clause of the contract cannot be wholly fulfilled for the very reason that Mephistopheles must operate within the laws of nature, as Chapter One has established. Mephistopheles can only bring Faustus those things that occur naturally in the material world. He cannot bring Faustus a wife, knowledge of heaven or hell, or literally bring the past into the present. There is no mention of a wall built around Germany or the Rhine encircling Wittenberg. We do not know if Faustus goes on a sightseeing trip to hell. We are never told if the Prince of Parma is forced to flee from Germany, or if spirits really did dry the sea in order to fetch treasure from shipwrecks. Mephistopheles successfully

¹ Daniel Yeager, "Marlowe's *Faustus*: Contract as Metaphor?" in *University of Chicago Law School Roundtable 2* (1995), p.607.

² West, *The Invisible World*, p.234.

³ Jones, p.96.

expels these ideas from Faustus's impressionable mind, filling it instead with the significantly less impressive feats the demon is actually able to perform.

As for the fourth clause, we cannot be certain if Mephistopheles always appears invisible or not. He is certainly visible to the horse courser when he comes to Faustus's lodgings, and even the Emperor has heard tell of Faustus's spirit. As Faustus freely acknowledges Mephistopheles's presence and power to the Duke and Duchess of Vanholt, his requirement for his devil to be invisible seems superfluous, unless he wishes to keep his demonic dealings secret for the other scholars who frequent his chambers, for, rather oddly, Faustus does not reveal the pact to his scholars until the end. They had, however, initially suspected that his involvement with Valdes and Cornelius would lead to such things, fearing that Faustus has "fall'n into that damned art for which they two are infamous through the world" (I.ii.33-34). Later on they request to see Helen but do not inquire about her origins. In fact, no explanation is offered. It seems especially strange that those nearest to Faustus should express surprise when he reveals his contract with hell, for when he confesses that he "gave them my soul by cunning" all they can do is exclaim "God Forbid!" (V.ii.36-38). It is only the last stipulation of the agreement that Mephistopheles is both willing and able to fulfil, for visual deception is his greatest strength; it is, of course, the only real power devils were allowed. Why Faustus only asks for twenty-four years is yet another *Faustus* mystery never resolved, although we assume that Faustus is supposed to age in during his time with Mephistopheles. Perhaps, in this contract, he is asking for no more years than those that will fall within his natural expected lifetime. Like the other conditions of the pact, it is Faustus who suggests the time frame. The pact is not honoured by Mephistopheles because he is not capable of doing so; his continual efforts to fight for Faustus's soul render the contract null and void.

Mephistopheles does not master Faustus through outright command but through shrewd manipulation, and the tragic conclusion to *Faustus* is thus determined by Mephistopheles's ability to outwit and out-command his human victim. Cox confirms that "the bargain thus appears to be another demonic feint, as the Good Angel and Old Man

suggest in their assurance of divine mercy long after Faustus has signed”.¹ As many have been quick to point out, if the pact was indeed valid then Mephistopheles would not go to such great lengths to keep Faustus absorbed in demonic enterprise. Even the Evil Angel acknowledges the instability of the pact by threatening Faustus with bodily harm if he decides to pledge his soul elsewhere: “If thou repent, devils shall tear thee in pieces” (II.iii.80). Mephistopheles’s eventual success at overcoming Faustus can instead be attributed to his great skill in manipulating his human: the devil remains in charge because he is so adept at leading Faustus to believe that he, the magician, is in charge. This manipulation is demonstrated when the pair descend on Rome. After a brief geography lesson, a bored Faustus declares he does “long to see the monuments / And situation of bright splendent Rome” commanding “Come therefore, let’s away” (III.i.47-49). He is immediately overruled by Mephistopheles, however, who has an agenda of his own: “Nay, Faustus, stay. I know you’d fain see the Pope / And take some part of holy Peter’s feast, / Where thou shalt see a troupe of bald-pate friars”(III.i.50-3). Here Mephistopheles clearly has the upper hand in the relationship. This is even more evident when the pair reach the Vatican. When disrupting the papal festivities, Mephistopheles takes charge while Faustus merely assists, despite the fact that the contract requires Mephistopheles to be “his servant, and at his command”. Mephistopheles thus masters Faustus, completely overriding the conditions of the pact.

The Pact in Context

Devils were not always so successful in mastering humans, however. In most other versions of the Faustian story, it was usually the human who mastered the devil. Although the document drawn up to denote the terms of the relationship between a devil and the human intending to sell his soul has become synonymous with the ‘Faustian Pact’, the demonic contract is much older than the stories of this Renaissance conjuror. Several well-known encounters between humans and devils predate the appearance of the first Faust

¹ Cox, p.117.

legends by over a thousand years. The first recorded pact between man and devil allegedly took place in the fourth century when a servant of Senator Proterius of Caesarea sold his soul to the devil in exchange for marriage to the Senator's daughter.¹ The enormously popular story of the third-century Christian martyrs St. Cyprian and St. Justina also reflect a Faustian theme in subsequent legends of Cyprian's conversion. According to *The Golden Legend*, Cyprian dabbled in necromancy from an early age: "when he was seven years old he was consecrated by his parents to the devil".² Probably the most well-known pre-Faustus Faust, Theophilus of Adana (died c.538), sold his soul with a pact written in blood and sealed with his ring in order to gain ecclesiastical promotion.³ Similarly, the mysterious Benedictine monk Gerbert (955-1003) was also rumoured to have sold his soul in exchange for the highest church office and was elected Pope Sylvester II in the inauspicious year 999 on condition that he did not celebrate high mass in Jerusalem.⁴ In many of these earlier stories, however, the human in question was usually able to elude the consequences of this hellish bargain by attaining eleventh hour salvation. The Senator's servant was saved by praying to St. Basil, while Cyprian renounced the devil by converting to Christianity and undergoing baptism.⁵ Theophilus was famously rescued by appealing to the Virgin Mary, who managed to retrieve the original document from 'Satan's archives' and thus revoked the agreement. Notably, the retrieval of Theophilus's written document is essential to his salvation; its repossession by Heaven secures the repossession of Theophilus.

The concept of a formalised agreement between a human and demon took on a new importance in the demonological debate that emerged in Europe from the fourteenth century onwards. The legal nature of these contracts distinguished such agreements from other forms of demonic covenants, and debates about its validity were still in full swing at the time Marlowe wrote *Faustus*. As James I indicates in *Demonology*, there was a marked difference between the relationship a devil forged with a magus and the one he made with a

¹ Helmut Wiemken, *Doctor Faustus: Weheklag: die Volkbücher Von D. Johann Faust und Christoph Wagner* (Bremen: C Schüemann, 1961).

² Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, repr. 2012), p.556.

³ William Empson, *Faustus and the Censor*, ed. John Henry Jones, (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p.11.

⁴ Butler, p.95.

⁵ See *The Famous Historie of Frier Bacon* (London, 1679).

witch. This belief was evident in the way the pact itself was formed: for the magus, an indirect, official document with the contract itself absorbing the blood pledge; for the witch, a highly sexualised sucking of blood directly from the body. Such distinctions were not always evident, however, and in several notable cases magicians accused of signing demonic pacts were also found to possess the devil's mark on their bodies as well.

Demonologists often made a further distinction between an express pact with the devil or an implicit one, as Russell illustrates: "in [an] explicit pact one literally made a covenant with the Devil, face to face, à la Faust; in [an] implicit pact one takes an action that could not be accomplished without demonic aid and therefore without in some way rendering service to demons".¹ In the *English Faustbook*, Faust considers whether or not he even needs to draw up a formal written document, "pondering with himself how he might obtain his request of the devil without the loss of his soul".² He rather unwisely decides to hand such a decision over to Mephistopheles himself: "yet fully [Faustus] was resolved in himself, rather than to want his pleasure, to do whatsoever the spirit and his lord should condition upon".³ This surrendering of power to the devil characterises Faustus's relationship with his demonic spirit from the very beginning; it also proves to be his downfall.

Although they took care to distinguish between the various kinds of demonic pacts, the validity of such agreements was seriously doubted by early modern demonologists. West explains: "[o]rthodox demonology says that pacts have no contractual force either about the terms or the signer's life or about anything else".⁴ Weyer regarded the idea of the explicit pact as "deceptive, foolish, and of no weight", while clergyman John Webster believed that the pact was a subtle spiritual bond rather than a formalised material reality.⁵ While Webster and Weyer exhibit the more sceptical attitudes towards witchcraft in general, their opinions were shared by the majority of demonologists who took a more orthodox view. The pact's influence carried greater meaning and was taken more seriously in both ecclesiastical and legal contexts. In 1437 Pope Eugenius mentioned written documents

¹ Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1972), p.144.

² Jones, p.96.

³ Ibid. Jones's edition demonstrates that this is an addition made by the mysterious 'P.F. Gent' as it does not appear in the original German or Spies *Faustbook* of 1587.

⁴ West, "The Impatient Magic of Doctor Faustus", p.226

⁵ Weyer, p.173; Webster (1610-1682), qtd. in Cameron, p.194

drawn up with devils in a decree issued to all inquisitors, and a written pact was produced in court as late as 1751.¹ The written pact is given particular significance in an essay penned by Freud in 1923, “A Neurosis of Demoniacal Possession in the Seventeenth Century”. In this peculiar article, Freud addresses the historic case of Christoph Haizmann (d.1700), a Bavarian painter who believed he had sold his soul to the devil. In the course of the Church’s enquiries, Haizmann produced not one but two pacts drawn up between himself and the devil, the first in blood, the second in ink. Haizmann believed he had sold his soul to the devil for reasons that remain obscure.² It fell to Church officials to exorcise Haizmann’s alleged demons, and the second pact emerged during one of these rituals. Like Theophilus, Haizmann was eventually rescued by the Virgin, with the repossession of the pacts supposedly saving his soul. The case bears a remarkable resemblance to the Faust story, and in the *Faustbook* Faustus is required to make a copy of the original pact, the blood copy for Lucifer’s records and the inked version to remind Faustus of his new allegiance to hell.³

The contract also plays a prominent role in the heavily sensationalised cases of demonic possession in Louviers and Loudun in seventeenth-century France. In the infamous trial of Louis Gaufridy in 1611, a demonic pact allegedly drawn up between the accused priest and the devil, promising Gaufridy fame and young women in exchange for his body, soul, and material possessions, was produced.⁴ According to the multitude of stories surrounding the case, Gaufridy was allegedly tricked by the devil “and deprived of many years of life he expected to have, as a result of this agreement”.⁵ Gaufridy was burnt at the stake for sorcery in 1611, dying at the hands of humans rather than demons, the human action thus overriding the date of damnation determined in the contract.⁶ In the equally notorious case of possessed nuns in Loudun in 1634, two contracts were produced

¹ Maxwell-Stuart, p.75, p.185.

² Sigmund Freud, “A Seventeenth-Century Demonological Neurosis” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1981) vol. 29.

³ Jones, p.100.

⁴ Butler, p.173.

⁵ Maxwell-Stuart, p.113.

⁶ See Francois de Rosset’s account, “De L’horrible & espvventable sorcellerie de Louys Goffredy, Prestre de Marseille: in *Les Histoires Tragiques de Notre Temps* (1612) and Michaëlis’s *Histoire admirable de la possession et Conversion d’une penitente* (1613).

by Mother Superior Jeanne des Anges who had sourced them from the “Hellish Archives” claiming they were drawn up between the Priest Urban Grandier and the devil.¹ This extraordinary document promised Grandier:

irresistibility with women, the flower of virgins, the honour of nuns, all imaginable dignities, distinctions, pleasures, and riches. He will commit fornication every three days, never abstain from drunkenness, proffer up his allegiance once a year sealed with his own blood, spurn the sacraments and address his prayers to us.²

This contract seems more representative of the activities Faustus actually pursues on sealing a demonic bargain rather than the noble humanist aspirations he writes into his own contract. Grandier’s pact does not entail a sense of permanence, however; the clauses that require the priest to confirm his allegiance once a year and to address his prayers to the devil imply that the pact itself is not sufficient to cement his allegiance with hell since his loyalty needs to be constantly monitored and renewed. The version retained by Lucifer’s representatives is signed by no less than seven devils and takes on a delightfully secretarial tone, ending with the notation “Visa for the signature and the seal of the Master of Devils and all overlords of Demons”.³ The pact, still held in French archives, is widely believed to have been forged by des Anges herself. Grandier, like Gaufridy, was burned for sorcery in 1634, with human intervention again pre-empting the sinner’s expected date of death. These two celebrated cases occurred at a time in which the Faust legend enjoyed widespread popularity and it is tempting to speculate that the renewed prominence of demonic pacts in cases of possession and sorcery was influenced by the Faustian legend itself. The remarkable speed at which the story was translated and transmitted across Europe made it more relevant – and far more prominent – than any of the hundreds of demonologies in circulation at the time. Such ‘real’ cases of demonic contracts as well as the older legends of the bargain with the devil demonstrate that, even if it was widely discredited by demonologists, the idea of the written pact carried certain weight in the popular imagination.

¹ Butler, p.174.

² Translation produced in Butler, p.174. The original pact is written in “Backwards Latin.”

³ The ‘Council of Demons’ includes Lucifer, Beelzebub, Satan, Elimi, Leviathan, Astaroth, and Baalbarith (Secretary).

Even for even those who believed in the validity of the pact, however, there was usually a way out. In these earlier, pre-Reformation incidents of demonic pacts, the human signatories were usually reliant on the intercession of the Virgin or other saints to extract them from the hellish covenant. As *Faustus* is probably set in post-Reformation Wittenberg, such sources of salvation were no longer considered attainable but this does not mean that Protestantism offered no way out of a demonic pact. There were other options, and these relied on human action, not heavenly intervention. Luther himself allegedly saved a student from a demonic pact by placing his hands on the victim and praying. Instead of depending on the Virgin or other sources of divine intervention, it was now up to the humans themselves to find a way out of the agreement. In some cases, the demonic pact could be countermanded through personal prayer or a renewal of Christian faith. As Clark asserts, the pact itself was viewed as “parasitic on baptism”, a covenant with hell that renounced God by pledging allegiance to hell instead, bastardising the sacrament’s traditional renouncement of Satan.¹ According to orthodox demonology, the hierarchies, rituals, and practices of Christianity were mirrored by a demonic hierarchy and rituals of hell that held Satan at the centre of their worship, as Grandier’s contract indicates.² Evading the hellish consequences of the pact thus required the witch or a magus to formally break from hell by reaffirming the allegiance to God, something that Faustus is not certain he can do. Weyer describes the process as a simple strategy: “let the [witch or magus] be guided by sounder Christian instruction, so as to submit a ‘bill of divorce’ to Satan and embrace the true and orthodox religion and return humbly to the bosom of Mother Church”.³ The re-baptism of repentant witches to formalise their return to God was a widespread practice across Europe.

Other stories of evading the pact called for more immediate action that was based more on mastering the devil through trickery rather than formally renewing one’s Christian faith. Tricking the devil was possible because humans and demons were not considered to be very different in terms of skill and natural abilities. The demonic conventions that so closely resembled Christian practices stopped short of embodying a Manichean duality, for

¹ Clark, p.83

² Ibid., pp.83-84.

³ Weyer, p.552.

Satan was by no means as powerful as God but was instead, like humans, subject to the laws and limitations God imposed on the knowledge and workings of the natural world. The understanding that the devil had to adhere to the same natural laws as humans, combined with the Renaissance interest in extending or exploring the scope of human intellectual abilities and achievements implied that, technically speaking, it was possible for the human to outwit the devil. If the only powers at the devil's disposal were cunning, illusion, and trickery then surely the human must be able to beat the devil at his own game. Outsmarting the devil through cunning or superior counter-magic is a key feature of many of the magician plays that emerged in the early modern theatre in the early 1590s and also features prominently in later devil comedies. In Anthony Munday's *John a Kent and John a Cumber* (c.1590) the magician John a Cumber is reputed to have beaten the devil at his own game, having "ouerreachte the deuill by his skill" (544).¹ Once he had "beguiled the devil, his art could never find his match" (696-697). In Rowley's *The Birth of Merlin*, the devil is overcome by his half-human son Merlin, who imprisons him in a rock, restricting his power to begetting "earthquakes or some noisome damp" (V.i.69).²

Such similarities between the inhabitants of earth and the denizens of hell call into question both the validity and permanence of the Faustian pact on the early modern stage. Indeed, the human-devil relationship in *Faustus* is unusual among devil plays as the other dramatic renderings of the legendary infernal bargain yield surprisingly different results. There are several devil-human pacts between minor demons and would-be magicians that appeared on the early modern stage, including both express pacts like *Faustus*'s, and those that could be regarded as implicit, like Bacon's and Prospero's. Both Prospero's and Bacon's attempts to renounce their hellish soliciting suggest a return to Christian ways that echoes the tactics used in earlier, successful attempts to dissolve the bond. Prospero's anxious epilogue in which he admits "my ending is despair, /Unless I be relieved by prayer" is reminiscent of the story of Luther's alleged rescuing of a student from the consequences of a Faustian pact through prayer (Epilogue.14-15). Bacon's more optimistic speech suggests a washing away of the demonic stain through re-baptism:

¹ Anthony Munday, *John a Kent & John a Cumber*, ed. M. Byrne, Malone Society Reprints (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).

² William Rowley, *The Birth of Merlin or the Childe hath Found his Father* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1989).

drown not in despair.
 Sins have their salves. Repentance can do much.
 [...]
 From thence for thee the dew of mercy drops
 To wash the wrath of high Jehovah's ire,
 And make thee as a new-born babe from sin (xiii.98-105).

The confident conclusion of *Friar Bacon* and the more tentative ending of *The Tempest* imply that the surprisingly simple act of returning to God might be enough to override the supposedly binding agreement between human and devil, something Faustus contemplates but ultimately doubts.

The problem we face at the end of both these plays, however, is that we cannot be certain if such acts of penitence are effective. We simply do not know what happens next. It remains uncertain just what will happen to the repentant magician. Fortunately, two other plays offer further insight: *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* and *John of Bordeaux*. The hugely popular *Merry Devil of Edmonton* opens with a scene reminiscent of the conclusion to *Doctor Faustus* where the magus-scholar Peter Fabel awaits his spirit Coreb who will come and claim his soul. When the spirit appears, he reminds Fabel that “Didst thou not write thy name in thy own blood / And drew'st the formal deed 'twixt thee and me? / And is it not recorded now in hell?”, informing the magician that “the date of thy command is out, / And I am master of thy skill and thee” (Induction.27-29, 32-33). Fabel instead tricks the demon into sitting in a necromantic chair “In which he makes his direful invocations / And binds the fiends that shall obey his will”, bargaining himself another seven years (Prologue.38-89). Why Peter Fabel asks for only seven more years of power is a mystery, but despite his reputation for necromancy he goes on to resolve the complicated *Romeo and Juliet*-style plot through wholly human means, distancing himself from demonic magic. The incident is described in greater detail in Nicholas Breton's *An Olde Mans Lesson, and a Young Mans Loue* (1605), but in Breton's version, no specific time limit is set on the devil working as Fabel's “slaue or vassaile”, although the master-servant relationship is clearly established.¹ Breton notes that “when this officious serant thought hee had beene at his commaunde long inough, (for not terme or time was set at the contract) hee demaunded

¹ Nicholas Breton, *An Olde Mans Lesson and a Young Mans Loue*, (London, 1605), sig.A3.

his commaunders soule”.¹ Fabel asks for time to set his business in order and farewell his friends, asking the devil to “spare me but till this inche-long end of candle (pointing to the Candle burning in his study) and take my soule”.² The devil agrees, but Fabel simply snuffs out the candle, thus preserving his soul for an indefinite amount of time. In fact, Fabel was well-known for outsmarting the devil. John Weever’s *Ancient Funerall Monuments* asserts that Fabel “by his wittie deuises beguiled the deuill: belike he was some ingenious conceited gentleman, who did vse some sleightie trickes for his owne disports”.³ Breton records another story in which Fabel again cheats the devil by identifying a loophole in the agreement. His soul is promised to the devil “when I am buried, either within the Church, without the Church, in the Church porch, Church-yard street, field, or high way”.⁴ On approaching death, Fabel simply “digd his death bed in the Church wal, and there rested day & night hartly praying & repenting him of all the euill he had committed”.⁵ The merry devil thus outwits the actual devil.

Demonology and *John of Bordeaux*

The little-known and much-overlooked *John of Bordeaux* offers unexpected insight into the human-devil relationship and overturns many commonly-held assumptions about the demonic pact. Discovered in manuscript form in the library of Alnwick castle in Northumberland in the 1930s, this never-printed play is in fact a sequel to *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and was possibly written by Robert Greene in an effort to capitalise on the success of *Bacon*. The title of the play, *John of Bordeaux, or the Second Part of Friar Bacon* was assigned to the play on its discovery. *John of Bordeaux* follows a similar plot pattern to its predecessor, although the second instalment is considerably more serious in both tone and content. The action of *John of Bordeaux* takes place after the conclusion of the first *Bacon* play: Friar Bacon is invited to the court of Emperor Frederick II where his rivalry with German magician Vandermast is rekindled. Frederick’s son Ferdinand falls in love with the

¹ Breton, sig.A3.

² Ibid.

³ John Weever, *Ancient Funerall Monuments*, (London, 1631), p.534.

⁴ Breton, *An Old Mans Lesson and a Young Mans Love*, sig.B1.

⁵ Ibid.

eponymous John's wife, Rossalin, and Vandermast vows to help him get the girl through magic in much the same manner as Bacon promises to help Edward acquire Margaret against her will in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. In *John of Bordeaux*, Bacon sides with the exiled John, successfully restoring him to his wife and to his place at court. Meanwhile, Bacon's servant Perce, a slightly cleverer character than the bumbling Miles of the previous play, creates cheerful havoc with Vandermast's scholars in the comic subplot. Perce's story is reminiscent of the sub-plots in both *Friar Bacon* and *Faustus* in its adherence to the transmission of magical knowledge through an established academic hierarchy and its mockery of the serious magical consequences arising from the main plot.

As noted by the few scholars to write on the play, *John of Bordeaux* depends heavily on the plot of *Friar Bacon*; it also takes a great deal from *Doctor Faustus*.¹ In fact, the sub-plot seems much closer to *Faustus* than the first Bacon play. Inherent in *John of Bordeaux* are the demonological assumptions established in both of these plays; the anonymous author makes a similar effort to expose the limitations of both the devil's and the human's 'supernatural' abilities. In *John of Bordeaux*, the post-repentant Bacon appears to be preoccupied with his fate, protesting that "Bacon is ould and age can not [.....] be blith for many yeares must meditat on sin"(43-44), a sentiment echoed in Prospero's "Every third thought shall be my grave" (V.i.309). His concern does not prevent him performing supernatural feats, however, for *Bordeaux's* Bacon is clearly still a magician, openly practicing magic and consorting with devils over which he wields absolute command. Bacon's actions in this play completely undermine his renunciation of magic in the previous drama, and the climatic breaking of his glass is reduced to a passing comment where the Emperor Frederick regrets its destruction:

¹ Waldo McNeir establishes the close dependency of the play on *Friar Bacon* in "Robert Greene and *John of Bordeaux*", *PMLA* 64.4 (1949), pp.781-801 and Waldo McNeir, "Reconstructing the Conclusion of *John of Bordeaux*", *PMLA* 66.4 (1951), pp.540-543. Laurie Maguire establishes the play's dependency on its predecessor, but also champions the complexity and literary merit of the play in considering how the story develops beyond *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* in "(Mis) Diagnosing Memorial Reconstruction in *John of Bordeaux*", *Medieval and Renaissance Drama*, 11 (1999), pp.114-28. Paul Dean's analysis of two-part plays suggests a "unity and duality" model rather than viewing it as "unity and continuity". Dean points out that *John of Bordeaux* is a much graver play than *Friar Bacon*, and there is less room for "detached or amused contemplation". "*Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay and John of Bordeaux: A Dramatic Diptych*," *English Language Notes* 18 (1981), pp.262-66. Like McNeir, Richard Levin attempts to reconstruct the ending of *John of Bordeaux* in "*Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, John of Bordeaux, and the 1683 Edition of The History of Friar Bacon*", *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 40 (2001), pp.55-66.

ha Bacon had thy glass bin holl which thow didest breake
 at Oxford in a splene I myght in that have clerlie sene
 my wish fo^r thow art ma^r of all siences (424-26).

The magician replies to say he can produce the same result through a different method, inserting the vision into Frederick's dream. Bacon's pious break from magic is thus rendered meaningless and irrelevant. However, Bacon does seem to have undergone some sort of moral transformation in *John of Bordeaux*. In this respect, *John of Bordeaux* seems truer to the Bacon of *The Famous Historie*. In *Friar Bacon*, his involvement in the Edward-Margaret-Lacey triangle is somewhat sinister. In *The Famous Historie*, it was Bungay, not Bacon, who supports Margaret and Lacey, and Bungay who disrupts the wedding for rather dubious purposes. In *Bordeaux*, Bacon is firmly on the side of John and Rossalin, constantly thwarting Vandermast's plots and helping his imperial host outsmart the Turks. What is noticeably absent from this play are Bacon's own intellectual pursuits. Rather than focusing on and constantly boasting of his own projects (such as the brazen head), he seems "repentant for the follies of [his] youth / That magic's secret mysteries misled" (xvi.36-37). This portrayal of the post-repentant magician is thus decidedly complex. His magic is characterised by a greater sense of obligation and he is no longer attempting to push the boundaries of human-demonic ability. However, Bacon can – and does – still practice magic, command devils, and establish his superiority over his rival scholar-magician in a blatant display of academic pride. The magic is still sourced from devils, and it is exactly the same kind of magic performed in *Doctor Faustus* and *Friar Bacon*.

John of Bordeaux's magic thus conforms to the dominant demonological convictions of the early modern period. As well as having the ability to cast a vision through dreams, a variant of visual manipulation, Bacon can summon food, create pageants of spirit apparitions to outwit the Turkish emperor, comfort the grieving Rossalin, and entertain a courtly audience. The play features demonic 'transformation' through substitution and magical transportation, and a supernatural storm. *Bordeaux's* magic is instantly recognisable as the work of the devil, despite the fact that Bacon is using the magic for more moral purposes. In fact, Bacon uses the magic to assert his moral authority throughout the play, using devils not to "countervail his God" as he does in *Friar Bacon*, but to reinforce

Christian values in the world (xiii.97). This does not work out particularly well for the Turkish army with whom Emperor Frederick is currently at war. Bacon's ability to summon demonic apparitions enables a German victory when Bacon and Perce trick the Turkish emperor Ameroth into surrendering his crown, robes, and scimitar. They do so by producing a demonic apparition of the Turk's only son, Selimus, being pursued by soldiers. Once the desired effect is achieved, Bacon sends 'Selimus' back to his hell. These apparitions may only be demonic illusions, but they certainly have a powerful effect. Bacon produces another disguised spirit later in the play, providing a "vision" of John of Bordeaux for the heartsick Rossalin, and in the final scene, when exposing the extent of Vandermast's treachery, Bacon summons up a dumb show – another demonic pageant – of *The Rape of Lucrece*.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the shortcomings of the apparitions are clearly stated in the play. To prevent the Turks from coming close to or touching the incorporeal apparition of Selimus, Bacon bewitches them; a noble declares: "the devell I thinck or elce som worsser hath so in chaunted ous we can not mov," recalling the immobilised Edward in *Friar Bacon* and later Ferdinand in *The Tempest* (201). The noble's acknowledgement that there is "something worsser" than the devil is apt, since Bacon continually proves throughout the play that, in wielding power over the devil, he is a greater force to be reckoned with. The spirits who perform *The Rape of Lucrece* do not talk, and when Rossalin is shown the apparition of her husband, Bacon makes her promise not to attempt to touch the apparition. When Rossalin tries to embrace and converse with her 'husband', the vision departs, its incorporeal nature made evident. Rossalin thus assumes John is dead: "whether dost flie...yf thow be[e]st a gost ah he is [god] gon his faynting speright is fled ah bring me to my husband wher he liees" (1025-28). The play also features transvection. On encountering the exiled John, Bacon sends the scholar back to Vandermast on a magic "stead" "that like a wherlwind shall convay the hence the when thow art returnd to hosburg say that thow hast rid [ten] Iurnies in on daye" (791-793). This not only recalls the transvection 'whirlwinds' of *Friar Bacon*; the use of a bewitched animal (or object) carried by devils is also reminiscent of both the transformed horse in *Doctor*

Faustus and the “black long-sided jade” in *The Late Lancashire Witches* (II.vi.58). Bacon also exhibits a Prospero-like power to summon a storm which is, again, the work of his spirits. So as the world may know his anger, he commands Rabsacke to “bring me a hiddious storme vpon the yearth”(1159).¹

John of Bordeaux makes it clear that the devil’s magic is a means to an end, not the end itself. In order to provide food for the impoverished John, Bacon has to summon a banquet to him rather than creating it on the spot, thus employing the same methods used by Mephistopheles to provide food. Vandermast stresses to Ferdinand that it is not possible to use magic to change a woman’s mind: “the mynd is such a thinge as is beyonnd the reach of ani art[,] she that is chast cannot be won with charmes” (310-11). Consequently, the plan to help Ferdinand to get the girl is rather long and complicated: Vandermast helps Ferdinand by conjuring a spirit into a Turk who will claim that Rossalin’s husband is a traitor. John is then banished, leaving Rossalin alone and penniless, thus leaving Ferdinand free to pursue Rossalin for himself. Magic provides a way of getting around the problem, since it is not within the magician’s or the devil’s power to create something from nothing or permanently alter something’s natural state. This is best exemplified by the way in which Bacon’s scholar Perce frequently uses a combination of magic and trickery to get what he wants. When Vandermast’s two scholars complain of their thirst to Perce, he performs a quick, devil-like substitution. Rather than conjuring drinks out of thin air, Perce replaces the books they are carrying – Plato and Aristotle – with bottles of ale. This is no magic but simple trickery. Perce has conned them out of their books with the pretence of magic. He holds the texts ransom until the scholars can pay him for the beer: “yo^r books are turned in to [two] bottells of alle for as it was a poynt of magicke to torne yo^r books in to [two] bottells of [ale] so it is a poynt of phelossophe you should pay fo^r yo^r [ale] before you have yo^r books” (400-3). Similarly, the mass prison break orchestrated by the mischievous Perce is caused not by demonic aid but by natural cunning; Perce has been drinking with the jailor. Indeed, much of Perce’s magic is based on trickery, using the devil’s power to create a diversion rather than addressing the problem

¹ How demons were believed to create storms is discussed in Chapter Seven.

directly. In order to avoid paying his tavern bill, Perce distracts the alewife by making her dance in a circle. In this comic episode, the same fate befalls anyone who tries to intervene, until four people (including the Constable) are dancing in a circle chanting “the schollers of Bacon have [been here]” (813). In doing so, Perce asserts his command through a combination of devilish magic and human tricks.

Mastering the Devil

Perce’s trickery not only allows him to evade the bill. It also enables him to exert Bacon’s authority over Vandermast’s scholars by leaving Bacon’s name in the mouths of the bewitched. Through Perce, Bacon claims another victory over his rival, mastering the source of Vandermast’s power as he later masters Vandermast’s control of students. Like *Faustus* and *Friar Bacon*, the action of *John of Bordeaux* plays out in both courtly and academic settings, both of which dictate a firm hierarchy established on either social standing or intellectual ability and experience. Mastery of one’s fellow scholars and scholarly rivals is a critical element of Bacon’s matchless authority in the play. While *John of Bordeaux* merely presents the same kind of magic as that featured in *Faustus* and *Friar Bacon* and thus adheres to orthodox demonology, the play offers a greater insight into the devil-human partnership by illustrating how some magicians could use the natural skills that define Perce’s magic – trickery and mastery – to overcome the devil and thus overthrow the authority of the Faustian pact. What is particularly significant about this play is that it openly challenges Faustus’s assumptions about the pact. If we accept that Greene penned the play, then it offers some interesting answers to the unanswered questions in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. *John of Bordeaux* also offers some interesting answers to the questions arising over Faustus’s pact as well.

In *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, Fabel simply extends the terms of his contract through negotiation, but *John of Bordeaux* goes further by demonstrating what happens when the magus has the audacity to refuse to comply with the demands of the devil outright. In an episode towards the end of the play, Bacon proves he still has absolute

command of the devils and can out-master them even when they come to claim his soul.

Astaroth and Rabsacke fly to the imprisoned Bacon, claiming that:

no Bacon no it goes not with the as twas wont
 the hellish sperrit ar no mor at thy commaund
 thy tyme prefickst thy pour hath a nend
 and thow art ours both bodie and soull ho ho ho (1140-3).

It appears that Bacon's time is up. Now the servants of Satan are in charge. Before he is dragged to hell, however, Bacon turns the tables on the fiends in an inexplicable counter-command which is immediately obliged:

away presuming speright away thow hast no
 pouer over a Cristian fayth willt thow do what
 I commaund the do (1144-6).

Bacon, through his unwillingness to comply with the demands of hell, undermines the validity of the demonic pact and renders it null and void. This magician can command devils for as long as he likes, irrespective of a prearranged agreement. In fact, evading the devil's conditions is also synonymous with the Bacon legend. In the prose source for Greene's play, *The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon*, Bacon not only outsmarts the devil, he also manages to help another person. In a chapter entitled "How Fryer Bacon saued a Gentleman that had giuen himselfe to the Deuill", Bacon rescues a man who has unwittingly bargained away his soul in return for money that enables him to pay off his debts. In this instance, the devil, not the human, has drawn up the conditions of the agreement, which outlined that the money is "to be lent on this condition, that so soone as he had paid all his debts, that he should be at the lenders disposing, and without any delay, freely to yeeld himselfe to him vpon the first demand of the aforesaid lender".¹ The devil places particular emphasis on the written agreement; he specifies to the Gentleman that "I take no oaths...I must have bonds".² In due course, the startup loan enables the man to reimburse his creditors, and the devil materialises to claim him in a manner reminiscent of *Faustus*: "one day, hee being in his Studie the deuill appeared vnto him, and did tell him that now his land was redeemed, and his debts paid, and therefore the time was come that hee must yeeld himselfe to his mercy, as hee was bound by bond".³ Fryer Bacon first consoles

¹ *The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon*, sig.B2.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

the man “Yet be of good comfort, penitentiall teares may doe much”, echoing his own self-reassurance in Greene’s play that “repentance can do much”(xiii.99). Yet the man avoids his fate not through penitential behaviour, but through trickery. Bacon points out that the devil can only claim the Gentleman’s soul once he rid himself of debt. Since the Gentleman has not repaid the devil for the sacks of money given to him when they made the bargain, technically he has not paid all of his debts: “At this, the Deuill vanished with great horror, but *Fryer Bacon* comforted the Gentleman, and sent him home with a quiet conscience, bidding him neuer to pay the Deuils money backe as he tendred his owne safety”.¹ Bacon again uses natural cunning and wit to rescue a soul by pointing out the flaws in the devil’s own thinking. The devil, it seems, is humanlike in his capacity to err. This episode places particular emphasis not just on the pact, but also on the role of mastery. The devil enables the Gentleman to return to a position of financial power only if he will become the “slaue of a stranger”.² Bacon, in helping him escape the contract, denies the devil’s authority. *The Famous Historie* also implies that Bacon gets out of his demonic contract through trickery in the same way as Peter Fabel. After burning his books and disposing of his possessions to his scholars, Bacon retires to a purpose-built cell in the wall of a church “where he locked himselfe in, and there remained till his death”.³ The church wall will presumably protect him from any demonic visitors.

Both *Friar Bacon* and *John of Bordeaux* also suggest that devils and their hellish consequences are transferable. In the first play, Bacon sends his servant Miles to hell. In *John of Bordeaux* he gives Astaroth to Vandermast, presumably transferring any hellish punishments to the malevolent German magician who assumes ownership of the devil and thus assumes the demonic consequences. Unlike Faustus, who ultimately submits to Mephistopheles believing that there are no other options, these other magicians are better acquainted with early modern demonological thought, which placed little emphasis on the validity of the Faustian bargain. Both *Friar Bacon* plays thus demonstrate that there are no hard-and-fast rules that govern why humans may or may not be sent to hell after dabbling in demonic magic. The decisions are made by whoever is in charge, be they human or devil.

¹ *The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon*, sig.B3.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

It is not only the human who might be able to override the conditions of the pact and allow the magus to evade the 'the time prefixed', however. *The Devil's Charter* features an explicit pact that is overruled not by human action or magical might but by devilish trickery. Astaroth claims the soul of the human several years earlier than expected, using a mistranslation in the hellish covenant to end Rodrigo Borgia's depraved pontificate sooner than the wicked pope had bargained for. Yet the pact itself is irrelevant, since the devil takes the pope's life through natural means, switching a bottle of wine with a poisoned bottle. The devil thus beats the human at his own game by giving the notorious poisoner a taste of his own medicine. This action undermines any validity the pact itself might carry, however, as the simple switching of bottles pre-empts Borgia's date of damnation and he dies a natural, not supernatural, death reminiscent of the way Gaufridy was supposedly tricked by the devil and cheated of "many years of life he expected to have".¹

In other dramatic renderings of the demonic pact, the devil's refusal to live up to his end of the bargain occurs much earlier. In Dekker, Ford and Rowley's *The Witch of Edmonton*, Mother Sawyer's devil, Dog, encourages her to exchange her soul for his alleged power in a dramatic blood-sucking affair by promising the much-abused woman that she will be able to

command me
Do any mischief unto man or beast,
And I'll effect it, on condition
That, uncompelled, thou make a deed of gift
Of soul and body to me (II.i.137-41).

Dog afterwards denies Sawyer's request to have her neighbour Old Banks killed, a request that cannot be met with:

Fool because I cannot.
Though we have power, know it is circumscribed
And tied in limits (II.i.164-6).

Dog thus acknowledges that his powers are restricted only after Mother Sawyer has obligingly surrendered up her soul. Like Mephistopheles, Dog has tricked Mother Sawyer and manages to sustain the trick throughout the play; the witch never questions the validity of the agreement, despite Dog's failure to deliver on his promises.

¹ Maxwell-Stuart, p.113.

Faustus is similarly cheated by the devil, who fails to point out the limitations in his supernatural abilities, an act which influences the effectiveness of the demonic pact. The pact itself is a demonic trick, an illusion. The tragic conclusion to the play is thus determined by Faustus's unwavering belief in the contract and his inability to realise it is unfulfilled by his devil, even though the pact itself contains the wording "the articles above written inviolate" (II.i.110). While Mephistopheles does not live up to his end of the bargain, it never really occurs to Faustus that he is thus not obligated to live up to his. While he spends a great deal of time agonising over whether or not he can repent, he gives little thought to the written document at the centre of his quandary. Unlike Bacon and Prospero, Faustus succumbs to despair, fulfilling the stipulation featured in the contracts of Haizmann, Gaufridy, Theophilus and many others that they must turn their backs on God.

What the staging of devil-human relationships in the early modern drama implies is that the extent to which the devil can influence the material world is entirely dependent on the natural ability and power of the human he possesses, or by whom he is possessed. In *John of Bordeaux*, Friar Bacon, already powerful in both intellectual and human command, is able to command devils with a mere frown, while the foolish Fitzdottrel in *The Devil is an Ass* is unable to access any magic from his equally foolish devil. According to Cox,

[o]ne of the hallmarks of traditional devils is their consistent identification with those who have the greatest wealth and power, because the socially elevated are most vulnerable to the sin of pride, and therefore capable of inflicting damage on the sacred social body. Demonic power thus manifests by analogy to social oppression (from above) rather than social subversion (from below).¹

The Witch of Edmonton's Mother Sawyer, of low social standing, cannot command much effect in the community around her. Prospero, as a Duke, seems to exercise complete control over Ariel. Friar Bacon wields supreme command over his spirits:

The great arch-ruler, potentate of hell
Trembles, when Bacon bids him or his fiends
Bow to the force of his Pentageron (ii.49-51).

While he admits he had demonic assistance in the forging of his magical instruments, the most frequent use of devils in the play is as servants for practical tasks, such as bringing food or transporting people to and from his secret cell. Bacon's intellectual stimulation

¹ Cox, p.123.

comes not from these devils but from humans, from his partnership with Friar Bungay and his ongoing rivalry with Vandermast. Similarly, in *Faustus*, the power Mephistopheles attaches himself to is not that of wealth or political influence but intellectual prowess, as we learn from the Prologue that we Faustus is born to “parents base of stock” and has risen in the social hierarchy not through wealth but through education (Prologue.11). In regard to his demonic contract, however, it is abundantly evident that Faustus is just not that clever. For once Lucifer has sent to earth a devil cleverer and more skilful than the would-be magician he is supposed to serve. The certainty of the pact come from Faustus’s own firmly-established understanding long before Mephistopheles enters the scene. Mephistopheles merely feeds this incorrect understanding and humours him, for like Faustus’s other ideas of magic, the conditions of the pact are something of his invention which he imposes on Mephistopheles. Faustus is clearly unaware of the highly unstable nature of demonic contracts depicted both in esoteric magical writing and in the many popular legends of those who outwitted the devil and thus evaded hellish consequences. Far from acting as a permanent, binding agreement, the demonic pact was regarded as notoriously unreliable, the terms still negotiable for both parties involved even after it has been formed. Its effectiveness is thus determined by the superiority of the command wielded by either party; human and devil must compete in a battle of wills to outwit or surpass the demands of the other. Faustus has clearly not done enough research into the matter.

Faustus’s efforts to overcome or out-master the devil are thus rendered futile in comparison to the successful efforts made by his fictional contemporaries. While *John of Bordeaux* is an obscure play and we know very little about its actual performance, the scenario of Bacon out-mastering the devil was by no means obscure. As this chapter has demonstrated, the story of the human outwitting the devil was well-known in early modern popular culture. Such stories provide a new insight into the pact Faustus’s makes with Mephistopheles. In *Faustus*, the possibility for redemption is always there, not because the play offers a clear conclusion on the free will versus predestination question, but because the devil only has the power to claim Faustus’s soul if Faustus believes him and fails to

resist. In *John of Bordeaux*, Friar Bacon exerts his authority over almost everybody he meets, exhibiting an intellectual superiority achieved through learning and natural skill. He masters the scholars, the powerful Vandermast, and even the Turkish Emperor. Given the early modern stage's emphasis on the similarities between devils and humans, and the natural limitations that governed how the latter could function in the material world, it is therefore no surprise that Bacon can also out-master the devil.

CHAPTER FOUR

Is the Devil Really an Ass?

Hellish Environments and the Body of the Demon in *The Devil is an Ass*

While many early modern devil dramas exhibit a rather understandable concern with what a condemned human might find in hell, the advent of individualised ‘human’ devils such as Mephistopheles make one naturally curious about the reverse situation: what concerns might a devil have upon ascending to earth? Both *Faustus* and *Friar Bacon* hint that this experience, from the devil’s perspective, is not especially enjoyable. A cluster of plays emerging in the early seventeenth century elaborate on this theme, dramatising the human-devil relationship from a devil’s point of view. The most sophisticated of these, Jonson’s 1616 comedy *The Devil is an Ass*, focuses more on the ‘naturalism’ of the devil rather than the ‘supernaturalism’ of the human, presenting a convergence of human and demonic beings in quite a different way to the earlier devil dramas. *The Devil is an Ass*, while deeply satirical, is nevertheless demonologically sound, exploring the frustrating experiences of a demon unable to transcend the natural limits of magic during his time on earth. As discussed in the previous chapter, mastery of humans depended on the individual power and ability of a demon and, as the title indicates, Jonson’s demon Pug is particularly asinine, restricted not only by the laws of nature but also by a limited intellect. In *The Devil is an Ass*, the demon is no match for his human counterparts.

This chapter considers the devil’s experience of earth, highlighting the very human side of the minor demons who, in their ineptitude, become figures of sympathy on the early modern stage. The play emphasises an overlap between hell and earth in the characterisation of their respective inhabitants; the devil displays many very human qualities and is worthy of audience attention as much as the human is devilish and worthy of condemnation. As the title suggests, the devil here is less than human rather than more than human. In turn, the human capacity for evil surpasses that of the devil, thus making his presence on earth redundant. This chapter also explores the material aspects of demonic experience, the body of the demon, and the restrictions imposed by ‘borrowing’ human form. The frequent crossovers between earth and hell, and the similarities between

environment and character as depicted in plays emphasising the devil's perspective, have surprising spatial consequences. Due to both the limits of demonic powers and the limits of staging, hell is, geographically speaking, both close by and easily accessible on the early modern stage.

The Devil's Mission to Earth

While Jonson's employment of the vice Iniquity alludes to the framework of early morality plays and Elizabethan interludes, *The Devil is an Ass* draws from more recent influences. Thomas Dekker's *If this be not a Good Play, the Devil is in it* (1611) and the anonymous *Grim the Collier of Croydon* (c.1600) also feature demons ascending from hell to earth in disguise in order to fulfill certain tasks, either given to them by Satan or other highly ranked demons, or, like Pug, a self-imposed mission to enlarge the kingdom of hell.¹ *Good Play* dramatises the exploits of three devils, Shacklesoule, Ruffman, and Lurchall, and their experiences on earth as they attempt to corrupt three very different human environments. These devils, like Mephistopheles, have unique names that suggest distinct individual character. Based on Machiavelli's 1545 novella *Belphagor Archidiavolo*, *Grim the Collier of Croydon* opens with a 'conclave' of devils who send Belphagor, disguised as Spanish doctor 'Castiliano', to determine if women really were the cause of all the strife and unhappiness in the world. Jonson was evidently familiar with an Italian version of the text, since that *Devil is an Ass* alludes to Machiavelli's *Belphagor Archidiavolo* itself.² *The Devil is an Ass* also references the

¹ Probably written by William Haughton. Henslowe paid Haughton for a play entitled *The Devil and his Dam* in May 1600. Carol Chillington Rutter (ed), *Documents of the Rose Playhouse*, Revised Edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.186. F. G. Fleay identified Haughton's play as *Grim the Collier of Croydon* (first printed in 1662 as *Grim the Collier of Croydon; Or, The Devil and his Dame: With The Devil and Saint Dunstan*) in 1891. Frederick G. Fleay, *Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama 1559–1642* vol. 1 (London: Reeves & Turner, 1891), p.273. W. M. Baillie confirms "there is good reason to accept the suggestion of [Fleay]", *A Choice Ternary of English Plays: Gratiae Theatrales (1662)*, (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984), p.174.

² Baillie notes that Haughton took the story directly from the Italian version, first published in England in 1549 and reprinted by John Wolfe in 1588, p. 186. Machiavelli's *Belphagor* was first published in English in 1647 under the title *The Divell a married man. Or The Divell hath met his match*, (London, 1647). A more substantial translation was published with the novels of Francisco de Quevedo in 1671. Francisco de Quevedo, *The novels of Dom Francisco de Quevedo Villegas, knight of the order of St. James Faithfully Englished. Whereunto is added, The Marriage of Belphegor, an Italian novel. Translated from Machiavel* (London, 1671). Several translations have since been published. All quotations from Machiavelli's *Belphagor* are taken from the 1954 edition unless stated otherwise. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Belphagor*, trans. Thomas Roscoe (London: Rodale Press, 1954).

Friar Rush myths, on which Dekker's play is based.¹ The Friar Rush story, of a devil disguised as a monk in order to corrupt the inhabitants of an austere monastery, was a popular motif in early modern European literature, first appearing in Central Europe in the Middle Ages. In 1620 an English translation was printed which documented the exploits of the demon who disguises himself as Friar Rush.² As well as Dekker's play, Friar Rush was probably the protagonist in the missing drama *Friar Rush and the Proud Woman of Antwerp* (1602) by Day and Haughton which Henslowe refers to in 1601-2.³ Between 1568-9, "a boke intituled ffreer Russhe" was entered in the Stationers' Register.⁴ All four of these surviving texts depict the exploits of devils on earth and their failures and successes in adjusting to a human world full of its own devices, corruption, and tortures. The action of each is framed by a beginning and ending in hell, usually with an unfavourable comparison between the two environments. While these plays are comedies, this setting and approach offers a particularly telling insight into human-demon relationships, emphasising the very human qualities of the devils depicted by directing audience sympathies towards the devils rather than the humans.

The devil's mission to earth was clearly a subject of interest and popularity in the early modern theatre. The stories of Pug, Belphegor, and Dekker's Shacklesoule, Ruffman, and Lurchall reveal that devils are not always willing to venture into the human world. Both *Grim the Collier's* Belphegor, and the three devils in *Good Play* do not choose to visit earth. They are ordered to do so by Pluto, who serves as potentate of an underworld that is a hybrid of Hades and Hell.⁵ As in Machiavelli's novella, Belphegor is chosen by a "conclave" of devils to undertake a mission to assess the level of malice of dominant females.⁶ In Dekker's play, Shacklesoule is sent to corrupt a monastery, Ruffman to a royal court, and

¹ Dekker was especially interested in devils. He mostly likely penned the witch-plot in the coauthored *Witch of Edmonton* and wrote several pamphlets featuring infernal characters including *Newes from Hell* in 1606. "Newes from Hell" in *The Non-Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, 5 vols., ed. Alexander B. Grosart (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), vol. 2.

² *The Historie of Frier Rush [...]*, (London, 1620). The story was reprinted in 1626, 1629, and 1659. *The Historie* begins, like *Belphegor*, with a council of devils, and also features a demon named Belphegor who was "Prince of Gluttony", sig.A2.

³ "Friar Rush and the Proud Woman of Antwerp", *Lost Plays Database*, ed. Christopher Matusiak: http://www.lostplays.org/index.php/Friar_Rush_and_the_Proud_Woman_of_Antwerp [Accessed 23 September 2013].

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Clearly a Lucifer figure

⁶ The 'conclave' of devils also appears in *Paradise Lost*: "In the close recess and secret conclave sat / a thousand demigods on golden seats" (Book I, l.795-97).

Lurchall to an urban environment, again selected by their superiors rather than opting to go of their own free will. Their tasks are laid out for them and they comply. Similarly, Mephistopheles claims to be working for Lucifer, not Faustus, and needs his permission before advancing his relationship with the impatient magician: “I am a servant to great Lucifer / And may not follow thee without his leave. / No more than he commands must we perform” (I.iii.41-3). The usual mission for devils is to gain a soul. Ruffman confirms this in *Good Play*: “dread king of ghosts, weele plye our thrift so well, / Thou shalt be forc’d to enlarge thy jayle of hell” (I.ii.135-6).¹ The diabolic missions of Dekker’s play are created to remedy the slow traffic from earth to hell. What is unusual for Pug’s mission is that he wants to go of his own accord, even though Satan points out he has neither the skill nor the intellect to implement any significant impact on earth. The demon Pug is Jonson’s foolish overreacher, tempted into a Mephistophelean pact in order to satisfy his curiosity and ambition to foster a human-devil partnership and to gain a human soul for himself.

The Devil is an Ass is therefore not merely an inversion of the Faustian theme. It also develops and satirises the often comical stories of demonic interaction with human characters and their vices. The play speaks to other devil plays, mentioning Dekker’s *Good Play* and the anonymous *Merry Devil of Edmonton* in the prologue, the latter a “dear delight”, the former presented as an excuse for not meeting audience expectations: “If this play do not like, the devil is in’t” (Prologue.22, 26). These lines demonstrate how devil dramas built on each other and were written in response to popular demand for the genre. *Friar Bacon*, *John of Bordeaux*, and *The Witch of Edmonton* all follow the *Faustus* text closely. Although projecting a more sceptical view of magic in general, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and the 1619 play *The Two Merry Milkmaids* both expressly refer to Mephistopheles and the Faustian model too, demonstrating the widespread and enduring popularity of Marlowe’s play and the efforts made by other playwrights to capitalise on the appetite for theatrical demons. *The Two Merry Milkmaids*, which includes a faked conjuration like *The Devil is an Ass*, is of particular interest because it draws heavily from Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft* and, like

¹ Thomas Dekker, “If this be not a Good Play, the Devil is in It”, *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). All subsequent references are to this edition.

Jonson's play, links the theatrical experience with the devil's magic.¹ The Prologue boasts "Tis a fine play: for we haue in't a coniuurer, a Deuill, And a Clowne too" but warns "perhaps vn wisely we may faile, of wanting squibs and crackers at their taile" (Prologue. 14-18).² Indeed, Traister goes so far as to suggest that the play is "notable only for its obvious attempt to capitalise on all the formulas that had produced successful plays in the past".³ Fitzdottrel, an avid theatregoer who never misses a new performance, "haunting the Globes and Mermaids!" as Meercraft observes, is in fact going to see a play entitled 'The Devil is an Ass' on the day he is visited by Pug (III.iii.25-6). The pairing of Fitzdottrel and Pug also stands in opposition to the Faustian relationship, for while Mephistopheles and Faustus are both in possession of substantial intellect, Pug and Fitzdottrel are both foolish and fail to understand each other, or even connect with each other as man and devil. Satan has no interest in Fitzdottrel, who has tried several times to summon the devil. Otherwise, he would have sent his best – not his most foolish – minion suggesting, as Mephistopheles does, that devils are only interested in enlarging Satan's kingdom with particularly powerful souls.

In this trio of devil plays, the mission to earth is made into a formalised agreement – a sort of inverted Faustian pact – before the devils embark. In Machiavelli's version, Belphagor must make a vow: "[a]t the same time he took an oath to observe the tenor of his instructions, as they had been drawn up with all due solemnity and ceremony for the purpose of his mission".⁴ He is given strict conditions pertaining to his conduct and power while visiting earth. In *Grim the Collier*, Belphagor, disguised as a Spanish physician, must find a wife and remain married to her for twelve months.⁵ Pug too is given firm instructions. Satan indicates that he is entering into a binding agreement:

Only thus more I bind you
To serve the first man that you meet; and him
[...]
But once engaged, there you must stay and fix (I.i.151-2,155).

¹ Pierre Kapitaniak, "The Devil Turned Go-Between: False Conjurations on the Jacobean Stage", *The Devil in Society in Premodern Europe*, eds. Richard Raiswell with Peter Dendle (Toronto: CRRS, 2012), p.360.

² J. C. *The Two Merry Milkmaids*, ed. G. Harold Metz (New York: Garland Pub, 1979). All references are to this edition.

³ Traister, p.54.

⁴ Machiavelli, p.13.

⁵ In the original *Belphagor* it is ten years.

This proves to be a problem for the demonic visitors to earth. All five of these devils long to break their contracts with hell before they are due to expire. In *Grim the Collier*, Belphagor is accompanied by 'Puck', who takes the name 'Akercock' in the human world, and this character finds the human experience particularly trying, soon expressing a longing to return to hell before his time has expired, attempting to find a way out of the oaths sworn in order to get to earth in the first place: "What shall I do? To hell I dare not go! / Until my Master's Twelve months be expired" (III.ii.16-17).¹ Pug utters a similar sentiment: "O call me home again, dear chief" and "'Twould be a refreshing / For me to be i'the fire again, from hence" (V.ii.1,16-17). Belphagor/Castiliano similarly expresses relief as the end of his term draws nearer:

Now I remember I have quite out-run
My time prefixt to dwell upon this earth;
Yet Akercock is absent, where is he:
Oh I am glad I am so well near rid
Of my Earth's plague, and my lascivious dame (IV.iii.53-57).

This again illustrates the hierarchical, orderly nature of hell, the civilised manner in which the devils meet and discuss their presence on earth. This is particularly apparent in Machiavelli's *Belphagor*: "[i]t was then resolved that the conclave of infernal princes should form a committee of inquiry, and should adopt such measures as might be deemed most advisable by the court in order to discover the truth or falsehood of the calumnies which they heard".² Perhaps unsurprisingly, hell is frustratingly bureaucratic.

The unwillingness of the other demons to volunteer to go to earth implies that dwelling in the world of humans comes at a price. The protagonist of *Belphagor* is not at all keen to undertake the task, and nor are any of the other devils present:

[n]o one, however, being ambitious of undertaking such a task, it was resolved to leave the affair to chance. The lot fell upon the arch-devil Belphagor, who, previous to the Fall, had enjoyed the rank of archangel in a higher world. Though he received his commission with a very ill grace, he nevertheless felt himself constrained by Pluto's imperial mandate, and prepared to execute whatever had been determined upon in council.³

¹ I.T., "Grim the Collier of Croydon; or, The Devil and his Dame, with The Devil and Saint Dunstan", *A Choice Ternary of English Plays: Gratiae Theatrales* (1662), ed. William M. Baillie (Binghampton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984). All subsequent references are to this edition.

² Machiavelli, p.10.

³ Machiavelli, pp.12-13.

Belphagor is right to dread the mission, for all of these texts suggest that the time a devil spends on earth is particularly trying. In fact, it is frequently referred to as akin to a human experiencing hell. One of the conditions of Pug's trip, and the trio of demons in *Good Play* as well as *Grim's* Belphagor is that they must be limited in the same way that humans too are limited. They are required to take on the full human experience, their powers limited and their human qualities emphasised by the fact that they are treated as entirely human, particularly for the latter two parties who purport to travel incognito. In *Belphagor*, there is a further condition to the devil:

during the said ten years he should be subject to all kinds of miseries and disasters, like the rest of mankind, such as poverty, prisons, and diseases into which men are apt to fall, unless, indeed, he could contrive them by his own skill and ingenuity to avoid them.¹

The words 'skill' and 'ingenuity' here suggest they must rely on natural intelligence and cunning, not supernatural ability, demonstrating Clark's point that devils were 'superhuman' but not 'supernatural'.² Pug too is restricted to the power and form of man:

...become subject
To all impressions of the flesh you take
So far as human frailty (I.i.137-140).

as is *Grim's* Belphagor:

Thou shalt be subject unto human chance
So far as common wit cannot relieve thee;
[...]
But whatsoever happens in that time,
Look not from us for succour or relief;
This shalt thou do, and when the time's expired,
Bring word to us what thou hast seen and done (I.i.130-137).

Friar Rush is similarly "put in rayment like an earthly creature," imprisoned in the body of a dead man.³ These devils seem even more limited than Mephistopheles and Bacon's Belcephon and Astaroth, recalling Agrippa's observation that demonic ability ranged hugely, and Scot's "Inventory of demons" which outlines that different demons have different abilities and appeal to different human qualities and aspirations.⁴ In these plays, the mission to earth serves as a demonic rite of passage for these reluctant travellers. All of

¹ Machiavelli, p.13.

² Clark, p.162.

³ *The Historie of Friar Rush*, sig.A2.

⁴ Scot, pp.217-225.

the devils are instructed to abide by the natural laws of the material world.

Demonologically speaking, they have no other option. This is the devil's end of the Faustian bargain: something must be lost or sacrificed in order to gain a soul.

Earlier plays also reveal the devil's time on earth to be particularly trying, with some of the more skilful and successful devils complaining about their time abroad. When summoned by Robin and Rafe in *Faustus*, Mephistopheles grumbles at being called away from his more engaging mission of trying to entice cleverer, worthier souls into the demonic ways: "How am I vexed with these villains' charms! / From Constantinople am I hither come / Only for pleasure of these damned slaves" (III.ii.32-4). In the penultimate scene of *Friar Bacon*, the devil delivers a long monologue, voicing his dissatisfaction at being in such high demand from humans seeking his demonic skills:

How restless are the ghosts of hellish spirits
 When every charmer with his magic spells
 Calls us from nine-fold trenched Phlegiton
 To scud and over-scour the earth in post
 Upon the speedy wings of swiftest wings (xv.1-5).

These devils clearly have better things to do with their time. The foolish demons of *The Devil is an Ass* and *Grim the Collier* dread returning to hell having failed in their missions, as Pug states:

To Newgate brought? How is the name of Devil
 Discredited in me! What a lost fiend
 Shall I be on return! My chief will roar
 In triumph, now that I have been on earth
 A day, and done no noted thing, but brought
 That body back here was hanged out this morning. (V.vi.3-8).

Yet after a short time on earth, hell becomes a far more attractive prospect, as Pug reiterates throughout the play. As discussed in the previous chapter, pact or no pact, a devil has to really work at collecting human souls in order to please his hellish master. In his last scene, Pug lists all the things we would rather do for Satan than spending time in London:

put me
 To yoking foxes, milking of he-goats,
 Pounding of water in mortar, laving
 The sea dry with a nutshell, gathering all
 The leaves are fallen this autumn, drawing farts
 Out of dead bodies, making ropes of sand,
 Catching the winds together in a net,
 Must'ring of ants, and numbering atoms (V.ii.1-8)

Any of these actions would be preferable, as “There is no hell / To a lady of fashion. All your tortures there / Are pastimes to it” (V.ii.14-16). Earlier he declares “all my days in Hell were holy-days to this!” (I.iv.223). These impossible tasks are infinitely more satisfying than trying to gain recognition as a devil among humans who possess greater cunning and malicious intent. In a perfect inversion of Christian practice, Pug prays to his master to relieve him: “*The Devil Prays*. Pug: O Chief, call me to Hell again, and free me” (I.iv.s.d). Here, again, the stage emphasises the idea outlined in orthodox demonology that the practices associated with hell are merely inverted or ‘bastardised’ Christian practice, that witchcraft and devilry “had all the appearance of a proper religion but in reality it was religion perverted”.¹ Like Miles in *Friar Bacon*, rather than being dragged back to hell reluctantly, Pug jumps at the chance to return, carried by Iniquity. In *Grim the Collier*, Belphagor admits “Hell, I salute thee, now I feel my self / Rid of a thousand torments; O vile Earth, / Worse for us devils, then Hell it self for men!” (V.iii.6-8). Most of these demons end up serving two masters: the more highly ranked devils who sent them, and the humans who dominate, outwit, beat, and cuckold them into realising that earth is far more trying, and humans far cleverer than anticipated. In fact devils learn from humans, not the other way around, as Pug exclaims: “You talk of a university! Why, Hell is / A grammar school to this!” (IV.iv.170-1).

Locating Hell

The constant switching between earth and hell also serves to set human and demon quite literally on the same level, for the traditional symbolism of the stage as the world of living humans with hell accessed through the trap door below is not always adhered to in the depiction of the traffic between earth and hell. As Poole asserts, “[t]o make an utterly obvious but crucial point: it is in the theater that we find physical, three-dimensional bodies

¹ Clark, p.82. Clark specifies that “It was in this spirit that early modern Europeans were able to read off all their religious orthodoxies in parodic disguise. There were nine orders of devils to match the nine order of angels. Each devil was said to have his ‘adversary’ in heaven, in the form of a saint with exactly opposite qualities” p.83. In *Grim the Collier of Croydon*, Haughton sets up the direct devil/saint contrast as St. Dunstan is a character in the play.

moving in actual three-dimensional spaces ... As such, it is an ideal vehicle for expressing both the epistemological and phenomenological complexities of early modern space”.¹ The frequent overlap of devils and humans and the interaction between the two realms is often depicted on the same level, and the staged physical space, the indistinction of boundaries between earth and hell suggests that humans and devils are, in fact, equal, subject to the same natural laws and restrictions. As Mephistopheles exclaims to Faustus “Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it” and refuses to give Faustus a satisfactory answer about its whereabouts (I.iii.77). Mephistopheles is considerably less coy than he is about it than the location and workings of heaven, however. Thomas Nashe’s *Pierce Penilesse his supplication to the diuell* also describes hell spilling out into earth: “Hel (which at the beginning was but an obscure uillage) is now become a huge Cittie, whereunto all Countries are tributary”; hell is merely downhill rather than a distant ‘below’.² Indeed, in *Devil is an Ass* and the group of plays from which it emerged, hell is treated more like a foreign country than a torturous inferno. The lack of a strict demarcation between the two emphasises Jonson’s point that Jacobean London is no less corrupt and wicked than hell itself. As Peter Happé points out in the Revels introduction to the play, “the interrelationship of space between hell and London is thematically important and they must be shown as indivisible”.³ When Fitzdottrel is first shown to Pug by Lucifer in the opening scene to the play, the stage directions call for it to be on the same level rather than coming from above or below: “He shows Fitzdottrel to him, coming forth”, suggesting that humans and demons are operating on the same physical plane (I.i.s.d).

Similarly, *Grim the Collier* begins with humans and devils operating on the same level. St. Dunstan falls asleep, and the discovery space is opened to reveal Pluto and his assembly of devils ready to welcome Malbecco, the most recent arrival to this part-classical, part-Christian afterlife. The devils are hidden, but in the same physical space: “*A Place being provided for the Devils, Consistory, enter St Dunstan with his Beads, book, and Crosier staff &c. and then: He Layeth him down to sleep; Lightning and Thunder; the Curtains drawn, on a sudden Pluto, Minos, AEacus, Rhadamantus set in Counsell, before them Malbecco his Ghost guarded with*

¹ Poole, p.19.

² Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse his supplication to the diuell* (London, 1592), sig.B3.

³ Happé, p.19.

Furies” (I.i.s.d). The staging of *Faustus* indicates a more orthodox spatial representation of earth’s relationship to hell, with Mephistopheles appearing from below as depicted in the famous woodcut on the later printed versions of the play. Henslowe’s infamous list of properties of the Rose theatre does include “1 hellmought” although in most situations, the use of it seems too impractical.¹ While the three devilish emissaries ‘come up’ in Dekker’s play when they first appear, this is merely ascending to the level on which Pluto and Charon are already existing, a deeper dimension to hell rather than rising up to earth itself. If hell is indeed to be found on this lateral plane, while heaven remains above, then one den of iniquity is comparable to the other. This shared physical space reinforces the idea that hell’s denizens are subject to the same natural laws and respond to social environments in the same way.

The proximity of hell is further reinforced by the fact that devils have to physically move humans there. In both *Faustus* and Barnes’s *The Devil’s Charter*, the ill-fated pact-makers are both dragged to hell, yet their bodies (in the B-text of *Faustus*, at least) remain behind. This poses an intriguing staging conundrum. How does one remove a devil from a human body on stage? *The Devil is an Ass* includes a similar scenario. In Pug’s final scene he returns to hell, but must leave his borrowed human cadaver behind. Rather than being located above the trap door, it is more likely that the ‘hellmought’ was located in the curtains concealing the discovery space, where the devils of *Grim the Collier* first appear, indicating that hell – or at least the entrance to it – is located on a very human level and is readily accessible. In the B-text, the stage directions specify that “Hell is discovered” (B-V.ii.s.d). When Alexander Borgia faces his doom earlier than expected, the devil is sitting in the discovery space, decked out in Borgia’s papal glory: “ALEXANDER draweth the curtain of his study where he discovereth the DEVIL sitting in his pontificals: (Scaena Ultima, s.d).² When Pug and Iniquity depart earth for hell, Satan blasts a hole in the prison wall, not the floor. The spacing of hell is therefore far more sophisticated than the simple above and below that is often implied and, as Mephistopheles suggests: “Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed /In one self place” (II.i.124).

¹ Reproduced in Rutter, p.134.

² Barnabe Barnes, *The Devil’s Charter*, ed. Nick de Somogyi, Globe Quartos (New York: Routledge, 1999). All subsequent references are to this edition.

Conjuring Devils

The early modern stage does, however, almost always adhere to the natural law that humans carried or dragged to hell, either across or down, could not reemerge.¹ While devils could move freely (if reluctantly) between the two spaces, for humans it was a one-way ticket. Underlying the satirical, comedic tone of Jonson's play is the same, rational understanding that governs the workings of the devil in the material world featured in the more serious theatrical treatments of the subject. For a play with a supernatural title, there is surprising little magical display, and even less magic that really works. There are the pyrotechnics at Newgate when Satan appears at the end, but this is the work of Satan, not Pug. The other magic is lacklustre and ineffective; in fact it is, for the most part, fake. Jonson's magic nevertheless addresses three of the most contested issues of demonic magic, how they worked, and whether or not they could be achieved at all: demonic possession; conjuration; and the various forms taken by the devil when visiting the material world. *The Devil is an Ass* shows under what circumstances these things are made possible. While the demonic possession and conjurations are faked and ineffective, the latter is made very real in the play, with the body of the devil a chief concern for it dictates how Pug is received in the human world. In fact, the form he takes becomes Pug's problem, for he blends in a little too well. The lack of effective magic in the play does not, however, wholly deny its existence; it is instead making a pointed comment about the inefficacy of both Pug as the supernatural power, and Fitzdottrel as his equally incompetent human counterpart. Fitzdottrel's problem is that he is too concerned with the show, and not the substance, of demonic magic, so when the devil appears to him, in substance, he fails to recognise the infernal origins of his strange servant. Jonson just stops short of denying the supernatural altogether, for Pug's very existence on earth is a supernatural feat, an act of demonic magic in itself: the possession of a dead body. This is paradoxically the reason why he is not acknowledged as the devil, and not able to inflict any hellish impact on earth.

¹ Although Friar Bacon claims he has "dived into hell" (xi.7).

Fitzdottrel's attempt at conjuring the devil is the first magical incident presented in Jonson's play. He has clearly been doing some sort of Faustian research, for he lists some of the reputed practitioners in London and rattles off a long list of props, including crystals, rings, virgin parchment, a dead man's skull, ravens' wings, lights, and the pentacles and characters mentioned by Faustus, the magical signs and symbols which so excite his imagination. Like Faustus, Fitzdottrel locates magic erroneously within ritual and material objects. Fitzdottrel is as eager as Faustus; very eager, as the stage directions indicate: "he expresses longing to see the devil" (II.ii.s.d). The conjuration, however, is a non-event. While it does actually produce the desired effect – Pug does appear – the scene lacks the dramatic terror and impact of Mephistopheles's first appearance because Lucifer has already informed Pug of Fitzdottrel's intentions and makes it clear the ritual is ineffective. Fitzdottrel is hoping for a spectacular entrance. Instead, as Richard Dutton observes, "the joke is that [Fitzdottrel's] entire view of devils has been formed by watching plays".¹ He does not seem to have been following them very carefully, however, for had he been paying attention to *Faustus*, he would know that Mephistopheles instantly disregards Faustus's ritualised summoning of him, claiming it was the words alone:

That was the cause, but yet *per accidens*.
 For when we hear one rack the name of God,
 Abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ,
 We fly in hope to get his glorious soul (I.iii.47-50).

The Two Merry Milkmaids exposes the ineffectiveness of conjurations in a rather more humorous circumstances. Continuing with the Sorcerer's apprentice theme of *Friar Bacon*, *Faustus*, and *John of Bordeaux*, in *Two Merry Milkmaids*, Wittenberg student Bernard, thinking his master away, borrows a magic book and attempts to summon a devil to help him win a woman's heart, unaware that the 'Asmody' who materialises is his master disguised as a devil. Bernard's ritual in the opening scene of the play calls on a magic that, like Faustus's, is drawn from classical rather than Christian sources. Bernard's incantation is actually

¹ Richard Dutton, "Jonson's Satiric Styles", *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson* eds. Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.67.

modelled on Medea's invocation in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, "witchcraft's great set-piece" on the early modern stage:¹

Inchantments plucke out of the Skie
 The Moone, though she be plac't on hie.
 Dame Circes, with her Charmes so fine.
 Vlysses Mates did turne to Swine:
 The Snakes with Charme is burst in twaine,
 In Medowes where shee doth remaine.
 And here againe,
 Shee plucks each Starre out of his seat,
 And turneth backe the raging Waues;
 With Charmes she makes the Earth to sweat,
 And rayseth Soules out of their Graues:
 She burnes mens bones as with a fire,
 And pulleth downe the Lights of Heauen,
 And makes it snow at her desire,
 Euen in the midst of Summer season (i.1-23).

Bernard then reads out a description of the demon:

Asmody; a great King, strong and mightie, he is seene with three heads;
 whereof the first is like a Bull, the se|cond a Man, the third a Ram: he
 hath a Serpents tayle, he belceth Flames out of his Mouth, he sitteth on
 an Infernall Dragon, he carryeth a Lance and a Flag in his hand, he goeth
 before others which are vnder the power of Amaymon, he giueth the
 Ring of Vertues, he teacheth Geometry, Arithmetick, Astronomie; to all
 demaunds he answereth fully and truely: he maketh a man inuisible (i.
 45-54).

This all seems very comprehensive, more scholarly than Fitzdottrel's conjuration and more well-researched and coherent than Faustus's. However, these esoteric mutterings are actually lifted from Reginald Scot. Bernard is not reading a grimoire, but the thoroughly sceptical *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Furthermore, he has failed to grasp the point of the entire book, having evidently missed Scot's critique of Jean Bodin a few pages earlier for using Ovid as a valid demonological resource.² However, the audience is not initially aware that the first ritual is false unless they too have been reading Scot. Landoff's exposure of the fake ritual is not immediate like Mephistopheles's exposure of Faustus's complicated ritual, but a little later on, meaning that the audience is not immediately aware of the difference between a devil and a human dressed as a devil: "despite the stage direction ('Enter

¹ Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.252. The invocation surfaces in *The Tempest*, *Friar Bacon*, Middleton's *The Witch*, Heywood's *The Brazen Age*, Jonson's *The Masque of Queens* and Lyly's *Endymion*. This passage will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

² These passages are quoted directly from Scot. The Medea passage is reproduced several times in *Discoverie of Witchcraft* in different translations (see pp.127-130, 143). Asmody is mentioned in the 'Inventory' of demons, p.220; Scot, p.57.

Landoff his tutor like a spirit'), no one in the theatre can tell that the devil Asmody is really Landoff disguised until Landoff announces the fact".¹ After Bernard has departed, Landoff announces that his devil disguise is intended to help his unhappy student find love. Like Peter Fabel in *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, Landoff wants to cure his student's melancholy through wholly human methods.² Here the difference between devil and human doesn't seem particularly important. Regardless, like *Faustus* and *The Devil is an Ass*, *The Two Merry Milkmaids* exposes the discrepancy between false human ideas about the supernatural and the reality of the devil's actual magic. In *The Devil's Charter*, the conjuration scene is not particularly effective either. Despite its status as "perhaps the most elaborate conjuration in Jacobean drama" the audience has already seen Borgia summon the devil in a significantly less dramatic and more straightforward way, by simply calling his name.³

The Body of the Demon

The title of Jonson's play is clearly referring to 'ass' in the metaphorical sense, meaning 'fool'. Yet it prompts a discussion on the real possibility of devils descending into a base, lower-than-human form literally as well as figuratively speaking, for the form Pug takes in the world of Jonson's play is a key component of both his success at blending in amongst living humans, and his failure to inflict any evil.⁴ The joke is not just that Fitzdottrel has a false impression of devils from the theatre, but that he has not been paying the slightest bit of attention to the workings of the devils, only the insubstantial displays they produce. Like Bernard's misreading of Scot, Fitzdottrel has completely missed the point. Had Pug been following plays such as *Friar Bacon*, *Faustus*, *Grim the Collier*, and *Good Play*, he would know that one of the few real powers ascribed to devils was their transformative abilities, the power to adopt the disguise of human or animal. Belphegor, Shacklesoule, Ruffman, and Lurchall all appear, at some stage in each play, in human form.

¹ Cox, p.163.

² As discussed in the Introduction, *Friar Bacon*, *John of Bordeaux* and *Endymion* all make it clear that making people fall in love is beyond the skill of humans and devils alike.

³ Traister, p.59. The complicated ritual in *The Devil's Charter* is in fact lifted straight from Peter of Abano's *Heptameron*, printed with the infamous *Fourth Book of Agrippa* in England in 1655 but circulated in manuscript form before then.

⁴ And also, of course, referring to the half-animal pagan gods who were reclassified as 'demons'.

Fitzdottrel has clearly not grasped the transformative nature and qualities of devils. The natural form of the devil, as he appears on the stage, is a beastly shape, the grotesque assemblage of animal parts of medieval illustrations that hark back to the references to ‘the Beast’ in the bible, and the frequent references to the devil as an animal. The account of the “shag-haired” devils in *Faustus* indicated that the lesser devils retain their animalistic characteristics, while *Grim the Collier* could be renamed ‘how the devil got his horns’, for Belphagor develops horns after he is cuckolded by his wife. At the conclusion of the play, Pluto decrees that all devils shall have horns:

This for thy service I will grant thee freely,
All devils shall, as thou dost like horns wear,
And none shall scorn *Belphegor’s* arms to bear (V.iii.64-66).

The demonic shapes of which Fitzdottrel is thinking are of the devilish representations of the older interludes, either the ‘natural’ beastly state, or a devil thinly disguised as a human, unable to conceal the horns and cloven feet.¹ This incarnation, which appears in the illustrations in the *Friar Rush* book, is also mentioned in the early play *Gammer Gurton’s Needle* (c.1553), where a character is likened to a devil:

... saw ye neuer Fryer Rushe
Painted on a cloth, with a side long coves tayle:
And crooked clouen feete and many a hoked nayle?
For al the world (if I shuld iudg) chould reckon him his brother
Loke euen what face Frier Rush had, the deuil had such another (II.i.18-22).²

As noted in the Introduction, Fitzdottrel’s first instinct, on seeing Pug, is to examine his feet: “He looks and surveys his feet, over and over” (I.ii.s.d). He refuses to accept Pug’s claim to be a devil as a result of the examination:

Pug: Sir, I am a devil!
Fitz: How!
Pug: A true devil, sir.
Fitz: Nay, now you lie under your favour, friend, for I’ll not quarrel.
I looked o’ your feet afore; you cannot cozen me,
Your shoe’s not cloven, sir, you are whole hoofed (I.ii.25-9).

Fitzdottrel refuses to believe Pug’s story, even when the devil points out that “that’s a popular error deceives many”(I.ii.30). The appearance of a devil with cloven feet on a

¹ See anecdote about Luther’s argument with the devil in Chapter One.

² Mr S., “Gammer Gurton’s Needle” in *Drama of the English Renaissance I: The Tudor Period*, eds. Russell A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1976).

human body features in many folk stories told in demonologies, of a mysterious man appearing at a dance and people realising later on that it is the devil. In these stories, the devil could disguise himself as a human, but never got it quite right; it was usually his cloven, animal, feet that gave him away. This occurs in *The Late Lancashire Witches* when the boy witness relates his encounter with the devil:

I wondered to find him so strong in my hands, seeming but of mine own
age and bigness, till I, looking down, perceived he had clubbed cloven
feet, like ox feet, but his face was as young as mine (5.1.82-85).

In the early modern theatre, it is usually just the foolish characters who recognise the devil for his animalistic rather than human qualities. In *The Birth of Merlin*, the clown realises that the father of Joan's child is the devil, again by his feet. Similarly, in *Faustus* the clown identifies devils by their beast-like characteristics:

There was a he devil and a she-devil. I'll
tell you how you shall know them: all he devils has horns,
and all she devils have clefts and cloven feet (I.iv.55-7).

In *The Devil is an Ass*, Fitzdottrel's first mistake is to not recognise the human form of the devil. He doesn't credit the devil with having a more human side. Fitzdottrel consequently fails to ascribe Pug with any of the superhuman intellect and skill he associates with the devils he wants to appear, thus proving himself equally asinine. While *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and *John of Bordeaux* illustrate that human intellect can equal or even surpass that of a devil, *The Devil is an Ass* highlights the similarities between humans and demons by showing the opposite: a devil can also be as incompetent as a human. In this instance, the audience pities the devil rather than the human. Fitzdottrel's failure to recognise Pug's true identity alienates the human while bringing the vulnerable devil closer to audience sympathies.

As *Faustus* illustrates, the appearance of the devil in the stage world often signals a change of disguise. In the A-text, Mephistopheles's initial horrifying appearance is specified in the B-text as a dragon and confirmed on Henslowe's list of properties as "1 dragon in Fostes".¹ In *The Devil's Charter*, the devil appears first "in most ugly shape" and secondly as "a sergeant with a mace under his girdle" before Borgia deems his form acceptable enough

¹ Reproduced in Rutter, p.137.

to seal a pact, in the form of a pope (Prologue.s.d). In Dekker's 1609 pamphlet "Lanthorne and Candlelight", a reply to a pamphlet of the same name published a year earlier, a devil is ordered to earth by a superior, and instructed to adopt various animal shapes in order to be of the most annoyance in certain situations:

Flye, *Pamersiel* with speede to the great and populous citie in the West:
Winde thy selfe into all shapes: bee a Dogge (to fawne) a Dragon (to
confound) bee a Doue (seeme innocent) bee a Deuill (as thou art) and
shew that thou art a Iorniman to hel.¹

All these stories illustrate how easily – and constantly – the devil can change form in these instances within a very short space of time, destabilising any concrete or lasting image of physical manifestations. In *Good Play*, the trio of traveling devils are sent out in order to change their form, returning in different shapes in a matter of minutes.

The Devil is an Ass reflects accurately the dominant demonological theories regarding why – and how – the devil could so easily adopt different forms, changing the shape of his 'insubstantial body'. The appearance he adopts is one of his own free will, as James I illustrates:

Yet to these capped creatures, he appeares as he pleases, and as he findes meetest for their humours. For even at their publick conventions, he appeares to divers of them in divers forms, as we have found by the difference of their confessions in that point. For he deluding them with vain impressions in the aire, makes himselfe to seeme more terrible to the grosser sorte, that they maie thereby be moued to feare and reverence him the more: And les monstrous and uncoutlike again to the craftier sorte, least otherwaies they might sturre and skunner at his ugliness.²

Gifford confirms this point, stating that "Diuels *can* appeare in a bodily shape" (my emphasis), and as Agrippa explains, this is because of their angelic origins:

all angels in the beginning at their creation had aerial bodies, being formed of the most pure and superior part of the air...these bodies were after the confirmation preserved in good angels, but changed in the evil in their fail, unto the quality of more thick air, that they might be formulated by fire.³

Agrippa states earlier that "admittedly demons are without sex and have no native language but nevertheless, they change their airy body at will into various forms, as when the wind

¹ Thomas Dekker, "Lanthorne and Candlelight", *The Non-Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, 5 vols., ed. Alexander B. Grosart, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), vol. 3, p. 216.

² James I, p.163.

³ Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtil Practices of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers* (London, 1587), sig.E2.; Agrippa, p.518.

blows in the clouds”, which explains the rapid transformations undertaken by Mephistopheles and the first devils in *The Devil's Charter*.¹ Weyer voices a similar explanation, asserting that demons lack: “flesh, blood, spirit, and bone”.² This line of thinking harks back to the writings of both Augustine, and Aquinas and is a sentiment echoed by Milton in *Paradise Lost*:

so soft
 And uncompounded is their essence pure
 Not tied or manacled with joint or limb
 Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,
 Like cumbrous flesh; but in what shape they choose
 Dilated or condensed, bright or obscure (1.423-29).

Agrippa specifies that only certain demons can change form at will, however: “neither can any of the demons turn themselves into all shapes at their pleasure, but to the fiery and airy it is easy so to do, viz, to change themselves unto what shapes their imagination conceives” while others “being concluded in the straits of thick and unactive body cannot make the diversity of shapes, as others can”.³ Pug is clearly the latter sort, and needs to borrow the ready-made body of a human in order to have material effect. The incorporeal ‘body’ of the demonic spirits in the material world is limited. In order to interact with humans in a more physical level, such as the devil/human copulation featured in both *Faustus* and *Lancashire Witches*, devils were required to possess the body of a human being. Lucifer acknowledges this to Pug, advising him that

you must take a body ready-made, Pug,
 I can create you none: not shall you form
 Yourself an airy one, but become subject
 To all impression of the flesh you take
 So far as human frailty (I.i.135-39).

Dog also discusses this with Cuddy Banks in *The Witch of Edmonton*:

The old cadaver of some self-strangled wretch
 We sometimes borrow, and appear human.
 The carcass of some disease-slain strumpet,
 We varnish fresh, and wear as her first beauty (V.i.148-151).

Like Pug’s cutpurse corpse, Dog indicates the bodies possessed by demonic spirits are from the dregs of society, the suicides, criminals and prostitutes. Dog also indicates here that

¹ Agrippa, p.40.

² Weyer, p.85.

³ Agrippa, p.519.

they can alter the physical appearance of the corpses, varnishing them fresh to seek some amusement by seducing libertines into demonic copulation:

Didst never hear? If not, it has been done.
An hot luxurious lecher in his twines,
When he has thought to clip his dalliance,
There has provided been for his embrace
A fine hot flaming Devil in her place (IV.i.152-156).

Possessing a human body also allows for a more convincing disguise, allowing devils to conceal their infernal origins. In *Grim the Collier*, Belphagor, disguised as ‘Castiliano’, adopts a Spanish persona to account for his foreignness.¹ The possessed body cannot die again, although the poisoning of Castiliano coincides with the termination of his time abroad. He is, however, susceptible to a human nervous system, for, like Pug he is made “subject to all impression of the flesh” and certainly feels the painful effects of the poison:

But she hath pepper’d me. I feel it work,
My Teeth are loose, and my Belly swell’d
My Entrails burn with such distemper’d heat,
That well I know my Dame hath poyson’d me (V.ii.14-17).

The body possessed by a demon must also be a dead one, for Lucifer indicates that there is a one spirit per body rule: “This morning / There is a handsome cutpurse hanged at Tyburn, / Whose spirit departed, you may enter his body” (I.i.139-141). This demonic possession of cadavers is the only way in which the demons can give corporeal semblance of raising the dead. As for the spirits of living humans, Dog reveals to Cuddy Banks that this too is impossible: “I have deluded thee for sport to laugh at. The wench thou seekest after thou never spakst with, but a spirit in her form, habit and likeness. Ha, ha!” (V.i.118-121). Prospero’s claim that “graves at my command / Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let ’em forth / By my so potent art” (V.i.48-50), taken from Medea’s speech in *Metamorphoses* “I call up dead men from their graves” refers not to the spirits but to the bodies themselves, presumably as avatars for the various spirits he commands (VII.275).²

The devil can more easily adopt the form of an animal because they have mortal souls and therefore allow room for a demonic occupant in the body as well. As Dog outlines to Cuddy Banks he can take “any shape to blind such silly eyes as thine, but chiefly

¹ According to William Lilly, spirits spoke with an Irish accent. Thomas, p.274.

² *Ovid’s Metamorphoses: The Arthur Golding Translation*, ed. John Frederick Nims, (London ; Collier-Macmillan ; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965). All subsequent references are to this edition.

those coarse creatures, dog or cat, hare, ferret, frog, toad...any poor vermin” (V.i.124-7), and human form – whether possession of a body or taking human form with an ‘incorporeal body’ – wasn’t always achieved easily. Weyer illustrates that

Trithemius informs us, moreover, that the demons prefer to assume the figure of man; but when they do not find the airy matter suitable for this figure, they assume a visible form fashioned by whatever humor of vapor they encounter. Thus they are often seen in the form of a lion, a wolf, a swine, an ass, a hippocentaur, or a man with horns or even with goat’s feet.¹

The animals Weyer lists here are a combination of ‘real’ animals and human-animal hybrids, demonstrating the precarious position between human and beast the devil occupied in the popular imagination. The assumption that devils “prefer to assume the figure of man”, along with Agrippa’s assertion that not all devils are able to transform at will, suggests a natural demonic hierarchy of ability in much the same way that *Faustus* and *Friar Bacon* exhibit a natural human intellectual hierarchy: some humans are able to perform some feats of intellectual magic, some not. The same applies for devils. While the stage devils who take animal form appear to have considerably less power, they are far more successful at avoiding detection. The animal guise adopted by the devil does not have to be whole, either. A pamphlet published in 1584 promises *A true and most dreadful discourse of a woman possessed with the Deuill who in the likenesse of a headless beare fetched her our of her bedd*.² Pug would perhaps have been better suited to adopting an animal rather than human form. His name echoes the diminutive monikers of the animal familiars of witches, domestic devils who double as household pets, like *Lancashire’s* ‘Puckling’ and ‘Puggy’.

Pugs, Pucks, and Demonic Mischief

The name of Jonson’s asinine devil is also redolent of Puck, and like Puck, Pug’s powers seem to be confined to inflicting mischief rather than malice. In the opening scene, Satan speculates that Pug’s “main achievements” will be nothing more than a list of petty annoyances:

¹ Weyer, p.42.

² *A true and most dreadful discourse of a woman possessed with the Deuill who in the likenesse of a headless beare fetched her our of her bedd* (London, 1584).

For what? The laming a poor cow or two?
 Entering a sow to make her cast her farrow?
 Or crossing of a market-woman's mare
 'Twixt this and Tottenham? These were wont to be
 Your main achievements, Pug. You have some plot now
 Upon a tunning of ale, to stale the yeast,
 Or keep the churn so that the butter come not
 Spite o' the housewife's cord or her hot spit?
 Or some good ribibe about Kentish Town,
 Or Hoxton, you would hang now for a witch,
 Because she will not let you play round Robin? (I.i.8-18).

These greatly resembles the roguish pursuits of Shakespeare's merry wanderer of the night,
 who

frights the maidens of the villagery;
 Skim milk, and sometime labour in the quern
 And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
 And sometime make the drink to bear no barm:
 Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm (II.i.35-39).

Puck too lays claim to the metamorphic abilities of devils:

I jest to Oberon and make him smile
 When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
 Neighing in likeness of a filly foal;
 And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
 In very likeness of a roasted crab (II.i.42-50).

and

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
 A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;
 And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
 Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn (III.i.87-93).

Puck's magic also resembles demonic activity in other ways. In order to obtain Oberon's magic flower, he must travel to the distant location to fetch it himself, putting a "girdle round the earth in forty minutes" (II.i.175). Jonson also uses the name 'Puck-Hairy' for a witch's familiar in his unfinished 1640 play *The Sad Shepherd*, and Puck or Robin Goodfellow appears unequivocally demonic in other plays.¹ In both *Grim the Collier of Croydon* and the 1602 play *Wily Beguiled*, Robin Goodfellow is more explicitly connected with hell. In the latter play, he can disguise himself as a more powerful devil: "I'll put me on my great carnation-nose, and wrap me in a rowsing calf-skin suit and come like some hobgoblin, or some devil ascended from the grisly pit of hell", while in *Grim the Collier* he

¹ Ben Jonson, *The Sad Shepherd: or, A Tale of Robin Hood*, Cambridge Plain Texts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929).

emerges from hell with Belphagor to serve the more superior devil during his twelve month stint on earth.¹ Houghton's Robin, or Akercock, as his Belphagor calls him, abandons his master after continual beatings and humiliations from Castiliano's new 'wife'.

He flees to the country to cause his own mischief:

Thus therefore will I live betwixt two shapes,
When as I list in this transform'd disguise,
I'll fright the Country people as they pass,
And sometime turn me to some other form,
And so delude them with fantastick shows:
But woe betide the silly Dairy maids,
For I shall fleet their Cream-bowles night by night (IV.i.10-16).

As William Savage Johnson points out in his 1905 introduction to *The Devil is an Ass*, Jonson had used a character named Pug in his masque *The Satyr* (1603) who seems "evidently equivalent to Puck or Robin Goodfellow" while "Thomas Heywood makes Kobold, Hobgoblin, Robin Goodfellow, and Pug practically identical".² Scot acknowledges the sinister reputation of Puck:

heretofore Robin Goodfellow, and Hobgoblin were as terrible, and also as credible to the people, as hags and witches be now: and in time to come, a witch will be as much derided and contemned and as plainlie perceived, as the illusion and knaverie of Robin Goodfellow.³

Scot also connects Robin Goodfellow to the Friar Rush myth, asserting that "Robin could both eate and drinke, as being a cousening idle frier, or some such roge, that wanted nothing either belonging to lecherie or knaverie, &c" and the jests and pranks of the Friar in the prose source for Dekker's play are for the most part lighthearted and playful, not the more serious crimes of *Good Play's* Shacklesoule.⁴ *Grim the Collier's* Robin Goodfellow is sent to earth as a servant, a lesser demon employed to support the more malicious purposes of a superior devil. In *Good Play* Pluto permits Shacklesoule, Ruffman, and Lurchall to call up other demonic spirits to assist them:

Stay, least you should want helper, at your calling
Any diuels shall come, (*Starch-bound, Tobacco-spawling,*
Vpsbotten, Suckland, Glitterbacke,) or any
Whom you shall neede to imploy (I.i.126-129).

¹ *Wily Beguiled*, ed. W. W. Greg, Malone Society Reprints (London: Oxford University Press, 1912). In the *English Faustbook*, Wagner is assigned a lesser demonic spirits named 'Akercock' too.

² Ben Jonson, *The Devil is an Ass*, ed. William Savage Johnson, (New York, 1905) p. xxvi.

³ Scot, p.131.

⁴ Scot, p.67.

Mephistopheles has the ability to call up demons to both frighten and impress Faustus. Jonson's Pug has no such assistance, apart from the initial help of Iniquity. The name 'Pug' or 'Puck' thus suggests a minor, playful demonic creature who is less concerned with sophisticated rhetoric and enabling human evil than he is with mischievous tricks.

Like the various Robin Goodfellows that populated other devil dramas, Pug's influence on earth turns out to be beneficial for its inhabitants, for the bumbling, incompetent devil works towards good rather than evil, unwittingly thwarting the malicious plots of Meercraft, Wittipol, and their respective accomplices. In *Grim the Collier*, Robin acts as matchmaker to Grim the Collier, and it is left to Puck in *Midsummer Night's Dream* to right the many wrongs of the play and reverse the mischievous magic. As Happé observes, "Jonson's strategy... is to make the Devil foolish and yet to use him to bring things right. The Devil is an ass, but even his asininity is a positive moral value".¹ Consequently, Pug receives a severe dressing-down from Satan in Newgate prison before he is carried back to hell in disgrace. The stage directions read: "The great Devil enters, and unbraids him with all his day's work" (Vvi.s.d). Satan is furious because Pug, by allowing himself to be so cozened and outwitted by the human characters, has allowed them to realise their own potential for evil: "Out upon thee! /The hurt thou'hast done, to let men know their strength, / And that they're able to outdo a devil" (V.vi.56-58). Here Lucifer indicates that the 'idea' of magic and hell held by the likes of Fitzdottrel, Faustus, and *Merry Milkmaids's* Bernard is a key feature of mastering human-devil partnerships. In the first scene of *The Devil is an Ass*, Satan is reluctant to let Pug go for fear of him damaging the popular conceit of hell:

It is not
Everyone's work. The state of Hell must care
Whom it employs in point of reputation
Here about London (I.i.27-30).

These two speeches from Satan suggest that the potent idea of demonic magic and its effects is merely a ruse constructed by the denizens of hell and its ambassadors to earth. Their actual magic is used to maintain the pretence that demonic power is far more impressive and effective, thus aiding them in the mission for souls to enlarge Satan's

¹ Happé, p.5.

kingdom. The same concept is evident in *Faustus*, in the same way that Mephistopheles frequently diverts Faustus away from the limitations of his magic with fireworks, pageants, and other visual delights. Fitzdottrel's conjuration, a desperate appeal to the 'humanity' of devils he wants so badly to see, is ineffective, yet supposed to appear as if it worked, for Pug is shown Fitzdottrel before the foolish human attempts to summon him. Pug thus appears to fulfil the human expectations of demonic magic, yet of course this fails.

Staging Demonic Possession

The Devil is an Ass goes further in suggesting that the potency of some devilish magic is mere artifice by demonstrating how Fitzdottrel's demonic possession is faked. Clark writes that "[o]f all the phenomena associated with demonism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries possession and exorcism seem to have had a special capacity to astonish", and faked possessions were frequently staged, much more so than 'real' possessions.¹

Demonologists themselves were often quite sceptical about whether possessions actually existed. Markedly different from taking possession of a dead body as a host for the spirit, this sort of demonic possession is the attempt by a demon to bewitch the body of a living person. Jans Frans Van Dijkhuizen notes that the number of possession cases in England seems to have increased in England in the sixteenth century.² There were several notable cases of possession in the years leading up to *The Devil is an Ass*, including the much-publicised case of Mary Glover in 1602.³ It is hard to understand a devil's motivation behind this form of human possession, and its exposure as false seems to have been a popular entertainment motif: there are possessions staged in *The Puritan Widow* (1604), *Volpone* (1605), Fletcher's *The Chances* (1617), and even in *Twelfth Night*, most of them fake. Dr Pinch diagnoses Antipholus of Ephesus with demonic possession in *The Comedy of*

¹ Clark, p.407.

² Jans Frans Van Dijkhuizen, *Devil Theatre: Demonic Possession and Exorcism in English Renaissance Drama, 1558-1642* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), p.3.

³ See Edward Jordan's *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother* (London, 1603), Stephen Bradwell's *Mary Glovers Late Woeful Case, Together with her Joyful Deliverance* (London, 1603), and John Swan's *A True and Breife Report of Mary Glovers Vexation, and of Her Deliverance by the Meansas of Fasting and Prayer* (London, 1603).

Errors, and Van Dijkhuizen also cites references to demonic possession in several other plays.¹

In *Demonology*, James I discusses the signs of possession:

But to come to these three symptomes then, whereof I spake, I account the one of them to be the incredible strength of the possessed creature, which will farre exceede the strength of six of the wightest and wodest of any other men so troubled. The next is the boldning vp so far of the patients breast and bellie, with such unnaturall sturring and vehement agitation within them: And such an ironie hardnes of the sinnowes so stiffe bended out, that is were not possible to prick out as it were the skinne of anie other person so far: so mightely works the Deuvil in all the members and senses of his body, he being locallie within the same, suppose of his soule and affectiones thereof, hee haue no more power than any other mans. The last is, the speaking of sundrie languages, which the patient is knowen by them that were acquainte with him neuer to haue learned, and that with an vncouth and hollowe voice, and al the time speaking, a great motion being in his breast then in his mouth.²

In *The Devil is an Ass*, Pug does not – and cannot – possess Fitzdottrel in such a fashion, but advises him how to fake it, informing him that

Now I will so help
Your malice 'gainst these parties: so advance
The business that you have in hand of witchcraft,
And your possession, as myself were in you;
Teach you such tricks, to make your belly swell,
And your eyes turn, to foam, to stare, to gnash
Your teeth together, and to beat yourself,
Laugh loud, and feign six voices (V.v.14-28).

The demonic power is not in the possession itself, but rather in instructing how it can be staged. Jonson's play closely resembles Machiavelli's *Belphagor* in this respect. Belphagor promises to help his human rescuer Matteo acquire a fortune by exorcising demons from possessed young ladies: “[a]nd to convince them that it was really a spirit that possessed her, and that it was no flight of the imagination, he made the young lady talk Latin, hold a philosophical dispute, and reveal the frailties of many of her acquaintances”.³ Devils here prey on credulity rather than outlining the extent of their powers. As in Jonson's play, Belphagor is ‘possessing’ the young women in the way that humans would expect a demon

¹ Van Dijkhuizen writes “representations of a ritual of exorcism, or allusions to demonic possession, can be found in such diverse plays as John Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy* (1628), Thomas Middleton's *The Phoenix* (1603-1604), John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-1614), Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *The Humorous Lieutenant* (1619?), Barnabe Barnes' *The Devil's Charter* (1606-1607), and *Ignoramus* (1615), a comedy by Cambridge scholar George Ruggle”, p.6.

² James I, p.191.

³ Machiavelli, p.23.

to do so in order that it may be instantly recognised, playing to human assumptions about demonic possession as Fitzdottrel is instructed to do.

Like human and demonic metamorphoses, the question of whether demons could really possess humans in this fashion was a highly contested issue. There appears to be just as much written about how incidents of demonic possession are faked as there are stories of believed possession. Even James I admits that: “it is knowen so manie of them to bee counterfite, which wyle Clergie inuentes for confirming their rotten Religion”.¹ In *The Devil is an Ass*, Meercraft makes reference to the case of John Darrel, who allegedly exorcised demons from Thomas Darling, a teenager believed to be possessed, in 1596, only to be exposed as a fraud in a trial overseen by Samuel Harsnett, Bishop of London. Harsnett published his account of the incident, *A Discovery of the Fraudulent Practises of John Darel*, in 1599.² Weyer recounts a particularly disturbing incident of a man faking possession by ingesting mercury to make his belly swell, and includes several chapters on faked possession, questioning whether a devil was capable of possessing a body in this way since there seemed to be no genuine cases.³ Jonson also mentions faking possession in *Volpone*, when Voltore is advised in Act five to

Stop your wind hard, and swell - see, see, see, see!
He vomits crooked pins! His eyes are set
Like a dead hare's, hung in a poulter's shop!
His mouth's running away!...Now 'tis his belly...
'Twill out, 'twill out; stand clear. See, where it flies!
In shape of a blue toad, with a bat's wings! (V.xii.23-29).⁴

Fitzdottrel duly “begins his fit”, altering his voice, causing his belly to swell, foaming at the mouth, spitting fire, and uttering phrases in Greek, Spanish, and French (V.viii.s.d). His actions are instantly thought to be of demonic control by Sir Paul Eitherside, lawyer and

¹ James I, p.191.

² Samuel Harsnett, *A Discovery of the Fraudulent Practises of John Darel* (London, 1599). Harsnett describes the method of faked possession: “Also by drawing and stopping of my wind, my bellie would stir and shew a kind of swelling. The bunch (as they termed it) about my chest, was by the thrusting out of my breast. Likewise, my secret swallowing did make the ende of my windepipe to move, and to shew greater then usually it is: Againe, by moving of my jawes, one bunch was easily made in the side, my cheeke neere mine eare...These motions by practise I would make a very fast, one after another; so as ther might easily seeme to bee running in my body of some thing, from place to place”, pp.213-4.

³ These chapters include “Two Memorable Accounts of Feigned Diabolical Possession, with the second being attributed to enchantment” (p. 347), “Cases of Possession Feigned with the Help of Priests” (p. 350), “Another Engaging Story on the Same Subject” (p.352) and “Philip Melancthon's view concerning possessed persons (taken from his collected letters), (p.469).

⁴ Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, ed. Robert Watson, eds. Brian Parker and David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

justice: “That is the Devil speaks and laughs in him” (V.viii.29). Fitzdottrel only gives himself away when he hears from Shackles, keeper of Newgate, that Pug was indeed a devil all along. Fitzdottrel here admits that he has been coaxed into faking the possession:

They taught me all my tricks. I will tell truth,
And shame the fiend. See here, sir, are my bellows,
And my false belly, and my mouse, and all
That should ha’ come forth! (V.viii.142-45).

Van Dijkhuizen asserts that “both *Volpone* and *The Devil is an Ass* represent belief in demonic possession as a potential corruption of court proceedings”.¹ Indeed, Fitzdottrel’s possession was not instigated by Pug but by the devilish human Meercraft who, two scenes before Pug begs to help Fitzdottrel with his possession, has advised him that:

It is the easiest thing, sir, to be done.
As plain as fizzling: roll but wi’ your eyes,
And foam at th’mouth. A little castle-soap
Will do’t, to rub your lips: and then a nutshell,
With tow and touchwood in it to spit fire (V.iii.1-5).

Pug, and any form of demonic intervention, is thus rendered redundant, for he has no more skills to offer or coerce a human than another human being. Like the ineffectual exorcism in *Doctor Faustus*, the staging of ritual – and the demonstration of how it can be staged – confirms the natural limits of demonic possession as devils, like humans, can easily ‘fake it’, the human not realising that the real threat and the real magic merely the pretence of illusion of greater magic. Van Dijkhuizen outlines that “Meercraft’s schemes are a more serious moral issue than the existence of the devil” and emphasises the similarities between Meercraft and the Machiavel, neatly linking this back to Machiavelli’s *Belphegor*.²

Devilish Humans and Asinine Devils

Satan himself acknowledges that humans are more capable of committing evil than his unfortunate minion, including the criminal whose body Pug had borrowed:

Why, thou heavy slave!
The spirit that did possess that flesh before

¹ Van Dijkhuizen, p.119.

² *Ibid.*, p.122, 121.

Put more true life in a finger and a thumb,
Than thou in the whole mass (V.vi.39-42).

As Happé indicates, “Satan sees mortals escaping from his power...even though it is comic, this framework makes clear the perennial and subtle nature of evil, and it indicates that Jonson’s purpose is stimulated by indignation about the evil within human beings”.¹ Satan must, however, have been aware of what Pug would encounter on earth, demonstrating that the chief devil himself messes with his own demons as much as his potential human subjects. *Grim the Collier’s* Belphagor arrives at a similar conclusion, finding humans more demonic than devils. He says of his wife: “And still she railes, and chafes, and scoulds / As if it were the Sessions day in hell” and “I think the Devil himself / Cannot match her, for if he could, I should” (II.i.54-55, 59-60). Pug too finds the humans he encounters more fiendish than he expected, and throughout the demonic dramas of the early modern stage, humans are frequently referred to as devils; *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* refers not to Peter Fabel’s demonic spirit Coreb, but to Fabel himself and both Faustus and Friar Bacon are referred to as devils. The stage thus emphasises the similarities between human and devil by demonstrating their similarities not only in appearance – or lack of definite appearance – but also in their abilities and the physical space they occupy. Like the human-devil conflicts in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, *Faustus*, and *John of Bordeaux*, Jonson’s play suggests an even playing field between human and devil and that both are capable of using the same knowledge and skill to outwit the other. Beating the devil at his own game seems to be a valid way of evading hellish consequences, and many of the stage magicians are capable of doing so.

As discussed in Chapter Three, outwitting the devil is an established feature of devil dramas. It seems to be all down to personality and individual intellect and skill for human and devil alike in overcoming the other. Humans outwit the devil in triumphant comedies or succumb to his hellish rhetoric in the tragedies. Jonson’s play does neither. Instead, we are presented with a foolish devil and a foolish human. Pug is eager to gain a soul, while Fitzdottrel is only too willing to give his up, and yet the partnership is never established in the same way it is between Faustus and Mephistopheles, or Bacon and his various devils.

¹ Happé, p.5.

Fitzdottrel and Pug are not equally clever, they are equally stupid, and the interaction between them produces nothing but a stalemate. Pug is an ass, Fitzdottrel is an ass, and therefore their magic is non-existent. This is not the case for all devils, however, for it is important not to forget that there are two devils in this play. One of them is Lucifer, and he certainly knows what he is doing. *The* devil isn't really an ass, but *a* devil certainly might be. Assessing demonic prowess must therefore be taken case by case, since these characters are more than symbolic 'everydevils'. Some devils are clever, some are incompetent fools, and the inhabitants of hell vary in skill, intellect, and power in much the same way that humans do. *The Devil is an Ass* thus renders boundaries between earth and hell irrelevant. Jonson proves humorously – yet also disconcertingly – that the similarities between humans and demons lie not only in their abilities, but also in their faults.

CHAPTER FIVE

“Is Every Devil Mine?”

Human and Demonic Causation in *The Witch of Edmonton*

According to the Prologue of Dekker, Ford, and Rowley’s 1621 drama *The Witch of Edmonton*, it is “uncivil” to draw comparison between a witch and a devil (Prologue.3). Uncivil as it may be, comparing “so even a pair” of witch and demon – that is, a human and a devil – is inevitable in this tragicomedy which positions the witch, the devil, and the entire community of Edmonton in a confusing mess of accusation and blame (Prologue.4). *The Witch of Edmonton* is yet another drama that explores the different types of human-devil interactions. In small, rural Edmonton, the devil is able to infect almost every aspect of daily life, interacting not only with the eponymous witch but also with the entire community. The result is fatal. At the conclusion of *The Witch of Edmonton* two characters are hanged for separate murders. In both cases, the devil is cited as an accomplice. One of the questions that has plagued scholars of this troublesome drama is the matter of criminal liability: who is responsible, the devil or the human? The domestic tragedy of Frank Thorney parallels the story of the witch Mother Sawyer. Frank kills his second wife; Sawyer is accused of prompting the death of her neighbour. In both cases, the devil has quite literally rubbed his influence into the human. Yet to what extent is the devil to blame? Is the devil responsible for the evil he enacts or are the humans responsible for letting him in and commanding him to do so?

The chapter explores the question of human/demon causation in *The Witch of Edmonton*. Dekker, Ford, and Rowley’s play is often hailed as an ‘accurate’ depiction of a witch trial in early modern England; it is also noteworthy for its unusually sympathetic treatment of the witch’s plight. The play nevertheless adheres to orthodox demonology, however, as the playwrights make it evident that the power of both witch and devil is governed by clearly outlined restrictions. Indeed, as in *Doctor Faustus*, the devil’s limitations play a crucial role in Sawyer’s tragedy. Demonology, whose very purpose is to “define the boundary between social and demonic causation”, is thus necessary in determining the

extent of diabolic agency in the play's human criminal activity.¹ In this chapter I argue that that blame lies not with the devil but with the human who chooses to solicit his help. Despite the devil's obviously dangerous influence in the play, both demonological thought and the law focused on the human intent behind the crime rather than the demonic execution. Thus the witch, not the demon, is ultimately responsible for her crimes.

The underlying demonological realism of *The Witch of Edmonton* is reinforced by the fact that the play is based on a real witch trial. First performed in December 1621, *The Witch of Edmonton* is based on the trial and execution of one Elizabeth Sawyer for witchcraft in April of the same year. The playwrights used Henry Goodcole's account of his interview with Sawyer, *The Wonderful Discovery of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch, late of Edmonton, her Conviction and Condemnation and Death* as source material for the play. Like *Faustus*, the play presents the entirety of demonic engagement, from pact to death. Elizabeth Sawyer's story is dramatised from the moment she first contemplates demonic engagement. The play goes on to show her committing a series of offences against her neighbours through her demonic familiar, Dog. She is then tried and executed for the murder of Anne Ratcliffe, victim of the real Sawyer's alleged witchcraft. The play is rarely discussed alongside magician plays, despite the fact that, demonologically speaking, the play is closer to *Doctor Faustus* than any other early modern witch dramas. The magic is all the same, although Sawyer's supernatural capabilities are nowhere near as extensive as Friar Bacon's or Peter Fabel's. *The Witch of Edmonton's* three different plots are bound together by one devil, and like these other magician dramas, *The Witch of Edmonton* shows the devil's effect on different levels of the social hierarchy. The Thorney and Sawyer plots are clearly linked by the two crimes that bring the murderers together at the gallows. The third plot, featuring the fool Cuddy Banks and his efforts to put on a morris, is particularly insightful in exemplifying the play's adherence to orthodox demonology.

The presence of a devil in the form of a dog serves to expose the equally devilish nature of the humans who inhabit the town, as Meg Pearson notes: "his roaming throughout the multiple plots shows off the blatant hypocrisy and criminality inhabiting

¹ David Nicol, "Interrogating the Devil: Social and Demonic Pressure in *The Witch of Edmonton*", *Comparative Drama* 38.4 (2004), p.425.

the play's community".¹ While much has been written on the social causes of witchcraft and the other crimes in Edmonton, the witchcraft question is rarely considered alongside the discussion of diabolic causation. In one of the few examples of demonological analysis of the play, Nicol argues that to focus solely on the human characters and motivations undermines the presence of the devil in the community: "to downplay the importance of Dog is to misunderstand the ways in which scepticism about witchcraft was typically articulated in the period" and that "reading the play as a demonological study...reveals the intellectual sophistication of *The Witch of Edmonton*".² As with *Doctor Faustus*, demonological analysis of this play actually helps to resolve some of the many ambiguities arising from the presence of the demon dog in Edmonton and also the question of diabolic or human agency.

The Witch of Edmonton is especially of interest because we see how the devil works within a closed environment in which the community is as much to blame as the devil himself for the presence of a witch among them. In *Doctor Faustus* the devil operates in academic, courtly, papal, and tavern environments, and with a huge variety of people. *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and *John of Bordeaux* present the devil and his human counterparts in similar environments, while *The Devil is an Ass*, set in London, shows the devil operating with a variety of people who, in a city setting, have limited knowledge of each other. By contrast, Dekker, Ford, and Rowley's play is set in a small community with a firmly-established social hierarchy. The denizens of Edmonton know each other all too well, and the arrival of the devil among them serves to exacerbate the underlying tensions between neighbours. What is apparent from Sawyer's first appearance is that while Edmonton has no use for a poor, ill-tempered old woman dependent on their charity, they do have use for a witch. Quite apart from the need for a convenient scapegoat to carry the blame for local disasters of cattle dying, crops failing and butter refusing to thicken – concerns that "reveal a town living on the margin between prosperity and disaster" – the idea of the witch occupies a particular place – and a particular authority – in the collective Edmonton imagination.³ It is worth noting that Sawyer is regarded as a witch long before she is

¹ Meg Pearson, "A Dog, A Witch, A Play: *The Witch of Edmonton*", *Early Theatre* 11.2 (2008), p.92.

² Nicol, p.425.

³ Corbin and Sedge, p.8.

persecuted for the crime, and one of Cuddy's morris collaborators claims that "witches themselves are so common nowadays that the counterfeit will not be regarded. They say we have three or four in Edmonton besides Mother Sawyer" (II.i.12-15). When trying to explain to Susan his bigamous predicament, Frank draws on the wisdom of a witch he allegedly once consulted: "'Twas told me by a woman / Known and approved in palmistry, I should have two wives" (II.ii.118-120). He thus lends some authority to his fate by referencing a witch. The residents of Edmonton exhibit a strong need for a witch in their community. By association, they also need the devil, who evidently has an established role in Edmonton's world-view.

The Magical Power of Words

Dog, the devil spirit, is thus called into a community that already claims to know the presence of hellish influence among them. And called in he certainly is. In his account of his interview with Sawyer, Goodcole emphasises that the devil first gained access to Edmonton through Sawyer's foul language, a fact that Sawyer herself confirms:

That tongue which by cursing, swearing, blaspheming and imprecating, as afterward she confessed, was the occasioning cause of the Devil's access unto her, even at that time, and to claim her thereby as his own by it discovered her lying, swearing and blaspheming.¹

The first words uttered by the devil in *The Witch of Edmonton* similarly indicate that the witch becomes the property of the devil through her words: "Ho! Have I found thee cursing? Now thou art mine own" (II.i.128). This is a more prosaic echo of Mephistopheles's pronouncement that it was not the ritual but the words that summoned him "For when we hear one rack the name of God, / Abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ, / We fly in hope to get his glorious soul" (I.iii.48-50). Dog later explains to Cuddy Banks how one becomes the property of the devil:

Thou never art so distant
From an evil spirit, but that thy oaths,
Curses and blasphemies pull him to thine elbow.

¹ Henry Goodcole, "The Wonderful Discovery of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch, late of Edmonton, her conviction and condemnation and death", Thomas Dekker, John Ford & William Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, eds. Peter Corbin & Douglas Sedge, p.137.

Thou never did tellst a lie but that a devil
Is within hearing (V.i.127-31).

Words and language are indeed the most valuable and significant form of power in *The Witch of Edmonton*. The idea that words alone can draw the devil into the community is of particular significance in magical analysis, as Clark asserts:

The belief that utterances can themselves effect physical change, or assist in the effecting of it, has had a wide cultural diffusion. Anthropologists ... have referred to it as the belief in 'the magical power of words' ... That words have, simply by virtue of being uttered, a mechanical power to cause or prevent effects.¹

The power attributed to words is a key factor in determining the extent to which the human may be responsible for supernaturally-assisted actions, both in the summoning of the devil in the first place, and in the command of execution of the deed. This is not a quandary unique to Dekker, Ford, and Rowley's play. Tambiah asserts that "one virtue at least of defining rituals consisting of the word and the deed is that this formula solves the dilemma posed by Goethe's Faust – whether in the beginning there was the word or the deed".² The frequent references to the devil in *The Witch of Edmonton* demonstrate how much the devil and his power have infiltrated everyday speech. The denizens of Edmonton talk of the devil and his alleged influence so often that it is difficult to discern how much they know about Sawyer and if they can sense the current presence of the demonic in Edmonton. This invoking of the devil through words is mirrored in the Frank Thorney plot. While the devil does not appear until the second act, however, he is mentioned frequently in the preceding scenes in which the Frank Thorney/Winnifride/Sir Arthur Clarington triangle is established. While the word 'devil' is used metaphorically to emphasise both the wickedness of the situation and the people involved, the acknowledgement of the devil as a cause or material entity could well be enough to draw Dog into this plot long before he meets Sawyer. Frank's later actions suggest an implicit demonic pact (discussed below) and these initial examples of language may instigate the devil's involvement in his own crimes independent of Sawyer's blasphemous encounter.

¹ Clark, p.282-83. For examples, see Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words", *Man* 3 (1968), pp. 175-208 and Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, 2 vols., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965).

² Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality*, p.175.

The use of the word 'devil' to refer to people also acknowledges the human's own capacity for evil, the demon-like human causes of the conflict. In fact, trouble is brewing in Edmonton long before the real devil shows up.

The importance of language and utterances in *The Witch of Edmonton* is also underscored by the distinct emphasis on oaths and the power they carry, both marriage vows and oaths to the devil. The marriage vows Frank swears to both Winnifride and Susan Carter resemble the oath Mother Sawyer is forced to swear to Dog when she makes her demonic pact. Frank's transgression is emphasised by speeches from his wives who both stress the sacrosanct nature of such vows. In the opening scene, Winnifride delivers an impassioned speech about the importance of oaths, asking "And shall I then, for my part, / Unfile the sacred oath set on record / In heaven's book?" (I.i.200-2). Susan also indicates that oaths are not something to be sworn lightly, "Good sir, no swearing. Yea and nay with us / Prevails above all oaths you can invent", quoting Matthew 5:27 (I.ii.53-54).

Todd Butler explains:

Oaths thus serve a function both communal and institutional, enabling private individuals to exist together in relative harmony and security, while similarly ensuring that crucial mechanisms of institutional power maintain their firm and steady regulation of individual behaviour.¹

Indeed, all the relationships in *Edmonton* are determined by oaths. The breaking of his first marriage vows has hellish consequences for Frank, as the swearing of a second set of marriage vows is akin to swearing loyalty to the devil. Through their use and misuse of language, not only Sawyer but also Frank – and the entire village of Edmonton – invite the devil in.

Demonology and *The Witch of Edmonton*

Sawyer voices the desire to turn to the dark arts but, unlike Faustus, does not have access to the ritual she assumes is required to summon the devil: "by what means they came acquainted with them / I'm now ignorant. Would some power, good or bad, / Instruct me which way I might be revenged" (II.i.113-115). Dog's first words are followed by threats of

¹ Todd Butler, "Swearing Justice in Henry Goodcole and *The Witch of Edmonton*", *SEL* 50.1 (2010), p. 138.

grievous bodily harm: “If thou deniest I’ll tear thy body in a thousand pieces”, recalling the Evil Angel’s threats that “If thou repent, devils shall tear thee in pieces” (II.i.143-144; II.iii.80). It is thus a question of surrendering the soul in order to avoid damage to the body. Dog then extracts blood from Sawyer’s arm, not to provide ink for the pact document but rather a direct sucking from the animal familiar. Like Faustus’s bargain with Mephistopheles, Sawyer’s is largely an empty one. The impetus for this pact is not knowledge, like Faustus’s, or professional promotion, like Rodrigo Borgia’s, but revenge. The influence of other devil plays is apparent in Dog’s activities. The few deeds we can be certain that Dog does perform resemble the small mischiefs that Satan predicts Pug will enact in *The Devil is an Ass*: “The laming a poor cow or two? / Entering a sow to make her cast her farrow? / ... stale the yeast, / Or keep the churn so that the butter come not, / Spite o’ the housewife’s cord or her hot spit?” (I.i.8-14). The comic exchanges between Cuddy Banks and Dog are reminiscent of the comic subplots in *Friar Bacon*, *John of Bordeaux* and *Doctor Faustus*. The complex master-servant relationship between human and devil presented in all of these magician plays is also manifested in *The Witch of Edmonton*. That the play’s explanation of the workings of demonic magic is consistent with previous devil dramas is hardly surprising. Very little of the demonological understanding of the play is sourced from the Goodcole pamphlet, which focuses on the nature of Sawyer’s relationship with the devil rather than how exactly his power worked. However, as Purkiss reminds us, Goodcole’s account of Mother Sawyer’s dealings with the devil was just one of many versions of the story of the alleged witch in circulation at the time.¹

The Witch of Edmonton not only takes a great deal from the conventions established by these other devil dramas, it also draws heavily on or closely follows demonological discourses including Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft* and, most notably, Gifford’s 1593 *Dialogue Concerning Witchcraft and Witches*. Scot’s influence is apparent, yet the play, while sympathetic towards the plight of the witch, stops short of being utterly sceptical. Gifford in particular is often cited as a shaping influence, not only in providing specific anecdotes of demonic interjection, but also in the overarching premise that the devil, not the witch, is the main

¹ Purkiss, p.233.

source of *maleficium* and social unrest. The witch is both a victim of her community and an instrument of the devil who operates thus:

Then doth he plie it with the witch, setteth her in a furie, she sendeth him, euen vpon this sending the man or the beast suddainlie and strangely are tormented, fall lame, or die. Then the witch is suspected, examined, and confesseth that she killed such a man, or such a mans cattell, or made them lame. Here the people are set in a wonderfull maze and astonishment, as if witches could plague men in their wrath, by sending their spirits, because they confesse they did it, whe~ their spirits doe lie and had no power, but the tormentes came by naturall causes.¹

This extract from Gifford's *Dialogue* could perhaps pass for a synopsis of Sawyer's plot in *The Witch of Edmonton*, but with one notable exception. Mother Sawyer's "furie" is already established before she meets the devil. Dog's presence in the other two plots further complicates a Giffordian reading. The question of causation in the witch plot is not as straightforward as it initially appears. Indeed, the influence of Gifford and Scot on the playwrights is somewhat overstated, for the demonological restrictions which govern the way Dog is able to work imply a greater degree of human agency than has previously been allowed. In fact, the play exhibits a more orthodox understanding of demonology like that espoused by James I or Agrippa. West establishes that "*The Witch of Edmonton* is orthodox with a strong tinge of the moderate rationalism of Weyer and Gifford", and it is important not to skip over the orthodox demonology in the play in favour of the Giffordian or Wieran influences.² Confusion over who is to blame arises in this play because we are given greater insight into both the witch-devil relationship and the question of causation than is usually permitted in other witch dramas.

Dog's abilities and practices are certainly consistent with the plays which assert an orthodox demonological framework in their presentation of demons. In implementing his mischief and malice, Edmonton's devil behaves much the same as the others. When he reports back to Mother Sawyer in Act Four, he has struck a horse lame, snatched a child, prevented butter from coming in the churn and had "rare sport" in the morris, feats reminiscent of the petty mischiefs expected of Pug and executed by Puck and *Grim the Collier's* Akercock (IV.i.176). Perhaps the most impressive piece of magic performed by

¹ Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraft*, sig.D3.

² West, p.150.

Dog is the manifestation of two spirits resembling the two Carter sisters, Kate and Susan, who appear at different stages in the play. Such magic indicates that Dog is in charge of lesser spirits, – like Ariel and Mephistopheles are – suggesting that Dog is a reasonably powerful demon. The first spirit materialises to mislead Cuddy Banks, highlighting both his faith in the supernatural and his lust for someone clearly his social superior. Cuddy is told to wait in the peas-field after dark and to follow “the first live thing thou seest” (II.ii.274-5). The incident parodies the stories that detail ways to cheat the devil from claiming the “first living being” that enters a Cathedral he helped to build.¹ Cuddy sees Kate and follows her into a river (perhaps suggesting, as Cox notes, the horse-courser episode in *Doctor Faustus*).² Of course, the apparition is neither a “live thing” nor Kate Carter, but an insubstantial spirit. This is clearly outlined in both the stage directions and by Sawyer herself. Cuddy asks her directly if whatever appears will bring him to Kate. Sawyer replies: “to a sight of her, I mean” (II.ii.280), admitting it will merely resemble the object of Cuddy’s affections. Like *Faustus*, the play is clear to distinguish between Kate and the apparition of Kate, with the spirit entering initially in its natural, grotesque form, and then proceeding to “throw off [its] own essential horror” to appear as Kate (II.ii.s.d). This onstage transformation demonstrates how the demonic spirits under the command of Dog are able to adopt the appearances of people.³ The malicious nature of the spirit is subsequently revealed when it lures Cuddy into the water and he nearly drowns. Cuddy is unable to embrace the spirit (as he is told to do), indicating that the apparition has the same airy, insubstantial body as the “shows” produced by Mephistopheles, Belcephon, and other devils.

The second spirit is the “spirit of Susan” who appears at the wounded Frank’s bedside and partakes in revealing his guilt. Opinion is mixed over whether the ‘spirit’ is really Susan or a figment of Frank’s imagination, as the text could suggest, or some spirit

¹ Lutz Röhrich recounts the story: “A large church is built, but somehow it is never completed; something goes wrong in the construction. The people have no money; building is too expensive. At this moment an elegant lord appears and promises to complete the cathedral within a certain period of time if he will be given the first living being who enters the church. The people know very well that they have made a pact with the devil. Even so, they accept his offer. The devil drags great amounts of building material to the scene and, lo and behold, the cathedral is completed on time! But in place of a person, they send a dog or goat into the church first and again the devil is cheated of his human soul”. Lutz Röhrich “German Devil Tales and Devil Legends”, *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 7.1 (1970), p.28.

² Cox, p.175.

³ The stage direction reads “Enter SPIRIT in shape of Katherine, vizarded, and takes it off” (III.i.s.d).

newly crept out of hell at Dog's command. As the Revels editors point out, since Susan died forgiving Frank, the spirit is unlikely to be her ghost.¹ Dog's presence at the scene suggests unequivocally that he is in command of the spirit and orchestrating the whole affair; he is gleeful when the knife discovered: "Enter Dog, shrugging as it were for joy, and dances" (IV.ii.s.d). Since we have seen one 'spirit' adopt the form of a Carter sister, it is not unreasonable to assume that this 'spirit' is also of hellish origin, like the manifestation of 'Helen' in *Faustus*.

While the spirits are the most obvious incidents of demonic magic in the play, other incidents and aspects of Dog's character throughout the text are also consistent with orthodox demonological thought. A few snatches of lines reveal how Dog is meant to be perceived. The first is the way he sounds. To the audience, of course, he sounds like a human being as his role is voiced by a human actor. Yet when Cuddy Banks first hears the devil conversing with Sawyer, he reveals that the Dog does not sound quite human: "I heard I know not the devil what mumble in a scurvy base tone, like a drum that had taken cold in the head the last muster" (II.ii.265-67). He thus acknowledges that spirits cannot speak in the same way that humans do.² West points out that "only rarely can a spirit make his utterance by an assumed body sound natural to men's ears", confirming Agrippa's point that spirits converse differently since they lack a corporeal tongue.³ Dog converses with Cuddy and Sawyer usually when nobody else is within earshot, as Faustus often does with Mephistopheles, suggesting he is only capable of properly communicating with one person at a time.

Similarly, Dog is only visible to these two with whom he converses. Frank cannot see Dog when he murders Susan and is thus surprised by the assistance he gets in tying himself up. When Dog enters in the climactic 4.1 and barks, he is clearly invisible to those around him, Cuddy can easily cover for him. Dog makes it clear his presence in the morris is invisible, although the many comments of the villagers about Sawyer's spirit suggest that

¹ Corbin and Sedge refer to the apparition as "the spirit conjured by the Dog in the shape of Susan", asserting that "since Susan dies forgiving Frank Thorne, it is unlikely that it is her ghost returning to torment him", p.14; p.111n.

² According to French demonologist Henry Boguet, spirits sound "like that of a man speaking in a tub". Henry Boguet, *Discours exécration des Sorciers* (1602), qtd. in West, p.88.

³ West, p.88. See description of how spirits speak in the Introduction and Chapter Seven.

Dog has no need to maintain his invisibility for, while they are uncertain of the exact details, they have a pretty good idea of what has been causing such social upheaval. Sir Arthur, unaware of Dog's presence, proclaims to the crowd that "far and near, she's bruited for a woman that maintains a spirit that sucks her" (IV.i.103-5). Old Banks reveals that he knows the demon has assumed canine form: "you have a spirit, they say, comes to you in the likeness of a dog; we shall see your cur at one time or other. If we do, unless it be the devil himself, he shall go howling to the gaol in one chain, and thou in another" (IV.i.234-38).¹

Dog's means and methods of transportation are also suggested at two occasions in the play, implying that the town has some idea of how the devil could get from place to place at such speed. Sawyer, when waiting for Dog to come to her in imagines him flying to her in "In some dark cloud; and as I oft have seen / Dragons and serpents in the elements" recalling James I's assertion that flying is possible for witches to do unseen because they can "thicken & obscure so the air" (V.i.14-15).² As noted in the Introduction, this comment is also picked up by Shakespeare, whose weird sisters "hover through the fog and filthy air" (I.i.13); Macbeth later notes, "infected be the air whereon they ride" (IV.i.137). The second explanation comes from the frenzied crowd of accusers explaining to the Justice of the Peace how the thatch burning experiment worked, claiming Sawyer "came running as if the devil had sent her in a barrel of gunpowder" (IV.i.43-45). While the latter is merely a passing comment or figure of speech, the comment acknowledges that in order for the devil to travel quickly he must do so through 'natural' means; there must be an explanation for such speed, even if the devil is involved.

The Devil in Dog Form

While Dog's power works in the same way as any conventional demon, his behaviour and role in the plot are not so typical. In fact, Dog is one of the most intriguing devils to

¹ This is not as outlandish as it may seem. Keith Thomas asserts that "demonic beasts were often treated as morally responsible," *Man and the Natural World*, p.97. In England, however, animals were never put on trial as they were in Continental Europe. See discussion in Chapter Six.

² James I, p.174.

appear in early modern drama. Like Mephistopheles and Pug, this demon is not a mere representation of evil but has his own, distinct personality. An Iago-like manipulator who makes the most of human tension, he attends to his own mysterious agenda independent of the witch's involvement or command. He is a free agent, the internal dramatist, stage manager, or puppet master who evidently does not need to rely on the witch for power or even sustenance. As he informs Cuddy, "I serve more masters, more dames, than one" (III.i.152-54). Like the nameless devil in *Friar Bacon* and Asteroth in *John of Bordeaux*, Dog is kept busy by several masters. The real Sawyer states in her interview with Goodcole that the devil did indeed come to her in canine form, "always in the shape of a dog of two colours, sometimes of black and sometimes of white".¹ James Serpell's research on animal familiars reveals that a dog familiar in witchcraft cases was a common occurrence.² The devil in the form of a talking dog, however, was a rare occurrence on the early modern stage. The only other known example is Cerberus in Thomas Heywood's 1613 play *The Silver Age* whose "persuasiveness and intuitive malice resurface in Dog".³ In fact, *Edmonton's* Dog has far more in common with the demon dogs of folklore, the Mephistophelean companions of magicians rather than the animal familiars like those found in *The Late Lancashire Witches* or those that are mentioned in historic trials. Dogs are often linked to male magicians as well as female witches, particularly black dogs. Cornelius Agrippa was reported to own a black beast named Monsieur who was rumoured to eat and sleep with the scholar.⁴ When Agrippa died, the dog supposedly vanished, or threw itself into a river according to different sources.⁵ The magician Gerbert, who became Pope Sylvester II, allegedly owned a similar beast, as did Simon Magus.⁶ Black dogs also feature prominently

¹ Goodcole, p.143.

² The others were (in order of frequency of appearance in witch trials from highest to lowest): cats, dogs, toads, mouse, mole, domesticated fowl, wild birds, rat, cow/bull, ferret, bees/wasps/hornets, fly, rabbit, snail. James A. Serpell, "Guardian Spirits or Demonic Pets: The Concept of the Witch's Familiar in Early Modern England, 1530-1712", *The Human/ Animal Boundary: Historical Perspectives*, eds. Angela Creager and William Chester Jordan (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002), p.167.

³ Pearson, p.93: "Strikingly, these two talking dogs, which are figures of both sophistry and fear, are exceptions to the traditional staging of dogs".

⁴ Weyer writes: "I think this false rumor arose partly because Agrippa was too childishly fond of this dog...very often kissing him, and sometimes putting him by his side at the table, just as he allowed him in bed with him under the covers at night, after he repudiated his wife...And in the library, where Agrippa was constantly busy with his impressive collection of books and papers, this dog would always lie between us on the table that Agrippa and I shared in our studies". *De Praestigiis Daemonum*, p.113.

⁵ Ball, p.88.

⁶ Patricia Dale-Green, *Dog* (London: Hart-Davis, 1966), p.233; *The Golden Legend*, p.344.

in the early modern European versions of the Faust myth, surfacing later in Goethe's *Faust*, in which the doomed academic first sees Mephistopheles in the form of a black poodle. Perhaps the most famous devil-dog in England was that owned by Prince Rupert and called 'Boye'. The white poodle was believed to have aided Rupert's efforts in the Civil War.¹

In Goodcole's account, the dog's appearance as a black or a white dog seems arbitrary. Sawyer does not specify if the colour the devil had adopted carried any particular significance. The playwrights, however, change him to white only at the end of the play, making him unrecognisable to both Cuddy and Sawyer. Sawyer assumes the white dog is not hers, while Cuddy recognises Dog's bark but believes that "this is a dog of another hair" until Dog tells him otherwise (V.i.97). Dog states that the reasoning behind the transformation of his colour change is to torment Sawyer as "my whiteness puts thee in mind of thy winding sheet" (V.i.37). The transformation has other implications. Purkiss suggests it reflects his unreliable nature and deceptiveness, and the change in appearance may also indicate his disengagement with the witch, the fool, and Edmonton in general, his black arts having been successfully leaked into the town. At a stretch, it may indicate the eventual destinations of his victims.² Dog's comment to Sawyer that his white appearance has come to signal her death is reminiscent of the legends of the Black Dog of Newgate who allegedly sat beside the cart driver on a criminal's journey to Tyburn to be hanged.³ A 1612 pamphlet written by Luke Hutton entitled *The Discoverie of a London Monster called, the black dog of Newgate* likens the dog to the "black conscience" of criminals, an apt comparison to Dog, although Cuddy Banks tells his father that Edmonton's devil is not the

¹ There are a number of early modern sources that describe Rupert's Dog: T.B., *Observations vpon Prince Rupert's white dog, called Boy [...]* (London, 1643) ; John Taylor, *A dialogue, or, Rather a parley betweene Prince Ruperts dogge whose name is Puddle, and Tobies dog whose name is Petter, &c* (London, 1643); John Taylor, *A dog's elegy, or, Ruperts Tears for the Late Defeat Given him at Mastonmoore [...]*, (London, 1644); and *The Parliaments vnspotted-bitch in answer to Prince Roberts dog called Boy and his malignant she-monkey* (London, 1643).

² Purkiss, p.246. Dale-Green writes "In some parts of Wales the colour of the hound is significant: if a white dog appears near the home of a dying person it means his soul will be saved, while a black dog indicates that his soul will be subjected to everlasting torment", p.62.

³ Dale-Green, p.68.

infamous Newgate hound (IV.i.261).¹ The three editions of Hutton's pamphlets all contain a cover illustration that depicts the legendary Newgate dog standing upright on his hind legs in a very human manner. The first pamphlet, *The Blacke Dogge of Newgate*, shows the dog standing face to face with a human, showing him quite capable of embracing the person, just as Dog embraces Mother Sawyer.

If Dog doesn't behave like a typical familiar, he certainly doesn't behave like a typical dog either. He walks and talks, and he is, of course, played by a human actor. His arrival and alliance with Sawyer instigates a village-wide confusion of both species and natural hierarchy. Lisa Hopkins asserts that, while it is a "critically unfashionable idea" to bring the Chain of Being into current scholarship, it is particularly relevant to *The Witch of Edmonton*: "One thing that is immediately obvious is that the dog is placed directly above the man, subverting the normal hierarchies of the great chain of being, and the control which man was expected to exert over the animals".² In the small community of Edmonton, the distinction between humans and animals seems to be embedded in the local understanding as the play presents a complete social hierarchy with the knight (Sir Arthur Clarington) at the top and the beggar-witch Sawyer at the bottom. Again, this is similar to the breakdown of the human-animal boundaries in *Faustus*, the human-animal merging of barriers in *The Devil is an Ass*, and the devil being treated as a beast of burden in *Friar Bacon* and *John of Bordeaux*. This theme is in fact evident throughout Renaissance magic plays. In *The Late Lancashire Witches* the witches and devil familiars can transform themselves into the same animals. Heywood and Brome's play also features a village-wide descent to the bestial: letting in the devil always overturns the social pecking order.

The very nature of Sawyer's and Dog's relationship subverts such boundaries between beast and man. From the very beginning of Sawyer's interaction with the Dog,

¹ Luke Hutton, *The Discoverie of a London Monster called, the black dog of Newgate* (London, 1612). Hutton had also published a poem entitled *The blacke dogge of Newgate* (London, 1596). The Black Dog of Newgate also figures in Dekker's *English Villainies Discovered by Lantern and Candlelight* (1608), Corbin & Sedge, p. 106n. The famous canine is also the subject of two lost plays by John Day, Richard Hathaway, Wentworth Smith, and an unnamed poet, *The Black Dog of Newgate Part 1* (1602) and *The Black Dog of New Gate, Part 2* (1603). "Black Dog of Newgate, Parts 1 and 2", *Lost Plays Database*, ed. Roslyn Knutson: http://www.lostplays.org/index.php/Black_Dog_of_Newgate_Parts_1_and_2 [accessed 27 September 2013].

² Lisa Hopkins, *The Female Hero in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp.108-9.

their relationship is characterised by its physicality as he draws blood from her arm. Later encounters are of a more sexually explicit nature. When reunited after Dog has been abroad in Edmonton implementing mischief on behalf of Sawyer, the old woman asks the demon to “Stand on thy hind-legs up. Kiss me Tommy, /And rub away some wrinkles on my brow / By making my old ribs to shrug for joy”, and suggests they “tickle”, displaying, as Dawson points out, “both sexual and maternal tenderness” (IV.i.170-173).¹ Sawyer is not the only stage witch to indulge in such relations with animal-like humans or human-like animals. Other transgressors include Titania and Bottom-as-an-Ass in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, although, like Dog himself, Bottom retains his own soul and merely assumes animal senses.²

Sawyer is also not the only character to partake in a sexualised relationship with an animal in *The Witch of Edmonton*. Old Banks’ tale of his suspect relationship with his cow mirrors that of Sawyer’s and Dog’s. In an incident lifted straight from Gifford, Old Banks complains that:

So, sir, ever since, having a dun cow tied up in my backside, let me go thither or but cast mine eye at her, and, if I should be hanged, I cannot choose, though it be ten times in an hour, but run to the cow and, taking up her tail, kiss, saving your worship’s reverence, my cow behind, that the whole town of Edmonton has been ready to bepiss themselves with laughing me to scorn (IV.i.61-67).

Such behaviour resembles a different kind of diabolic activity, as Gail Kern Paster explains:

The anal kiss, enjoined by Satan, was a conventional ritual act, which, says Stuart Clark, inverted ‘religious worship and secular fealty’. Here the bovine instrument of Mother Sawyer’s revenge seems to stand specifically for Mother Sawyer herself, who shares with the cow the critical attribute of femaleness.³

Old Banks, for all his alleged virtue, is thus engaging in his own demonic rituals. Purkiss outlines that “a witch’s punishment of her enemies involves forcing them to cross the lines between human and animal”, and Sawyer is thus bringing everyone down to her own level of debasement.⁴ It is worth noting, however, that Gifford’s dialogue goes on to suggest

¹ Anthony B. Dawson, “Witchcraft/Bigamy: Cultural Conflict in *The Witch of Edmonton*”, *Renaissance Drama* 20 (1989), p.87.

² See discussion of transformations in Chapter Six.

³ Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.258.

⁴ Purkiss, p.242.

that this incident was not connected to the witch but a mere delusion of the cow's owner. The real Sawyer acknowledges this in her interview with Goodcole, claiming that the cursing and swearing that summoned the devil instigated her descent into beastliness: "the tongue of man is the glory of man and it was ordained to glorify God; but worse than brute beasts they are who have a tongue as well as men that therewith they at once bless and curse".¹ Again, human debasement – the descent into the animalistic – is brought about by language, the human commands that precede the devil's actions.

The presence of animal devils surrounds the Sawyer case. Later on in the interview, Sawyer suggests that she and the devil did not discriminate between humans and animals in inflicting *maleficium*: "he always did such mischiefs as I bid him to do, both on the bodies of Christians and beasts".² Goodcole follows up the question by asking her to list both the humans and animals she had killed through the devil. In the play Dog targets men and cattle alike, using the beasts to get to their masters. In Goodcole's introduction, he writes that some of the "ridiculous fictions" include "a ferret and an owl daily sporting before her", although Sawyer herself denies that she fed two white ferrets.³ Most notably, Sawyer's alleged role in the death of Agnes Ratcliffe allegedly arose after Ratcliffe "did strike a sow of hers for licking up a little soap", a fatal action that also appears in the play: "that foul-tongued whore, Nan Ratcliffe, / Who, for a little soap licked by my sow / Struck and almost had lamed it" (IV.i.183-85).⁴ Dog himself recognises the beastliness of hell, alluding to it as a kennel (V.i.63).

Dog's own animal-ness is pertinent to a particular type. As he reveals to Cuddy, the animal forms that the devil takes are usually not those of significant use. While they can appear "Any shape to blind such silly eyes as thine", devils typically favour a particular kind of animal: "chiefly those coarse creatures, dog or cat, hare, ferret, frog, toad" and "Any poor vermin" (V.i.124-27). As Cuddy informs the demon, this is not a particularly impressive range of forms to take for the devil: "It seems you devils have poor thin souls, that you can bestow yourselves in such small bodies" (V.i.128-9). In her analysis of vermin

¹ Goodcole, p.141.

² Ibid., p.142.

³ Ibid., p.136.

⁴ Ibid., p.138.

in early modern England, Mary Fissell suggests that ‘vermin’ were defined both their consumption of human food and grain and their lack of appeal to the human palate: “not only were vermin uncouth eaters who devoured their meat without ceremony. Vermin were also animals who were never transformed into meat”.¹ There is no satisfactory explanation for why vermin were not consumed, but, as Fissell suggests, the origins may be biblical. According to Leviticus: “These shall also be unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind, and the ferret, and the chameleon, and the lizard, and the snail, and the mole”.² The form the devil takes is perhaps linked to the expected natural power of the human they relate to.

James I asserts that

the qualitie of these formes and effectes, is lesse or greater, according to the skil and art of the *Magician*. For as to the formes, to some of the baser sorte of them he oblishes him self to appeare at their calling vpon them, either in likenes of a dog, a Catte, an Ape, or such-like other beast.³

This suggests that the devils are concerned with separating themselves from humans then, commonly assuming forms that ensure they will not be eaten. These vermin-like forms also reflect their own baseness or place in a human hierarchy, and their own bestial tendencies.

Infecting Evil

Like the small animal vermin who ruin food stores, infiltrating everything, evil seems to spread through Edmonton infecting all it meets. Not only does *The Witch of Edmonton* adhere to the dominant demonological theories of the time, it also demonstrates the means by which evil is spread throughout a community. This merging of animals, humans, and devils throughout the play is brought about by touch, the physical contact between devil to person, person to person, or person to animal; it is touch that leads to all transgressions in *The Witch of Edmonton*. This transmission of evil influence through physical contact

¹ Mary Fissell, “Imagining Vermin in Early Modern England”, *History Workshop Journal* 47 (1999), p.63. Fissell explains that: “Vermin were defined legally in Elizabethan and Henrician statutes which authorized parishes to provide payments for the killing of vermin injurious to grain...while the Henrician statute focused closely on birds that ate grain or spoiled fruit trees, the Elizabethan one also included foxes, stoats, weasels, hedgehogs, and a host of other ‘four-footed beasts’ who damaged or ate human food”, p.86.

² Leviticus II:29-30, qtd in Fissell, p.87.

³ James I, p.163.

resembles what James Frazer would later call ‘the law of contagion’.¹ Evil, it would appear, is infectious. Lucinda Cole demonstrates the link between witchcraft, vermin, and the spread of evil, stating that “rats, the plague, and witches were tied to beliefs about fetid or otherwise corrupt air supposedly generated from the earth”.² *The Malleus Maleficarum* asserts that touch is one of the ways in which a witch can administer her sinister influence.³ Gifford’s discourse similarly stresses the physicality of the devil’s involvement in acts of *maleficium*: “for doubtlesse, the deuill hath not power vntil it be giuen him, to touch any creature, to hurt, or to destroy the body, but onely to tempt and to lead into sin”.⁴ For Goodcole, physical contact with the devil is something that ascertains Sawyer’s guilt. He asks her “Did you ever handle the Devil when he came unto you”, adding a marginal note to explain his actions: “I asked of her this question because some might think this was a visible delusion of sight only”.⁵ Dog’s discussion about which animals are typically possessed by devils emphasises the materiality of his presence in Edmonton. As Pearson notes, the abundance of stage directions for the Dog indicate the physicality of the role, and the significant role Dog’s movement and physical presence have in his magic.⁶ He “rubs”, “fawns and leaps”, “ties”, “plays the morris”, “tickles”, “shrugs as it were for joy and dances”, “paws softly at Frank” and “stands aloof”. Dog is no ‘airy spirit’ but a devil in the (albeit borrowed) flesh, and thus able to bring about change and spread malice throughout Edmonton in a very physical way. Yet he does so at the witch’s command. It is the work of the partnership, not the devil alone.

The first action of physical contact is instigated by Sawyer’s bargain with the devil as he sucks her blood, although this indicates that he is not contaminating her but drawing

¹ Frazer, in his anthropological analysis of the principles of magic, splits sympathetic magic into two branches: *homeopathic or imitative magic*, based on the ‘law of similarity’, and *contagious magic*, based on the ‘law of contact’. The latter ‘proceeds upon the notion that things which have once been conjoined must remain ever afterwards, even when quite dissevered from each other, in such a sympathetic relation that whatever is done to the one must similarly affect the other’, *The Golden Bough*, p.11; p.37. See discussion in Introduction.

² Lucinda Cole, “Of Mice and Moisture: Rats, Witches, Miasma, and Early Modern Theories of Contagion”, *Early Modern Cultural Studies* 10.2 (2010), p.66.

³ “As for the way in which workers of harmful magic kill animals and cattle, one has to say [they do it] in the same way [as they kill] human beings – by a touch and a glance; or they put some charm [*maleficium*], or some object which will transmit the harmful magic under the threshold of the stable door or in the place where [the animals] usually get their water.” p.171.

⁴ Gifford, sig.D2.

⁵ Goodcole, p.147.

⁶ Pearson, p.54.

something out of her. In fact, she is contaminating him with her evil intent. The invasive act is exclusive to witchcraft; the formation of the pact between Dog and Sawyer is not via the medium of a piece of paper as in *Doctor Faustus*; the physical proof of Sawyer's contract is instead stamped into her arm. She thus becomes an object to possess. As discussed in Chapter Two, the human attempt to disengage from the supernatural is implemented through the destruction of magical objects. Sawyer, sucked dry by Dog, is the object that must be destroyed in order for the demonic presence to be eradicated for there is no inanimate medium which can be destroyed to signify a formal break between human and devil. Alternatively, revoking the demonic pact, as discussed in Chapter Three, typically required the victim to reclaim the demonic pact from hell's archives. For Sawyer to do so, she would have to reclaim possession of her body.

Dog himself acknowledges the power of his hellish touch, announcing that "one touch from me soon sets the body forward" (III.iii.2-3). His role in the death of Susan is confirmed by the stage direction "Dog rubs him"; the evil influence quite literally rubs off on people (III.iii.s.d). In his last encounter with Dog, Cuddy seems to understand how it works, advising Dog "if thou canst rub thy shoulder against a lawyer's gown as thou passest by Westminster Hall, do" (V.iii.211-12). The connection between touch and the spread of *maleficium* is made far more explicit in the language itself, for both Sawyer and Dog use the word 'touch' as a synonym for kill.¹ The word is also used in *Doctor Faustus*, when Mephistopheles tells Faustus he is incapable of harming the old man who pleads with Faustus to return to God: "I cannot touch his soul" (V.i.189). Sawyer's first command to Dog is to enact revenge on Old Banks "Go touch his life" to which Dog replies that he has "no power to touch" (II.i.160, 173). Similarly, Sawyer later commands Dog to 'touch' Anne Ratcliffe. 'Touch' here means, unequivocally, to kill. The very physical formation of Sawyer's contract enables the devil physically to manipulate or disrupt the lives of the rest of Edmonton, such as causing Old Banks to have repeated unsavory encounters with his cow; Dog later informs Sawyer he has "struck" the horse lame and "nipped" the sucking child (IV.i.174-75).

¹ David Crystal & Ben Crystal, *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary & Language Companion* (London: Penguin Books, 2002). Crystal and Crystal outline that touch does not mean 'kill', but can mean: "threaten, danger, imperil" or "wound, hurt, injure", or "stain, taint, infect", p.456.

However, the spread of evil through demonic contact is not the only way in which the sinful influence is transmitted. *The Witch of Edmonton* shows that humans ‘infect’ each other with evil without any devils involved. Dog is mimicking the spread of harm from human to human also administered through physical contact. The idea that malice is spread through physical contact operates on a deeper level in the play, for it is not only the touch of the devil but human-to-human contact that contaminates Edmonton with the social unrest which results in the deaths of several people. Sawyer is driven to the devil by the very human-caused physical abuse of Old Banks. In fact, ‘evil’ is first introduced through physical contact not just in the Sawyer plot but also in the Thorney plot. The physical relationship of Sir Arthur Clarrington and Winnifride leads to the physical relationship of Winnifride and Frank, who then marries Susan. Frank attempts to extract himself from the mess created by this series of physical encounters by “touching” the life of his second wife. Winnifride’s pregnancy, the result of an unwholesome touch of man thus parallels the unwholesome touch of Dog to Sawyer, a relationship that is also explicitly sexual. Cuddy Banks’s description of how he fell in love with Kate Carter also demonstrates an understanding of the physical contact required for magic to be effective. He has been ‘bewitched’ by Kate: “I saw a little devil fly out of her eye like a burbolt, which sticks at this hour up to the feathers in my heart” (II.i.231-33). His explanation demonstrates how exactly it could work, demystifying the effect with the physical presence of the ‘devil’ causing the bewitchment by moving directly from Kate to Cuddy. To counter the effect, Cuddy offers two solutions; either the physical removal of the ‘devil’ or the reverse effect applied to Kate so his love can be requited: “Now my request is to send one of thy what d’ye-call-ems, either to pluck that out, or stick another fast in hers” (II.i.235).

Touching or physical contact was also widely believed to work as counter-magic. The mad Anne Radcliffe references the widely-believed practice that drawing blood out of a witch would prevent further witchcraft: “I prithee let me scratch thy face” (IV.i.198).¹ Rather than scratching the evil out of the witch, as Radcliffe attempts, or tearing her into a

¹ Radcliffe is here alluding to the practice of scratching a witch to reverse the effects of her magic. Keith Thomas explains: “Once she appeared, the victim, it was believed, could put an end to his illness by scratching her and drawing blood; this was ‘the most infallible cure’”, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p.649. In the Revels edition of the play, Corbin & Sedge suggest the act is to draw out the witch’s evil, p. 103n.

thousand pieces, as both Dog and the village threaten to do, they hang her. Sawyer's body is repossessed not by herself in an effort to revoke her pact, but by the village's judicial system which ensures its destruction, a much neater, human-devised method of disposal rather than the gruesome and grotesque destruction wrought on the bodies of Faustus and Alexander Borgia by devils.

Who is to Blame?

Edmonton's infection of evil is thus terminated with the physical destruction of the two bodies blamed for the spread of crime, Sawyer and Frank. Sawyer blames the devil, while Old Thorney insists that the devil is also to blame for the demise of his son. A Giffordian reading of the play indicates that the witch, at least, is used as an instrument of the devil, a vehicle through which he can administer his own *maleficium* irrespective of her wishes. However, the play's exposure of Dog's limitations complicate this interpretation considerably; according to orthodox demonology, Dog's powers do not stretch as far as first suggested. The two murder plots are quite easy to imagine without the presence of the devil. As William Gifford observes, in *The Witch of Edmonton* "not a single circumstance takes place...which calls for intervention of supernatural aid".¹ In his analysis of the play's guilty parties, Dennis Kezar suggests that the presence of the Dog separates fact from hearsay: "as a domestication of the supernatural, this Familiar introduces to the play a means for distinguishing Sawyer's guilt from that circulating in much of the play's community".² In fact, the play clearly establishes both Frank's and Sawyer's guilt – at least in intention – well before the devil enters the scene.

When we first meet Sawyer in Act II, she is desperately looking for some way to ally herself with supernatural forces in order to get revenge on her enemies, even offering her body for the devil's use: "I'd go out of myself / And give this fury leave to dwell within / This ruined cottage ready to fall with age" (II.i.116-18). Sawyer here acknowledges full bodily possession, promising to make way for a devil to occupy her "ruined cottage" of a

¹ William Gifford (ed), *The Dramatic Works of John Ford*, I (London: John Murray, 1827), pp.xix-xx.

² Dennis Kezar, *Guilty Creatures: Renaissance Poetry and the Ethics of Authorship* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), p.133.

body. She is willing to give herself wholesale to the devil, serving as his instrument, but Dog manages her externally instead.¹ Sawyer is still her own person, and not under total influence of the devil. That Sawyer's intentions towards Old Banks and her other neighbours are voiced before the devil materialises is of particular importance. She has the intent to kill, she just needs the means to do so. As discussed above, the play's emphasis on word and the power of word as causing the deed – letting the devil in – is the crime here. When accused of her involvement in Susan's death, Sawyer grumbles "is every devil mine?", trying to rid herself of the blame (V.iii.28). In this case, however, the work is hers. While the real Sawyer denied involvement in the murder of Anne Ratcliffe, in the play she commands it not once but twice. Unlike the stabbing of Susan, Ratcliffe's death is not a direct murder; driven mad after Dog 'touches' her, she commits suicide. Any diabolic assistance is administered in a roundabout way, for Dog is not capable of killing outright. The commands to kill come from the people; Dog merely maximises his opportunities. Dog does not suggest things to Sawyer; she suggests things to him. There is thus a good deal more agency in the witch's intentions than has previously been asserted.

Etta Onat regards Anne's death as a case of demonic possession at Dog's touch, while West similarly declares Frank a victim of non-violent possession.² The latter is more plausible, for Frank's descent into crime parallels Sawyer's in some rather unexpected ways. Sir Arthur, speaking metaphorically of Frank's alleged sins, refers to "the nimble devil / That wantoned in your blood", suggesting Frank's moral purity has been likewise infected by an external demonic force (II.i.78-9).³ Helen Bonavita suggests that the letter Sir Arthur writes to confirm that Frank is not married is something of a Faustian pact: "[t]his bargain, with its outcome of a letter whose purpose is to mislead, echoes the compact between Sawyer and the Devil".⁴ The document eventually binds him to Susan and leads him to commit murder. In this respect, we see Frank attempting (and failing) to mimic the devil's behaviour of 'marrying' his human victims by taking more than one wife. It is Frank's

¹ As discussed in Chapter Four, Dog cannot possess a living human body.

² Etta Soiref Onat (ed), *The Witch of Edmonton: A Critical Edition* (New York: Garland, 1980), p.80; West, p.104.

³ Clark, p.87.

⁴ Helen Vella Bonavita, "Maids, Wives, and Widows: Multiple Meaning and Marriage in *The Witch of Edmonton*", *Parergon* 23.2 (2006), p.83.

bigamy, a defiance of his oath sworn to Winnifride that opens him up to the devil's influence, the formation of an implicit demonic pact. Cameron outlines:

The key point about an 'implicit pact' was that the one who entered into it made no overt or conscious gesture to initiate it. It happened as a result of actions taken recklessly, rather than through a positive decision, let alone some personal encounter with a demon.¹

Thus, the devil can be summoned not just through word but through action. That *Edmonton's* devil is a dog is particularly significant as it is suggestive of the folktales in which the devil would materialise in the form of a dog when humans were engaged in particularly sinful behaviour:

It has often happened to overly eager card players in German legends that they swear by the devil they will win the next hand – only to find shortly thereafter when they stoop to retrieve a card, that there is a huge black dog with glaring eyes under the table.²

In *The Witch of Edmonton* Dog often appears at socially tense situations, or when somebody is on the verge of committing a crime, and he tends to exacerbate the situation. As Dog later illustrates to Cuddy, it is the human sins that allow the devil in:

But when they come to act –
As thy tongue slandering, bearing false witness,
Thy hand stabbing, stealing, cozening, cheating –
He's then within thee. Thou playst, he bets upon thy part.
Although thou lose, yet he will gain by thee (V.i.143-47).

The human thus tempts the devil before the devil tempts the human.

Dog's role in the death of Susan Carter is perhaps the most problematic demonological issue in the play because of the ambiguities arising from the text. Frank tells Susan that, in acting upon his murderous intent, "the devil did not prompt me" but then informs Susan she has "dogged [her] own death" (III.iii.37-9). This issue, however, can be settled not by complex demonological inquiry, but by punctuation. After denying the devil's involvement, Frank's next sentence is "Till this minute you might have safe returned", a clause which makes sense when attached to either sentence (III.iii.37-38). In the original printing it appears as "The devil did not prompt me: till this minute..."³ Earlier editors, such as William Gifford, suggest this is an error on the grounds that "it can scarcely be

¹ Cameron, p.107.

² Barbara Allen Woods, "The Devil in Dog Form", *Western Folklore* 13.4 (1954), p.235.

³ Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton* (London, 1658), p.34.

correct; for, in fact, the Devil did prompt him”.¹ However, both the Revels and New Mermaid editions favour the original printing, which does not make sense in the context of the scene. Either way, it is clear that Frank is confused about the extent of the devil’s involvement. Dog, by contrast, is quite clear in asserting that Frank’s intention is there before he nudges the situation along: “the mind’s about it now” (III.iii.2). Dog’s ‘touch’ to set the body forward thus polishes the incentive to murder, turning thought into action.

In *The Witch of Edmonton*, the community of Edmonton is equally to blame for the demise of Sawyer and is often collectively likened to the devil; Sawyer refer to them as “base curs” who purport to tear her to pieces in much the same way that Dog threatens to if she does not agree to hand over her soul to him. Sawyer herself is called ‘beast’ at several times, a “base hell-hound” and a “grumbling devil”, merging the instrument of the devil with the devil himself (IV.i.55, 86, 103). The role that Sir Arthur Clarington plays in the plot is rather dubious, for much of the blame in the Thorney plot could be pinned on him. Corbin and Sedge note that Clarington plays a devil-like role himself and is a significant source of blame alternative to the devil.²

What is made absolutely explicit at the inception of Sawyer’s witchery is that Dog simply does not have the power to kill, in keeping with orthodox demonology. Weyer states that the devil cannot “be compelled to any evil by the command or the skill of any person or as a result of a pact”.³ Such natural limits are acknowledged by Dog himself, first, rather cruelly, to Mother Sawyer, whose request that Dog kill Old Banks is denied on the grounds that: “though we have power, know it is circumscribed / And tied in limits” (II.i.165-6). Banks is apparently far too virtuous to be touched by the devil. While it is unclear just how virtuous Anne Ratcliffe may be, Susan Carter is undeniably angelic throughout the play, which should render her immune from demonic influence.

Thus the crimes require a great deal of human agency. Humans, equally capable of evil as the devil, are even more culpable. Demonic agency only occurs in *The Witch of Edmonton* when the human incentive is already there. Dog appears to Sawyer *after* she has stated that she wants to become a witch and *after* Frank has got himself involved in his

¹ William Gifford, p.xix-xx.

² Corbin & Sedge, p.18.

³ Weyer, p.99.

bigamous mess. Dog is responsible for neither action; he merely enhances those thoughts, turning them into action with threats in Sawyer's case and a simple nudge for Frank. The devil is an enabler rather than an instigator. The human incentive is already there, and the devil merely acts as a catalyst or a tool to execute the human motivation, taking advantage of the resulting vulnerability. Dog's involvement in the deaths of Anne Ratcliffe, Susan, and Frank are deaths that rely on human intent and human action, as does the attempted murder of Cuddy Banks when he chases the spirit of Kate into the water. These deaths are all achieved in roundabout ways, by manipulating humans into killing other humans. It is important to note that the only two deaths Dog can really count as his own handiwork are Frank's and Sawyer's, not Susan's and Ratcliffe's. Frank is prompted to kill Susan when Dog brushes up against him; the village is prompted to kill Frank after Dog exposes Frank's guilt. It is in Dog's interests to expose Frank's guilt, for it leads to his death at the hands of his community who perform the killing that Dog is unable to do. Anne Ratcliffe is prompted to kill herself when physical contact with Dog drives her mad, and the village is prompted to kill Sawyer for her alleged role in Ratcliffe's death. In each case, the presence of external, hellish evil comes *after* the human motivation. The devil is not there at its inception. This is made quite clear from the Prologue's argument, which lists the human incentives first, only bringing in hell at the end: "Forced marriage, murder; murder blood requires. / Reproach, revenge: revenge hell's help desires", setting up "a perfectly clear chain of causation is set up in which satanic forces can become involved only after manmade marriage practices have wreaked the initial havoc" (Argument.1-2).¹

In examining a play that purports to be a factual retelling of a contemporary witch trial, drawing the line between 'fact' and 'fiction' in the play-world itself is not particularly easy. As this chapter has demonstrated, however, acknowledgment of the play's underlying demonological rationale reveals the limitations to the power of that uncivil pair, the witch and the devil. Indeed, understanding the limitations of the devil's ability to harm people, and to influence their thoughts, enables us to rethink *The Witch of Edmonton's* 'sympathetic' treatment of the witch by acknowledging her very real guilt in the play. The devil is not

¹ Hopkins, p.94.

responsible for the murders in the play because he cannot kill of his own accord. He merely acts on the human intent that is already present; demonic magic is used as a means to an end. It is the process, the method, but not the actual cause. The desire to kill comes from the devil-like human malice itself.

CHAPTER SIX

“Things Transcending Nature”?

Demonism and Metamorphosis in *The Late Lancashire Witches*

“Here hath bin lately a new comedie at the globe called *The Witches of Lancashire*” wrote Nathaniel Tomkyns in August 1634; “there be not in it (to my vnderstanding) any poetical Genius, or art, or language, or judgment to state o^r tenet of witches (w^{ch} I expected)”.¹ Tomkyns, it seems, went to the play expecting to confirm judgment on one of the most extraordinary witchcraft cases in England. He was disappointed. But the question remains: why would a play based on a recent witch trial not offer a clear verdict? In fact there is a perfectly good reason. The verdict was not yet known. At the time the play was first staged, four Lancashire women – victims of the last major witch trial in England – sat in jail awaiting a verdict from the Privy Council that would determine whether or nor they were guilty of witchcraft. Although *The Late Lancashire Witches* seems to present one of the most fantastical displays of magic on the early modern stage, its reception was thus complicated by the possibility that the play was believed to be based on a true story. If any early modern devil drama has an obligation to the ‘truth’ of witchcraft and demonism, that is, to present accurately the extent and limitations of demonic magic, it would surely be *The Late Lancashire Witches*.

At first glance, *The Late Lancashire Witches* seems a world away from the more sophisticated devil dramas discussed in this thesis. Tomkyns’s comments suggest it was all nonsense, revealing no great insight into the nature of witchcraft. Rather than presenting the facts of the witch case seriously and accurately, Tomkyns indicates that the play is instead “full of ribaldrie and of things improbable and impossible”.² In fact, Heywood and Brome, while purporting to present the news, carefully avoid passing judgment on the witches. In order to accommodate both a guilty and a not-guilty verdict, the play sets up two possibilities: it exhibits a sceptical attitude in which the men of the small community establish witchcraft as a convenient excuse; it also demonstrates that the women are clearly

¹ Tomkyns, p.212-13.

² Ibid., p.213.

guilty of witchcraft.¹ We are shown the coven of witches wreaking havoc on their increasingly suspicious neighbours; we are also presented with the idea of witchcraft constructed as a useful mythology by the rest of the community, with no solid proof on which to base their judgment until the very end. Witchcraft is thus revealed as both real and imagined, an immanent threat to social order and a convenient excuse for the natural shortcomings of men. The two sides of the story never properly connect. Indeed, the Epilogue appeals to the audience to decide for themselves, since

We represent as much
As they have done before law's hand did touch
Upon their guilt, but dare not hold it fit,
That we for justices and judges sit (Epilogue.7-10).

Yet the tenet of magic itself is considerably less ambiguous if we consider the source of the power and focus on the role of the devil. While we are given no insight into the individual characters or private motivations of the devils that frequent this play, these domestic demons nevertheless occupy a central role in the drama. By understanding the extent – and constraints – of the power the demons provide their mistresses in *The Late Lancashire Witches*, we can understand the play's adherence to naturalism.

This chapter examines the magic presented in *The Late Lancashire Witches*, asserting that despite its lighthearted tone, the magic is demonologically sound and is thus afforded a greater degree of verisimilitude than has previously been recognised. As the introductory chapter demonstrates, the magic in *Lancashire Witches* is very close to that of *Doctor Faustus*. While Heywood and Brome's play includes some of the least plausible instances of demonic magic (flying, magically-induced impotence, telekinesis, and human-animal metamorphosis), these instances are not staged as mysterious or inexplicable feats. Rather, *The Late Lancashire Witches* demonstrates how exactly they could be achieved. One aspect of Heywood and Brome's drama that might be considered particularly unusual is the frequency with which humans and devils alike are turned into animals. Throughout the play, the four titular witches transform themselves into dogs, hares, and cats, as well as

¹ Matthew Steggle confirms that “critical debate around the Brome/Heywood play has tended to focus on the question of how sympathetically or otherwise, and how realistically or otherwise, the witches are presented”. *Richard Brome: Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.58.

transforming several other characters into horses. The play itself is hugely concerned with the human form and, like Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, tells "of shapes transformed to bodies strange" (I.1). Indeed, human-animal transformation is usually associated with Ovidian mythology rather than rationalised demonological 'science'. Yet despite the play featuring some of the most far-fetched ideas about witchcraft, this chapter demonstrates that Heywood and Brome keep their magic within the bounds of a demonological realism. The transformations in *The Late Lancashire Witches* are so frequent and fluid that it seems that the human-animal divide is arbitrary and easily transcended. Yet while the play challenges the human-animal boundaries to a greater extent than any other supernatural drama, the magic does not transcend the laws of nature; the transformations are neither complete nor permanent.

"Things 'Transcending Nature?'" will first demonstrate that the magic displayed in *The Late Lancashire Witches* is consistent with early modern orthodox demonology. The chapter then focuses specifically on the question of demonic metamorphosis, outlining that the play does – and must – reject Ovidian associations in order for the magic to be presented as 'natural'. In fact, adherence to demonological realism is key to understanding the witches' guilt. Although the play stops short of passing judgment on the case itself, as Tomkyns outlines, it nevertheless demonstrates how the witches *could* be guilty of performing real magic by revealing the method and limitations of their witchcraft. More broadly, this chapter demonstrates that the representation of demonic magic on the early modern English stage was consistent across the period. *The Late Lancashire Witches* was one of the last devil dramas to appear before the theatres closed in 1642, and the play adheres to the same demonological principles established in the *Faustus*, *Friar Bacon*, and the other devil dramas of the early 1590s.¹

The Late Lancashire Witches appeared in particularly unusual circumstances. Based on the trial of a group of Lancashire women in 1633-4, the case had piqued the interest of the

¹ Only four known plays that feature devils were written after *The Late Lancashire Witches*: Davenant's *Luminalia* (1637), Shirley's *St. Patrick for Ireland* (1637), Kirke's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* (1638), and Jonson's unfinished *The Sad Shepherd* (1640).

general public and the play was just one of several forms of the story in circulation.¹ Much of what we know of the case comes from John Webster's *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (1677), and Webster supposedly interviewed the child accuser, Edmund Robinson, himself.² Following a widescale witch hysteria in which at least twenty were accused of witchcraft, four of those accused were brought to London to be tried by the Privy Council in June 1634. Given the widespread interest in the case, we can assume that many of the audience members attended the play expecting to learn about the trial, as Tomkyns did.³ The significant presence of metamorphosis in the play comes straight from the trial itself, and human-animal transformations formed a central part of the witness's account. Robinson claimed he had encountered two greyhounds that transformed into Frances Dicconson and a demon child when he beat them. Dicconson allegedly then transformed the demon child into a white horse and took Robinson to a witch feast.⁴ This incident is lifted wholesale into the play and accompanied by many more acts of metamorphosis.⁵ The witches transform both themselves and their neighbours into animals throughout the play, reducing the entire community to a devil-filled menagerie. Yet they do so within natural boundaries; their 'transformations' are frequently exposed as temporary and illusory.

¹ Laird H. Barber describes the popularity of the story in his 1979 edition of the play: "certainly the witches became a cause célèbre. Two pamphlets, "The Witches Dance" and "Prophane Pastime or the Witches Mad Humors" were entered in the Stationers Register on 22 August 1634. And, even on July 1635, there was still excitement; among the entertainments to be seen at Oxford was "the Witches of Lancashire over against the King's Head, their tricks, meetings". The sensation lasted a long time". Laird H. Barber, *An Edition of the Late Lancashire Witches* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1979), p.73.

² Webster (1610-1682), sigs. Yy2r–Yy3r.

³ Tomkyns indicates that the play ran for "three dayes together", p.212. This was highly unusual and, as Helen Ostovich notes, "a surprising fact in itself". Helen Ostovich, "Introduction to *The Late Lancashire Witches*", *Richard Brome Online* (<http://hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 25 September 2013), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4.

⁴ Webster (1610-1682), sigs. Yy2r.

⁵ How Heywood and Brome accessed this material in time to include it in the play is unclear. Herbert Berry suggests that they were given the interview with Edmund Robinson and the confession of Margaret Johnson, one of the accused, in a bid to sway the verdict of the trial. See Herbert Berry, "The Globe Bewitched and El Hombre Fiel," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, (1984), pp.211-30.

Demonology in *The Late Lancashire Witches*

Like *The Witch of Edmonton*, the play is set in neither a fantastical location nor a foreign country, and the familiarity dictated by a local English setting grounds the play in a greater sense of realism than that in the Jacobean witch dramas, Jonson's *The Masque of Queens* and Middleton's *The Witch*, or the classically-inspired witches of Marston's *Sophonisba* and Lyly's *Endymion*. The pneumatological realism of *The Late Lancashire Witches* distinguishes it from works of pure fantasy (such as *The Witch*) or classical mythology (exemplified by Medea in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) by making clear the methods by which these witches performed their magic. There is nothing especially atypical of the devil's involvement in the Lancashire community. As West observes, the magic in this play is "plainly and ungrudgingly orthodox".¹ Indeed, despite its vastly different setting, tone, and circumstances, the magic is more or less the same as that featured in *Doctor Faustus*. All of *Lancashire's* magic had appeared on the stage many times before, and is thus clearly governed by the same demonological convictions as its predecessors. While much of the magic comes straight from the trial record, it is not at odds with the way magic was ordinarily performed on the stage. In *Lancashire*, the devil is used to fetch consumable goods from distant locations, disrupt social festivities and rituals through invisible spirits, assist in public sexual humiliation, transport characters through the air and produce illusory 'shows'. *Lancashire* also features copulation with a devil and onstage human-animal transformation as part of the usual tricks and uses of stage devils. Most importantly, Heywood and Brome offer an explanation for *how* the devil is able to operate in the material world and how he is constrained. Like Marlowe's play, the devil's workings – and his limitations – are laid bare for the audience to see. Although we do not see the events from the devil's point of view, or hear any spirit talk (unless disguised as somebody else), the audience can be in no doubt of the devil's presence in the play, his importance to the magic itself, and the clear restrictions that do not allow him to defy the laws of nature. *The Late Lancashire Witches* may

¹ West, *The Invisible World*, p.154.

challenge the boundaries of the natural but the witches do not, as one character claims, exhibit “prodigies [or] things transcending nature”(I.i.5-6).

Accordingly, much of the magic is centred on visual deception and aerial manipulation. The spectacular magic shows in the play are more reminiscent of the magician’s pageants than the much more limited magic of Mother Sawyer, thus demonstrating that the effectiveness of magic was based on natural abilities and power; the power and success of the magic is not determined by gender, but by mastery, as Chapter Three illustrates. The witches’ respective relationships with their familiars are much more functional than that between Dog and Mother Sawyer, a symbiotic partnership in which the silent familiars – Mawsy, Puckling, Mamilion – execute the women’s commands unquestioningly in exchange for blood. The witches have certainly mastered their demonic spirits, thus producing very effective magic. The relationships they have formed with the devils seem to be genuinely affectionate rather than the stern command Friar Bacon wields: while dancing with the spirits, the witches feed them blood as well, chanting “Fall each to his duggy, /While kindly we huggy, /As tender as nurse over boy” (IV.i.110-13). Each devil serves as both a husband and a child, echoing Faustus’s ‘marriage’ to Mephistopheles and the passionate tones he uses to describe the relationship: “Had I as many souls as there be stars, / I’d give them all for Mephistopheles” (I.iii.104-5). Mistress Generous later reveals that, having sold her soul to the devil, she is loyal to him rather than her husband. She has sworn fealty to a rival master, and this one allows her a greater sense of freedom and enables her to exercise a greater degree of authority.

Yet this freedom and authority is wholly natural, since, in keeping with orthodox demonology, magic functions as a means to an end, not as the end itself. Throughout the play, the witches use their magic as a form of effective problem solving. When Robert declines to spend the evening with Moll Spencer as he must get his master wine, Moll suggests he can do both: “I’ll undertake you shall be at Lancaster, and twice as far, and yet at home time enough, an be ruled by me”(II.vi.20-22). She simply replaces her lover’s horse with a beast capable of carrying both of them. Moll makes it clear she has not transformed the original horse but replaced it with a “black long-sided jade”, since Robert’s “was too

short to carry double such a journey” (II.vi.58, 60-61). The new steed is, of course, a devil disguised as a horse, capable of flying through the air at record speeds; this demonic transvection enables Robert to “ride above three hundred miles in eight hours” (III.ii.15). According to conventional demonology, this was entirely possible. Clark writes that “[b]oth theology and physics allowed for [transvection], and the ‘constant and concordant confessions of witches’ confirmed it”.¹ Robert later specifies they rode on a “raw-boned devil (as, in my heart, it was a devil)” (III.ii.74-5). Moll employs spirits to perform her household tasks as well. Robert swears he saw a broom move by itself, and she is able to make a pail move on stage without touching it. Rather than wonder at the marvel, however, Robert immediately suspects the devil is responsible for its workings: “And I do think there is so much of the devil in’t” (II.vi.48-9). The devil is the natural explanation for these unusual feats because the devil’s involvement is the only way Moll’s actions could be explained in the first place.

Elsewhere in the play, the witches summon food to them rather than fetching it themselves. In order to acquire sustenance for their illicit banquet in the barn, the witches spirit away the feast from the wedding of Lawrence and Parnell, just as Bacon summons a feast from various sources and Mephistopheles fetches delicacies from the other side of the world. Unlike Faustus, the Lancashire witches source the food locally. Of course, they cannot get something for nothing, and the stolen feast is substituted with a variety of inedible off-cuts reminiscent of the repulsive ingredients used by the witches in *Macbeth* and *The Witch*. One distraught guest declares: “all the meat is flown out o’ the chimney top, I think, and nothing instead of it but snakes, bats, frogs, beetles, hornets, and humble-bees. All the salads are turned to Jew’s-ears, mushrooms, and puckfists, and all the custards into cow-shards!” (III.i.121-126). The food cannot just disappear; it needs to physically exit the premises. Since the borrowed feast is a real one, not an illusion like Ariel’s vanishing banquet in *The Tempest*, the witches cannot make the remnants disappear. Instead they call on their spirits to clear away the mess “so those that are our waiters near, / Take hence this wedding cheer”; they exercise their authority over the demons by treating them as ordinary

¹ Clark, p.206. This transport is not instantaneous. Devils, like humans, must physically travel the distance, and this takes time, if not as much time as it would a person. Puck, for example, can “put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes” (II.i.175).

human servants (IV.1.94-5). In fact, the witches steal the entire party, poaching the music as well. In an incident reminiscent of the devil dancing the morris in *The Witch of Edmonton*, the hired musicians cannot keep in time: “As [the guests] begin to dance, [the musicians] play another tune then [each plays a different tune]” (3.3.s.d). They then lose the ability to play at all. The Fiddler declares they are playing “as loud as we can possibly”, but the guests all state they hear “nothing” (III.iii.146, 150). Aided by their devils, the witches have relocated the sound. Since music cannot be conjured from thin air, in order to produce it the musicians must keep playing their instruments in apparent silence. The natural music is merely transferred, not created by the witches themselves. Magic’s workings – and consequently its limitations – are thus outlined to the audience.

There is nothing particularly unusual about this kind of magic – transference and substitution but not creation – which all appear frequently in devil dramas. However, *The Late Lancashire Witches* also features some more uncommon kinds of magic. The wedding scene includes a particular branch of witchcraft that demonologists across Europe found especially concerning: impotence. At the wedding, Moll enacts revenge on the bridegroom, a former lover, by presenting him with a ‘point’: “it may stand you in stead anon, when all your points are ta’en away, to truss up your trinkets, I mean your slops, withal” (III.iii.133-35). Tomkyns refers to the episode as “the tying of a knott at a mariage (after the French manner) to cassate masculine abilitie”.¹ Sexual humiliation is a notable feature of devil plays (The Knight’s cuckold’s horns in *Faustus*, Old Banks charmed to kiss the rear end of a cow every hour in *The Witch of Edmonton*, and Bacon’s cuckolding Vandermast in *John of Bordeaux*, for example). However, using magic to cause impotence seldom features in early modern English drama, although it is joked about in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.² The incident in *Lancashire* is not sourced from the trial and, as Tomkyns indicates, this particular sort of magic was associated with Continental practices. Catherine Rider notes that impotence-by-magic was first recorded by a Florentine physician in the early fifteenth century, and she references several other cases in France and Italy.³ As Rider observes, by

¹ Tomkyns, p.212.

² See Nancy Cotton, “Castrating (W)itches: Impotence and Magic in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38.3 (1987), pp.320-326.

³ Catherine Rider, *Magic and Impotence in the Middle Ages*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) p. 197.

the fifteenth century “magically-caused impotence was a clearly defined phenomenon and the rules that governed cases were well established”.¹ Most demonologies describe the devil’s ability to do so in great detail, and the act was generally believed to fall within the bounds of the ‘natural’. James I writes that the devil can weaken the “nature” of some men “to make them unable for women”, and the *Malleus Maleficarum* in particular devotes many chapters to the question of whether witches were really capable of channeling the devil’s power to impede male performance.² Kramer explains that impotence is usually caused by the removal of male genitalia but this is, of course, a demonic illusion: “the things done by workers of harmful magic in this regard, however, are done simply by deceit and illusion”, and “there is no deception when comes to the fact of the matter, because [the victim’s] rod is still attached to his person. But there is deception when it comes to the sense organs”.³ Through devils, witches could manipulate vision to give the impression that the necessary organ has disappeared. Kramer explains that the devil can either “interpose a perfectly smooth body between his organ of sight and touch, so he will think he has no penis”, or insert an image into the victim’s mind “which the senses then interpret as real”.⁴ Unsurprisingly, Scot denies the possibility altogether, but this doesn’t stop him from recounting some of the more lurid anecdotes of impotence from *Malleus Maleficarum*.⁵ Johann Weyer denies that genitalia can be removed “by a charm”, but states that demons can still induce impotence “by natural means”.⁶ In fact, all of these accounts are concerned with establishing the limitations of such magic. Kramer, like Weyer, specifies that “in no way should anyone believe that these parts of the body are torn out by the roots or separated from the body”, instead describing a natural method, not based on a illusion, that prevents an erection by “closing the seminal ducts so that the semen cannot make its way down to the testicles”.⁷ The devil thus inserts a barrier, an act more physical than magical.

¹ Rider, p.186.

² James I, p.150. Kramer include chapters on: “Do Witches employ illusions to trick people into thinking that [men’s] penises have been entirely uprooted from their bodies” (pp.84-87); “How [witches] usually impede the power of generation, or [inflict] other deficiencies” (pp.145-47); “How they usually remove penises” (pp.150-54); “Remedies for those whose generative power has been affected by harmful magic” (pp.187); Remedies for those whose penises are removed by the art of illusion, and for those occasions when people are changed into animal-shape” (pp.189-90).

³ Kramer, pp.84-85.

⁴ Ibid., p.85.

⁵ Scot, p.44.

⁶ Weyer, p.332.

⁷ Kramer, p.168.

Lawrence's impotence is caused by a similar physical constraint rather than a demonic illusion. Moll herself tells Lawrence that the 'point' will prevent him from consummating his marriage. That he must tie it on implies a form of natural constraint, an indirect rather than direct use of magic, and one whose method is not concealed from the audience. The issue is resolved when the codpiece point is taken off and burned; to reverse the magic, the barrier is simply removed.¹

Like most of the magic in *Late Lancashire Witches*, Lawrence's temporary impotence is part of a wide-scale destabilisation of patriarchal authority. Unsurprisingly, the devil's magic is used to upset the social order of the community. This destabilisation is also reflected in the spirit shows that Mistress Generous summons up to enact revenge for her dimwitted nephew, Whetstone. Rather than summoning up illustrious figures from the ancient world as Bacon, Faustus, and Merlin do, the witches again source their inspiration locally. The spirits appear as Bantam's old tutor, "a pedant in my father's house, who, being young, taught me my A, B, C" (IV.v.34-5); as Shakestone's family tailor, known to Shakestone "ever since I was a child" (IV.v.55); and the groom who served Arthur's father "in's youth" (IV.v.70). The effect is just as profound as the more exotic magician shows, however: the men are horrified. Since Whetstone has promised to allow each man to see his father, these spirit manifestations proclaim each of Whetstone's assailants to be of illegitimate parentage, cuckolding their assumed 'fathers' and thus casting doubt on the men's claim to superiority over Whetstone because they are 'gentlemen'.

In keeping with other early modern devil dramas, the workings of this magic in *The Late Lancashire Witches* are made evident before the disguised spirits are made to appear. The show is preceded by the witches discussing their next plan and how it will be executed, leaving the audience in no doubt about the true nature of the apparitions:

To bring a new conceit to pass.
Thy spirit I must borrow more,
To fill the number three or four,
Whom we will use to no great harm,

¹ Kramer suggests alternate cures for devil-induced impotence, outlining that it could be remedied by the witch simply placing her hand on the apparently missing organ to dispel the illusion. Another cure is to "come to a friendly arrangement with the witch responsible", p.190. Scot devotes a chapter to describing "Certaine Popish and magicall cures for them that are bewitched in their privities". The list includes the eating of "haggister" or pie, the smoke of the tooth of a dead man, anointing the entire body with the gall of a crow, and urinating through a wedding ring. p.47.

Only assist me with thy charm (IV.iv.56-60).

Here Mistress Generous confirms the need for (insubstantial) spirits, and the exact number required. During the scene, Mistress Generous calls in the spirits one by one, clearly directing the whole affair. Prospero's conversations with Ariel produce the same effect, functioning as a sort of early modern director's commentary. In learning how the magical feints and illusions are to be performed, the audience are never allowed to be taken by surprise. Each illusion is preceded by a pre-emptive disillusionment, firmly establishing a sense of realism that is never really shaken off.

While *The Late Lancashire Witches* demonstrates demonic verisimilitude, it lacks the pathos and elevated language of *Faustus* or even *The Witch of Edmonton*.¹ Tomkyns notes that "the onely tragicall part of the storie" is when Mistress Generous, on being caught, begs her husband's forgiveness.² Here Mistress Generous reveals to her husband that she has made a "contract with that fiend, / The enemy of mankind", admitting she has "promise'd him my soul" (IV.ii.163-65). However, in a move that echoes Friar Bacon's confidence that "repentance can do much" (xiv.99), Mistress Generous evidently believes her soul can be retrieved: "I hope I never bargain'd for that fire / Further than penitent tears have power to quench" (IV.ii.182-183). Her husband forgives her, satisfied that her tears are "full of true-hearted penitence" (IV.ii.196). This too proves to be false. Mistress Generous later boasts to Moll that

Some passionate words mix'd with forc'd
Tears did so enchant his eyes and ears,
I made my peace, with promise never
To do the like. But once and ever
A witch, thou knowest. Now, understand,
New business we took in hand.
My husband pack'd out of the town,
Know that the house and all's our own (IV.iv.25-32).

Her tears are a human feint that works in the same way as demonic transformations.

Mistress Generous alters her outward appearance to mask her true, unrepentant resolve.

Her repentance and submission are in essence an effective piece of theatre.

¹ Barber wryly observes that: "As a reader of Shakespeare, one might be looking for passages of fine dramatic poetry. There is an almost total lack of such passages in *The Late Lancashire Witches*", p.88.

² Tomkyns, p.212.

The Late Lancashire Witches has an intriguing relationship with theatricality itself, with the illusions and spectacles produced by the devil via the witches. In the play, even the most spectacular off-stage magic is preceded by an onstage occurrence of the same feat to leave the audience in no doubt that its workings are natural and achieved through manipulating visual perception. In fact, the theatre serves as an unexpected discerner of truth for the play takes care to perform the magic on the stage, outlining how it is done before the same feats of magic (if on a slightly grander scale) happen offstage. The ‘truth’ of the magic is thus determined by whether humans could simulate its effects on stage. The play thus confirms, as other devil dramas do, that the devil’s tricks can be easily simulated by humans. Since both are confined to the laws of nature, humans are equally capable of producing the same effects. As the Tomkyns letter illustrates, the method behind the magic is all too apparent in the witches’ stolen feast: “all sorts of meat and drinke conveyed vnto them by their familiars vpon the pulling of a cord”.¹ While this may seem like a convenient stage trick, bringing in food from somewhere rather than making it appear from thin air (clearly for consumption rather than an illusion of food) in fact comes straight from the trial.

According to Webster:

seeing divers of the said company going into a Barn near adjoining, [Robinson] followed after them, and there he saw six of them kneeling, and pulling all six of them six several ropes, which were fastened or tied to the top of the Barn. Presently after which pulling, there came into this Informer’s sight flesh smoaking, butter in lumps, and milk as it were flying from the said ropes.²

When Moll performs small magic tricks – the moving pail or the automated broom – Robert is conveniently at hand to spell out that the otherwise mysterious acts are the work of invisible devils. Even if the audience cannot see the devils, they can be certain that devils are there, working the magic through wholly ‘natural’ methods.

¹ Tomkyns, p.212.

² Webster (1610-1682), sig.Yy3r.

Metamorphosis and Demonology

As in *The Witch of Edmonton*, the witchcraft in *The Late Lancashire Witches* is closely aligned with popular festivities and local celebration. Much of the action centres on the wedding of Lawrence and Parnell, the ‘stolen’ celebration undertaken by the witches in the barn, and the Skimmington, the display of charivari that mocks the failed wedding night. Clark outlines the link between demonism and popular social ritual: “[t]he street charivari, in which partners in incompatible or violent marriages ... were ridiculed by the symbolic ride backwards and by the making of ‘counter-music’, focused on the dangerous social and moral inversions implied when familiar disorder threatened patriarchal rule”.¹ Puritan anxieties about such festivities ‘letting the devil in’ condemned such practices.² *The Late Lancashire Witches* confirms these fears, as the arrival of the devil in the community has thus enabled absolute chaos, the social inversion usually reserved for festivities.³ Nowhere is the social inversion better exemplified than in the subversion of human-animal boundaries in the play, through both transformation and behaviour. In fact, the social tensions in the community are played out in animal form. In doing so, *The Late Lancashire Witches* acknowledges both the precarious boundary between human and animal identity and the devil’s ability to confuse these boundaries. The arrival of the devil in the Lancashire community triggers a destabilisation of human form as both the witches and their hapless victims begin to adopt the devil’s animalistic appearance. As Chapter Four outlines, the devil was traditionally depicted as a hybrid human-animal, an assemblage of various animal parts, although he had been appearing in human form since Mephistopheles first walked onto the stage in the guise of a Franciscan friar at least four decades before *Lancashire* was staged. In *Lancashire*, the devils appear in a variety of animal forms, and so do the witches.

¹ Clark, p.17.

² See Leah Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

³ The witches indicate that they usually meet on holidays: “Because the beast did miss us last Good Friday Feast” (IV.iv.9-10), and “But All Saints’ night she met, though did halt outright” (IV.iv.12-13). *The Late Lancashire Witches* is clearly concerned with social inversion, exhibiting a keen anxiety about women on top. Mistress Generous defies her husband’s wish for her not to associate with the other women and leave the house without her permission. The Seely household is “now turn’d topsy-turvy” (I.i. 251). The Seely parents wait on their children, while the children wait on the servants. The presence of witches in the community is as much about empowering the women as it is about drawing attention to male shortcomings.

As Robinson's account indicates, they even appear in identical forms which thus render the human and the devil indistinguishable.

Of all the supernatural feats to appear in the early modern theatre, staged human-animal metamorphosis is undoubtedly the most difficult to comprehend. The most well-known instance is Bottom's transformation into an ass in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Others include the man who appears as a bear by day in Peele's *The Old Wives Tale* and the transformation of two clowns into an ape and a dog as punishment for wasting the devil's time in *Doctor Faustus*. This apparent transcendence of human-animal boundaries is often a source of comedy, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is frequently cited in magic plays, suggesting a clear link between the comical onstage transformations and the hugely popular fantastical transformations described by Ovid. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Ovidian connections are clear and as Paster and Howard illustrate, "educated members of Shakespeare's first audience would have recognised the literary allusions embedded in Bottom's transformation".¹ One would thus assume that Ovidian transformations were naturally aligned with the devil-powered animal transformations instigated by witches, the latter reminiscent of the transformative powers of Medea and Circe in *Metamorphoses*. As Cora Fox illustrates, "both Ovidianism and writings on witchcraft share an interest in the metamorphic body" and "*Metamorphoses* was instrumental in perpetuating the literary type of the witch mainly through the figure of Medea".²

Metamorphoses (or the illusion thereof) are featured prominently in early modern folk tales. While Jonson's play is titled *The Devil is an Ass*, in popular literature it was usually the human who was turned into an ass by the devil, not the other way around. In fact, literary incidents of humans being turned into asses are surprisingly common. The motif appears in the eleventh book of *Metamorphoses*, when Midas is given the ears of an ass by Apollo. The incident was dramatised in John Lyly's 1589 play *Midas*, and also features in William Adlington's popular translation of Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* (1566).³ In the latter

¹ Gail Kern Paster and Skiles Howard (ed), *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Texts and Contexts*. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's; Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p.275.

² Cora Fox, "Authorising the Metamorphic Witch: Ovid in Reginald Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft" in *Metamorphosis: The Changing Face of Ovid in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Alison Keith and Stephen Rupp (eds) (Toronto: CRRS Publications, 2007), p.165.

³ William Adlington. *The Golden Ass* (London, 1566).

text, Apuleius is transformed with a witch's ointment; rubbing a substance on the surface thus changes the surface's appearance. In the storytelling competition between Mother Bombie, Mother Redcap, Mother Howlet and Gammer Gurton in Drayton's "Mooncalfe" (1627), Mother Howlet tells the story of a "war wolfe" who was thwarted by a man who had been turned into an ass by witchcraft.¹ In Scot's critique of Bodin, he claims that the French demonologist "saith [witches] speciale transubstantiate themselves into wolves, and them whom they bewitch into asses".² Weyer also discusses the transformation of a man into an ass, turned so by a pair of witches who made a living by transforming their lodgers into animals to sell to merchants.³ In *The Devil is an Ass*, Jonson draws a firm line between the literal and the metaphorical. Fitzdottrel, as well as Pug, is rendered a figurative ass for the ease at which he is gulled by his human fiends. Wittipol, when speaking for Lady Fitzdottrel, pokes fun at her husband's asininity: "I have a husband, and a two-legged one. / But such a moonling, as no wit of man / Or roses can redeem from being an ass", referencing *Lucius, sive Asinus*, in which Lucius reclaims his human form by eating roses (I.vi.157-59). Scot, again slamming Bodin, states that in witchcraft, men are usually transformed into asses as a punishment for curiosity "for that such have beene desirous to understand the secrets of witches".⁴ While most of these stories seem to be evidence the marvelous, "the supernatural accepted in a fictional context" as Todorov describes, these stories nevertheless reflect an early modern anxiety about the uncertainty of the distinction between humans and animals.⁵

As many scholars have noted, the line between humans and animals occupied a precarious position in the early modern collective imagination, with the distinction not dependent on form but on behaviour.⁶ Traditionally, humans were distinguished from animals on anatomical grounds. Plato (and later Albertus Magnus) differentiated between animals and humans on the basis that animals were hairier, humans could laugh, animal

¹ Michael Drayton, "The Moon-Calfe" in *the Battaile of Agincourt* (London, 1627).

² Scot, p.51.

³ Weyer, pp.192-193.

⁴ Scot, p.52.

⁵ Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, p.41.

⁶ See, for example, Erica Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Ithaca ; London: Cornell University Press, 2006); Joyce Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*, (London: Routledge, 2011); Caroline Bynum Walker, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York ; Cambridge ; London: MIT Press, 2005).

sperm was not affected by the heavenly bodies, and the difference in head position. An animal looks down at the ground, while the head of the biped human is upright, in the heavens. The two other important distinctions were language and hands, or opposable thumbs which enabled humans to utilise tools. The uniqueness of the human hand, first outlined in Galen's *De usu partium*, was a particularly important distinction. In *The Late Lancashire Witches*, that the only proof of witchcraft is a human hand is particularly significant since it confirms that a human, not an animal, is really responsible for the unrest that plagues the community. These human-animal distinctions are based on both appearance and behaviour, yet the behavioural distinction was particularly pertinent in early modern England. Salisbury observes that while human-animal boundaries were clearly established in early medieval thought, after the twelfth century, "the paradigm of separation of species was breaking down. It was harder to determine what defined an animal and what was definitely human".¹ Salisbury cites the increased interest in (largely fictional) hybrid animals from classical sources and folktales, and later the increased interest in the devil, usually depicted as a human-animal hybrid himself, as one of the major causes for this destabilisation.² Robert Burton outlines three differences between humans and animals that are all behavioural-based. He asserts that animals lack proper understanding, innate notions, and self-reflection.³ The difference between humans and animals is thus not in their form but in their ability to reason. Erica Fudge explains in *Brutal Reasoning* that the anatomical similarities between animals and humans were known and well-documented: "put simply, early modern anatomists knew that the human body and the animal body were almost identical in the structure and overall workings of many of their organs".⁴ The lack of ability to reason was thus the defining characteristic of the animal/human divide. Thus, while the position and nature of the animal was firmly fixed, humans were in a precarious position. Keith Thomas asserts that "it was because the separateness of the human race was thought so precarious, so easily lost, that the boundary had been so tightly guarded",⁵ and Fudge confirms that "animals were needed in order to express the superiority of

¹ Salisbury, p.1

² Ibid, p.122-134.

³ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London, 1621), p.41.

⁴ Fudge, p.7.

⁵ Thomas, *Man in the Natural World*, p.135.

humans – to place men next to angels, in fact. But by holding this position, animals constantly undermined ideas of difference and superiority”.¹

In *The Late Lancashire Witches*, the human-animal transformations certainly undermine anyone’s sense of superiority. At first it would seem that the numerous instances of metamorphosis in Lancashire have a levelling effect as, by adopting animal forms (whether by choice or otherwise) the witches, the community, and the demons themselves are indistinguishable in a village-wide descent to the bestial. Indeed, towards the end of the play, Doughty claims to have caught a “kennel” of witches, the community’s transformation not lost on the witch hunter (V.v.117). Salisbury illustrates that in the many legends of metamorphoses, those transformed usually exhibited particular behavioural traits of the animal in question, the bestial nature within manifested in the transformation.² Bottom’s transformation into an ass in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is pre-empted by the mulish behaviour of the weaver. Andreas Höfele explains: “he even becomes more truly Bottom because, re-embodied as an ass, he reveals what he has been all along; becoming an animal shows his true character”.³ Thus, the devil’s act of disguising the outward appearance of a human paradoxically reveals the animal tendencies within. Behaving like an animal prompts a change into the appearance of an animal, suggesting that the boundaries between the two species were by no means absolute.

The frequent instances of metamorphoses in *The Late Lancashire Witches* in fact instigate a reversal of power. Like much of the magic in the play, the acts of metamorphoses destabilise patriarchal order. For the women in the community, taking animal form represents freedom; for the men it means submission. The animalistic transformations the witches inflict on others provide a means of controlling the men while allowing the women to unleash their own passions and exercise their own authority over the community. This is evident in the forms the women adopt by choice as witches – greyhounds, cats, and hares, all wily, wild animal forms that enable them to escape the clutches of their menfolk. When the Edmund Robinson figure ‘Boy’ finds a witch and her

¹ Fudge, p.192.

² Salisbury, p.159.

³ Andreas Höfele, *Stage, Stake, & Scaffold: Humans and Animals in Shakespeare’s Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.35.

demon disguised as greyhounds, these ‘dogs’ are wearing collars and leads, indicating they have evaded their domestic control. In contrast, the men are transformed into horses, lumbering beasts of burden that, while physically bigger than the other animals, are easily bridled. The clever witches thus dominate the men in animal as well as human form, escaping their submission by reigning in male control quite literally.¹

In *Lancashire* the transformations are used as punishments, the devil employed to administer ‘justice’ to those who threaten the witches’ autonomy. Such punishment is a reoccurring theme in devil dramas, whether it be the transformations of Rafe and Robin or the loss of reason brought on by madness inflicted on Vandermast in *John of Bordeaux*, Anne Ratcliffe in *The Witch of Edmonton*, and Sebastian, Antonio, and Alonso in *The Tempest* when Ariel proclaims “You are three men of sin... I have made you mad” (III.iii.53, 58). Hirsch writes that “biblical literature endorsed transformation as a divine punishment for wickedness and disobedience” and this is exactly what happens in *Lancashire*.² The miller is punished for interfering with the witches’ revels, stripped naked and tied to one of the sails of his windmill, losing the outward symbols of human civility and thus human identity.³ Moll punishes her former lover for previous heartbreak by interfering with his wedding night; Robin is punished by being turned into a horse for denying Mistress Generous her freedom. The Edmund Robinson character is punished for beating the witches-as-dogs by being turned into a horse himself. Unjust or inhumane behaviour thus warrants a punishment befitting an animal.

¹ Alison Findlay points out that the bridle resembles the scold’s bridle, “the notorious punishment for the unquiet woman”, and that in using it Mistress Generous “appropriates the instrument of torture and turns in back on its inventors” in “Sexual and Spiritual Politics in the events of 1633-34 and *The Late Lancashire Witches*”, *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories*, ed. Robert Poole (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002), p.157. The presence of horses or people/devils disguised as horses is particularly significant in *The Late Lancashire Witches* in terms of the witch-men powerplay. As Ostovich notes, “the representation of horses...is a vital spectacle that guides meaning: who is riding whom, and for what purpose”. *Richard Brome Online*. Gabriel Egan confirms: “The seeds of [social] inversion are clearly presented in *The Witches of Lancashire*, and in particular in its depiction of the relationship between horses and human beings.” “‘Ride me as You Would be Rid’: The Horse in Brome and Heywood’s *The Witches of Lancashire*”, *Conference of the Renaissance and Early Modern Horse* (Roehampton University, London, 2009), p.5.

² Brett D. Hirsch, “An Italian Werewolf in London: Lycanthropy and *The Duchess of Malfi*”, *Early Modern Literary Studies* 11.2 (2005), p.2

³ Thomas asserts: “Nakedness was bestial, for clothes, like cooking, were a distinctively human attribute”. *Man and the Natural World*, p.38. Salisbury confirms: “Clothing, too, is central to the definition of humanity. Only humans were self-conscious enough to clothe themselves, and the wearing of clothes was one of the things that medieval people thought separated humans from some of the monstrous races that were nude”, p.147.

Transformations also allow both the witches and their victims to indulge in animal passions, evidently a particular concern of the play. Indeed, in *The Late Lancashire Witches*, the sexual connotations are difficult to miss. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Bottom is transformed for sexual reasons. Having first ridden to London and back on a transformed horse, and then being transformed into a horse himself, Robert's speech is indicative of both his sexual relationship with Moll and Mistress Generous's sexual dominance in "riding" him against her husband's wishes. In contrast, "Lusty Lawrence" is made impotent on his wedding night, his animal passion stripped from him. Moll thus emphasises Robert's virility while robbing her former partner of his. Lawrence is not the only member of the community to exhibit sexual frustration. As Charlotte Coffin points out, the failure of butter to thicken after lengthy churning, a theme appearing in at least three other magic plays, has sexual associations in Lancashire: "[s]exual frustration is also suggested by the Miller's complaints about 'butter'; 'we could not make it come, though she and I both together churned almost our hearts out, and nothing would come'".¹

In their ability to transform both themselves and the men in the community, the four Lancashire witches recall the powers of the classical sorceresses Circe and Medea, both known for their abilities to transform humans into animals. Clark illustrates that these women symbolised "the sway of passions and the force of the irrational. Metamorphosis was readily understood as a metaphor for the transformation which vice could inflict".² Indeed, the other forms of magic in the play are also transformations: Lusty Lawrence is transformed into a disappointing bridegroom; a wedding feast is transformed into putrid off-cuts; three gentlemen are 'transformed' into bastards by Mistress Generous's apparitions. This descent into chaos, chiefly through metamorphosis by the witches, thus suggests that the play has strong echoes of these classical witches.

This is hardly surprising, considering the extreme popularity of Ovid at the time. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* enjoyed an increased popularity in the twelfth century that continued

¹ Charlotte Coffin, "Theatre and/as Witchcraft: A Reading of *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634)", (Unpublished manuscript for *Early Theatre*, 2012). The three plays are *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Devil is an Ass*, and *The Witch of Edmonton*.

² Clark, p.649.

throughout the Renaissance.¹ Indeed, Paster and Howard assert that “the idea of metamorphosis is so common in European literature that it is tempting to see its fascination as universal”.² Such “Circean configurations” were very common in medieval and early modern literature.³ The enduring popularity of Ovid was complemented by the rising interest in demonology after the Reformation. Human-animal transformation was also a prominent concern in demonological theory, with metamorphosis cited as a chief power of the devil and the witches through which he worked. In *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Scot links Ovidian metamorphosis with demonic transformation, ridiculing Bodin’s reliance on Ovid for his *De la Démonomanie des Sorciers*.⁴ Scot references Ovid at least fifteen times in his sceptical discourse, but rather than calling on Ovid as a magical authority, Scot illustrates the folly of other demonologists who do so: “you see in these verses, the poets (whether in earnest or in jest I know not) ascribe unto witches & to their charmes, more than is to be found in humane or diabolicall power. I doubt not but that the most part of the readers hereof will admit them to be fabulous”.⁵ Ovidian metamorphosis is also aligned with demonism in *Faustus*. Marlowe’s play, like *Lancashire*, at times suggests a malleable boundary between human, animal, and inanimate object. Early on in the play, the clown decides he would like to be transformed into “the likeness of a little, pretty, frisking flea, that I may be here and there everywhere” (I.iv.65-4). This sentiment is later echoed by Pride in the pageant of sins: “I am like to Ovid’s flea: I can creep into every corner of a wench” (II.iii.112). Wagner claims he can help Robin “turn thyself to a god, or a cat, or a mouse, or anything” (I.iv.60-1), while Faustus and Mephistopheles fool the horse courser by selling him a bottle of hay transformed into a horse. Robin and Rafe are also

¹ See discussions in Raphael Lyne, *Ovid’s Changing Worlds: English Metamorphoses, 1567-1632* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2011).

² Paster and Howard, p.275.

³ See Gareth Roberts, “The Descendants of Circe” *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). pp. 183-206.

⁴ Bodin in fact cites a variety of classical writers as authorities on the issue, declaring “I find it even stranger that many cannot believe it, since all the peoples of the earth and all antiquity agree about it. For not only did Herodotus describe it two thousand hundred years ago, and four hundred years earlier, Homer, but also Pomponius Mela, Solon, Strabo, Dionysus Afer, Marcus Varro, Virgil, Ovid, and a countless number of others”, p. 126. Bodin also cites Pomponazzi, Paracelsus, and Melancthon’s nephew, Caspar Peucer as proof that human-animal metamorphosis is possible, p.125.

⁵ Scot, p.130.

transformed into an ape and a dog in an onstage magical display. As noted in Chapter One, Poole highlights the Ovidian influence on *Faustus*, showing how “references to the classical poet are threaded through” with the many transformations in the play operating according to “Ovidian physics, an understanding of the world in which matter and space are perceived as fluid and plastic” – an understanding we might logically align with the unstable forms in *Lancashire Witches*.¹ Indeed, the Ovidian connections to witchcraft were well established in the theatre, with Medea’s famous invocation in Book VII of *Metamorphoses* serving as “witchcraft’s great set-piece” on the early modern stage as Bate outlines, appearing in *The Tempest*, Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, Jonson’s *The Masque of Queenes*, and Middleton’s *The Witch*.²

Heywood, who most likely authored the witch plot in the play, was naturally well-versed in Ovid and seemed to be particularly fond of Medea’s famous incantation. Heywood had translated the *Ars amatoria*, and the first thing he ever published, *Oenone and Paris* (1594), was taken from Ovid’s *Heroides*. His *Troia Britannica* (1609) also includes several excerpts of Ovidian poetry. The Medea speech features in *The Brazen Age* (1613), and *The Silver Age* (1612) also draws heavily from *Metamorphoses*. Heywood’s *Gynaikeion* (1624) refers to both Circe and Medea in the eighth book ‘Entreating of women in every way learned: Of poetesses and witches &c’, citing the Roman poet as an authority on witches by claiming that no other writer describes the power of witches and witchcraft “more amply than Ovid, when he thus writ [Medea’s speech]”.³ In fact, in this section Heywood references the piece not once but twice, the first in prose, the second in verse.⁴ In the same chapter he describes “[w]itches that haue eyther changed their owne shapes, or have transformed others”, even referencing a case of a severed animal paw transforming back into a human hand, an incident which, Hirsch notes, he evidently recycled for *The Late Lancashire Witches*.⁵ Heywood again quotes the famous Medea speech in his *Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels*, published in 1635, just a year after *Lancashire* was first performed. It would

¹ Poole, p.47, p.51.

² Bate, p.252.

³ Heywood, *Gynaikeion*, p.405.

⁴ Heywood outlines that witches can “Raise up dead bodies from their sepulchres; nay more, to call the moon down from her sphere, with other most strange things”. *Gynaikeion*, p.403.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.409; Brett D. Hirsch, “Thomas Heywood and the Werewolves: A Source for *The Witches of Lancashire*”, *N&Q* 53.4 (2006), pp.531-33.

thus be safe to assume that Heywood's play about witches would be heavily influenced by Ovid's transformative witches as the two were clearly linked in his mind.

Yet the Ovidian influence is curiously absent from *The Late Lancashire Witches*. Despite the huge number of human-animal transformations in the play, Ovid is mentioned just once, by Whetstone: "Hey day! This gentleman speaks like a country parson that has got his text out of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*" (II.ii.31-33). Here Whetstone makes a clear distinction between the fanciful works of a Roman poet and the reality of the witch-infested Lancashire community. It is telling that the only character to connect the play's drama with the fictional Ovid is the fool. Similarly, in *Faustus*, aside from 'Pride', the clearest reference to Ovidian metamorphosis is also made by the fool, not by the learned Doctor schooled in necromancy or the devil who performs the actual transformations. Bate argues that the transformations in *Faustus* are 'unovidian', that the play's transformations are associated primarily with necromancy rather than classical metamorphosis, thus asserting a firm distinction between the two,¹ a sentiment later echoed by Poole as Faustus discovers the universe not as "fluid and plastic" as he'd thought: "ultimately the universe is not...pliant to his will, but absolute and unwavering".² In fact, Ovidian metamorphosis – usually an actual, complete transformation that was often permanent – was regarded as distinctly different from demonic metamorphosis – the semblance of transformation – in early modern demonological thought.

Metamorphosis, by both devils and humans, is one of the oldest and most-debated forms of magic in legend and literature, but was rarely considered possible. Renaissance demonologies consider at great length whether the legends of Circe and Midas in *Metamorphoses* could be used as proof that supernatural characters, and humans themselves, could be transformed into animals. The debate usually stemmed from biblical discussion over whether Nebuchadnezzar was actually transformed into a beast to live in the wild for seven years, or merely adopted the practices without undergoing any sort of physical transformation. Nebuchadnezzar's transformation, however, was instigated with God's consent and thus not confined by the natural laws that limited the devil's powers in the

¹ Bate, p.28.

² Poole, p.48.

material world.¹ Weyer notes that “nothing has the power to transform men into beasts”, while Scot details some “ridiculous examples” of “this impossible, incredible, and supernaturall, or rather unnaturall doctrine of [metamorphosis]”.² While Weyer and especially Scot were inclined towards the sceptical end of the demonological belief spectrum, their views on the possibility of demonic metamorphosis are consistent with the predominant orthodox demonology of the time. Like resurrecting the dead, actual transformation is reserved for God alone. Much of this demonological debate surrounding animal transformation was usually caught up in the question of whether werewolves existed, or whether lycanthropy meant that someone only believed they had transformed into a wolf.³ Hirsch asserts that “the theological dismissal of the reality of the werewolf was based on the distinction between the illusory and actual change,” and this was the case for metamorphoses in general according to orthodox demonology.⁴ Bodin, one of the few demonologists to believe that the devil could cause actual metamorphoses, offers no substantial explanation but claims it must be a real possibility since so many had written about it:

Many doctors observing such a strange thing, and not knowing the reason for it, so as not to appear ignorant, have stated and written that Lycanthropy is an illness of sick men who think they are wolves, and go running through the woods. But it would take many arguments and witnesses to refute all the peoples of the earth and all the histories, and particularly sacred history since Paracelsus, Pomponazzi, and especially Fernel, the foremost doctors and philosophers of their time, and for many centuries, considered Lycanthropy an absolutely certain, true, and undoubted thing.⁵

There were no known cases of either version of lycanthropy in early modern England, and *The Duchess of Malfi* is the only known drama to feature it. Werewolves did appear in folktales, however. As mentioned above, a ‘war wolfe’ features in Drayton’s *Mooncalfe*, and in 1590 a pamphlet was published on the infamous ‘Stubbe Peeter’, an alleged werewolf who was executed for killing and eating a number of victims in Germany.⁶ In Webster’s play,

¹ Scot states that the case of Nebuchadnezzar “was neither divels, nor witches dooing: but a miracle wrought by God, whom alone I acknowledge to be able to bring to passe such workes at his pleasure”, p. 58.

² Weyer, p. 337; Scot, p.51.

³ See, Scot, pp.51-58; Weyer, pp.342-344; Bodin, pp.122-129, and Guzzo, pp.50-51.

⁴ Hirsch, “An Italian Werewolf in London: Lycanthropy and *The Duchess of Malfi*”, p.2.

⁵ Bodin, p.127.

⁶ *A true discourse. Declaring the damnable life and death of one Stubbe Peeter, a most wicked sorcerer who in the likenes of a woolfe, committed many murders [...]* (London, 1590).

lycanthropy is clearly a disease of the mind: “In those that are possess’d with’t there o’erflows / Such melancholy humour they imagine / Themselves to be transformed into wolves” (V.ii.8-10).¹ As in *Lancashire*, Ferdinand’s ‘transformation’ is punishment, in this case inflicted by his own guilt. Clark illustrates how lycanthropy worked through illusion or disguise. The person would either be wrapped in the skin of a wolf to hide their human form, or the air around them would be changed to give the impression their physical appearance had altered.²

As Scot observes, Bodin takes Ovid literally. However, most other demonologists did not. While Ovidian transformation was dependent on a malleable universe, demonology specifies the constancy of God’s created world that only allowed for a semblance of transformation rather than transformation itself. The devil was not capable of actually altering the natural form and essence of a creature since this would transcend the laws of nature. While most English demonologists were sceptical about actual metamorphoses because implementing permanent change of species was a direct challenge to God’s authority, the illusion of metamorphosis could be achieved through visual manipulation. As Clark outlines, “with the exception of Bodin and a few others ... no one could accept the phenomenon [of metamorphoses] as real”, a sentiment echoed by Scot himself: “[n]ow, if a witch or a divell can so alter the shape of a man, as contrailie to make him looke down to hell, like a beast; Gods work should not onelie be defaced and disgraced, but his ordinance should be woonderfullie altered, and thereby confounded”.³ Scot is quite wrong to align the ‘false’ claims of demonic magic with the fictional Ovid, however, because in orthodox demonology, such transformations were understood to work as alleged lycanthropy did: they were implemented by the devil changing the appearance of something, the air surrounding it to give it the appearance of something else, or even manipulating the eyes of the viewer, while the essence of the thing ‘transformed’ remained unchanged. This ‘magic’ of the devil is merely disguise, not transformation. It was almost universally agreed upon that the devil could not transform people to animals permanently,

¹ John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. John Russell Brown (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).

² Clark, p.197.

³ Clark, p.191; Scot, p.57.

or in the proper sense, but rather change the façade. Kramer cites Aquinas and Albertus Magnus, outlining that “those alterations of physical objects, which cannot take place by the Power of Nature, cannot in any way be carried out in actual fact by the working of evil spirits, as, for example, when a human body is changed into that of an animal ... if such a thing seems to happen, the appearance is a trick”.¹ Metamorphosis was considered ‘unnatural’ and therefore impossible. Semblance of metamorphosis, on the other hand, was ‘natural’ and therefore a distinct possibility in early modern thought. The many instances of alleged metamorphosis in *The Late Lancashire Witches* are thus plausible.

In most of the stories of human-to-donkey metamorphosis, the victim maintains his humanness except in his physical appearance. The change is appearance-based, not cognitive-based. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bottom does not initially realise he has been transformed by some rather sinister fairy magic and cannot understand the horrified reactions of the other mechanicals. In Weyer's account of a man turned into a donkey by an old woman, he finds the transformation especially difficult “for his understanding had not perished along with his speech”.² Scot goes a step further, pointing out the very practical reason why humans cannot wholly be transformed into asses: “the bodie of man is subject to divers kind of agues, sicknesses, and infirmities, whereunto an asses bodie is not inclined: and mans bodie must be fed with bread, &c: and not with hay, *Bodins* asseheaded man must either eate haie, or nothing: as appeareth in the storie”.³ Bodin himself admits that “all those who have written about [metamorphoses], both ancient and modern, are in agreement that the human form changes while the mind and reason remain in tact”.⁴

The temporal nature of these alleged ‘transformations’ is also evident in other stories of metamorphosis, including folk tales and hagiography. St. Macarius of Egypt, for example, was able to detect the true human identity of a girl transformed into a mule, the

¹ Kramer, p.89.

² Weyer, p.192.

³ Scot, p.56.

⁴ Bodin, p.128.

tale intended to demonstrate how a pious man is impervious to the devil's tricks.¹ Bottom is made human again by Puck's antidote, while the bewitched ass in Mother Howlet's tale regains his human appearance by bathing in an enchanted spring, literally washing off the animal façade. The man in Weyer's story is similarly restored to human form by rolling about in a lake. In *Faustus*, the horse courser discovers the horse he has purchased is really a "bottle of hay" disguised (but not transformed) by Mephistopheles when he rides the horse into a lake, nearly drowning himself. As noted in the Introduction, in the B-text of *Faustus*, Robin confirms the superficial nature of Mephistopheles's magic which turned him and Dick into a dog and a monkey: "that's excellent, for one of his devils turned me into the *likeness* of an ape's face" acknowledging the magic as a mere disguise, a visual trick that does not persist (B-IV.v.55-6, my emphasis). This washing or altering of the superficial disguise reveals the true nature of the human beneath the asinine exterior, exposing the devil's magic as an insubstantial ruse; it is a temporary enchantment broken with natural means.

The Late Lancashire Witches makes it clear that the multitude of transformations are mere temporary illusions. The transformations in *Lancashire* have much in common with the account of Stubbe Peeter as the alleged werewolf transformed himself with a magic girdle. In *The Late Lancashire Witches*, Robert, and then Mistress Generous are transformed into a horse by a magic bridle. However, while the magic bridle used in *Lancashire* recalls that in the Stubbe Peter story, the bridle seems to enforce behavioural transformation rather than altering the appearance. This behavioural transformation is reinforced by the staging itself, since the speed implied by the onstage transformations suggest that the actor simply got down on all fours. Thus, the 'transformations', enabled by the object provided by the devil, destabilise human-animal boundaries by bringing its victim literally down to earth. The witches' other transformations work by merely altering their outer appearances. The Boy claims Gillian Dickinson has "put [herself] into a dog skin", confirming that the transformation is external but not internal (II.v.22). Indeed, Dickinson chides him for

¹ See Caroline Oates, "Cheese Gives you Nightmares: Old Hags and Heartburn", *Folklore* 114.2 (2003), p.210. Cameron notes that Luther used the story of St. Macarius to illustrate how the devil's magic was all illusory. *Enchanted Europe*, p.166. The tale was first recorded in Palladius's *Lausiac History* (419-20). Cameron, p.48.

treating her like a dog just because she looked like one: “You young rogue, you have us’d me like a dog!” (II.v.21). She thus establishes a clear difference between conduct and outward appearance. The witches retain their human minds and thus their ability to reason. They may look like animals, but they still think and act like people. They also retain their human size, as the Miller indicates when he describes the creatures he encounters in the mill: “‘Cats’ do you call them? For their hugeness they might be cat o’ mountains” (II.ii. 197-98). In terms of size, the transformations are hardly realistic. Similarly, the witches’ devils appear not in perfect animal form but as ‘almost’ whole animals, as devils traditionally were: a porcupine that doesn’t prick; a badger large enough to carry the weight of a person; and a bear and tiger submissive enough to ride. The incomplete or unconventional forms and behaviour of these animals thus draw attention to their artificiality. This again recalls the traditional representations of devils who, disguised as humans, were unable to do so completely effectively. As discussed in Chapter Four, it was often their hands, feet, or horns that gave them away. In *Lancashire* the Boy witness states that the otherwise humanlike devil had “clubbed cloven feet, like ox feet” (V.i.84-85). Similarly, the transformations of Robert and the Demon Boy are temporary, mere illusion or disguise. Robert indicates that, while a horse, he understands everything he witnessed with a human intellect. Most of these transformations also happen on stage so we are left in no doubt of the false, illusory nature of these altered appearances. We see the witches ‘transforming’ back and forth with ease. In the other Heywood dramas that reference metamorphosis, the transformations take place almost entirely offstage, cultivating a sense of mystery about its workings. In contrast, the onstage metamorphoses in *The Late Lancashire Witches* make its workings explicit, adopting a degree of realism by showing how these transformations are limited.

But why would Heywood, evidently influenced by Ovid, not make clear reference to *Metamorphoses* in his latest play about witches? The answer perhaps lies in the fact that the play has a clear obligation to present the truth. As this chapter has established, *The Late Lancashire Witches* presents a more plausible account of witchcraft than Tomkyns suggests. In order to show the witches as potentially guilty, they have to be in possession of their

rational faculties. The play thus needs to make it very clear that they are merely humans disguised as animals and have retained their ability to reason. Hirsch outlines that “if a man is truly transformed into a beast, he is not responsible for any sinful acts he commits, since the rational consent of the sinner is lacking”.¹ It is therefore necessary to emphasise that the seemingly fantastical metamorphoses in the play are mere disguise; the outer appearance of a person may be altered but they are still a human, in possession of a human mind and clearly responsible for any mischief caused in that guise. This is made clear when Mistress Generous is finally implicated: the evidence produced is a cat paw that turns back into the very human hand of the guilty witch when discovered. As noted above, the hand is highly significant. Hands are one of the noted differences between humans and animals, and in *The Late Lancashire Witches* a human hand signals human guilt in the crime. While the boundaries between humans and animals have been temporarily confused by the devil, they have not been permanently altered. Mistress Generous, like Mother Sawyer, is guilty of both intent and action. If she had actually been a cat when she fought the miller and then the soldier in the mill, her ‘witchcraft’ is mere fantasy. The complete transformation would mean she could not be held accountable for her actions, since animals were never put on trial in England.²

By revealing how this demonic metamorphosis works, Heywood and Brome ground the seemingly fantastical shows within the confines of a reality that permitted limited demonic power. “Things Transcending Nature” has demonstrated that by showing *how* it is achieved, *The Late Lancashire Witches* does not expose the devil’s magic as fantastical fiction. Instead it legitimises the idea of witchcraft by showing the extent – and limitations – of their magical abilities. The many instances of metamorphosis in the play and the comical tone in which these occur imply this is a piece of sensational nonsense, “full of ribaldrie and of things improbable and impossible”.³ Yet these transformations and all the other magic in the play, are all portrayed as ‘natural’. Heywood and Brome have thus both situated their witch story within the firmly-established tradition of devil plays and

¹ Hirsch, “An Italian Werewolf in London: Lycanthropy and *The Duchess of Malfi*”, p.2.

² Salisbury, p.108. Animals were put on trial in parts of continental Europe throughout the medieval and early modern periods. Several pigs were put on trial in thirteenth-century France, for example, often for causing the death of a human. Animals were also tried in bestiality cases. Salisbury, p.112.

³ Tomkyns, p.213.

distanced it from more fantastical mythologies. Heywood had, thirty years earlier dramatised the fake 'magic' of an alleged witch in his 1604 play *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*, in which a woman is able to turn her skills and tricks into a profitable trade. In this play it is made abundantly clear to the audience that the eponymous witch has no supernatural powers and is not in league with the devil, even showing how she manages to garner information about her clients and perform her cold readings to give a convincing impression of preternatural wisdom. *The Late Lancashire Witches* in fact does something similar, outlining how the 'magic' is done to the audience so that, despite the witches' guilt and the obvious presence of the devil, the magic is nothing out of the ordinary on the early modern stage. Heywood and Brome's witch plot is grounded in a demonological 'truth'. While the playwrights do not determine if the witches were innocent or guilty, they certainly show how they could be considered guilty by accurately presenting demonic magic that was considered 'natural' and thus plausible. The magic displayed in *The Late Lancashire Witches* was certainly considered improbable in early modern thought. However, it was certainly not considered impossible.

CHAPTER SEVEN

All the Devils are Here

The Case for Demonism in *The Tempest*

If, as Baudelaire declares, the Devil's best trick was to convince mankind he did not exist, then Shakespeare's best trick was to convince critics that there is no devil in *The Tempest*.¹ There is a tendency to view the supernatural in Shakespeare's last play as a more mystical, benevolent sort of magic, a magic quite apart from the devilish antics in *Doctor Faustus*, *Friar Bacon*, and *John of Bordeaux*. Prospero's magic is also frequently distinguished from Sycorax's overtly demonic witchcraft, and he is often considered a foil for Faustus; Harold Bloom goes so far as to say that that Prospero is an "anti-Faust" who "transcend[s] Doctor Faustus, as Shakespeare sweeps Marlowe off the boards".² However, a comparison of *The Tempest's* magic to these other devil dramas reveals that Prospero's magic is undeniably demonic in origin. In fact, the Prospero-Ariel relationship can be readily understood as a demon-human partnership bound by a demonic pact. *The Tempest* is not a triumph over Marlowe's play; rather, it presents an inversion of the Faustian model in which the familiar spirit wishes to break free from his human constraints. Ariel himself is recognisably human in character, and thus recognisably demonic.

This chapter will bring to light the demonological understanding that informs the magic in *The Tempest*. While it may at first be difficult to see a clear connection between the angelic-sounding, delicate 'chick' of a spirit that conjures illusions for Prospero and the bawdy, manipulative tricksters that plague Faustus, a careful examination of *The Tempest's* magic, how it is performed, and the limitations that govern Ariel's tricks, demonstrates that Prospero's rough magic is identical to that featured in other devil plays. The foci of the previous chapters (object magic, mastery, the demonic pact, materiality and bodily possession, causation, metamorphoses, and illusion) are equally relevant to *The Tempest*. The play emerges from a strong tradition of devil-magician plays and the similarities are too

¹ "La plus belle des ruses du diable est de vous persuader qu'il n'existe pas.": "La joueur généreux" in *Le Spleen de Paris*, quoted in Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p.206.

² Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999), pp.670, 558.

significant to be ignored. While “from the opening storm to the closing epilogue, the play challenges the boundaries between illusion and reality”, *The Tempest* does not – and cannot – transcend these boundaries.¹ Ariel’s limitations are Prospero’s limitations, and these limitations are the same as those stipulated by early modern demonologists. Illusions are the stock of Prospero’s trade; they are also, of course, the chief power afforded to the devil. And the devil is certainly lurking in Shakespeare’s last play.

There is an extensive literature considering the complexities of the magic in *The Tempest*. The response from critics is divided, although the traditional reading has been to distinguish Prospero’s ‘art’ from the devil-powered ‘witchcraft’ of both Sycorax and Faustus, a higher form of enlightenment and learning rather than a baser, more sinister employment of the supernatural. In his introduction to the Arden Edition (second series), Frank Kermode establishes this binary:

[Sycorax] is a practitioner of “natural” magic, a goetist who exploited the universal sympathies, but whose power is limited by the fact that she could command, as a rule, only devils and the lowest orders of spirits. Prospero, on the other hand, is a theurgist, whose Art is to achieve supremacy over the natural world by hold magic. The Neo-Platonic mage studies the harmonious relationship of the elementary, celestial, and intellectual worlds.²

Pearson noted in 1974 that “almost without exception, the critical tendency has been to see in *The Tempest* Shakespeare’s positive glorification of the theurgist’s art”.³ This view, shared by James, Curry, Sisson, Johnson, McAdam, Berger, and Mebane to name a few, postulates that Prospero’s rough magic is closer to Neoplatonic ideals than any form of demonism.⁴ In his influential essay “Prospero’s Art”, Karol Berger claims that “the exact mechanism of this spiritual and artistic magic is nowhere explained in *The Tempest*. It is necessary to seek clarification in such Renaissance theories of magic as might have been known to

¹ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. eds. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, Arden Shakespeare 3rd series (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1999), p.6.

² William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Frank Kermode, Arden Shakespeare 2nd series, (London: Methuen, 1998), p.xl.

³ D’Orsay W. Pearson, “‘Unless I be Reliev’d by Prayer’: *The Tempest* in Persective”, *Shakespeare Studies* 7 (1974), p.253.

⁴ D.G.James, *The Dreams of Prospero* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967); C.J Sisson. ‘The Magic of Prospero’, *Shakespeare Survey* 11 (1959) pp.70-8; W.S. Johnson, “The Genesis of Ariel” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, (1951); Karol Berger, “Prospero’s Art”, *Shakespeare Studies* 10 (1977); W. C. Curry, *Shakespeare’s Phiosophical Patterns* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1937); John Mebane, *Renaissance Magic and the Return to the Golden Age: The Occult Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); Ian McAdam, *Magic and Masculinity in Early Modern English Drama* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univesity Press, 2009);

Shakespeare and the better-educated part of his audience”.¹ Berger goes on to outline that “it is possible to demonstrate, however, that the ideas of the Florentine Platonists are the most important model of Prospero’s Art”.² Such a view is quite removed from *The Tempest* in both text and action. It is indeed necessary to seek clarification in theories of magic, but not the kind Berger refers to. As in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, the claims for Neoplatonic magic cannot be upheld, particularly because nowhere does Prospero mention anything remotely Neoplatonic. His actions suggest that he is more concerned with revenge than with attaining higher, Platonic ideals of knowledge. Kermode’s binary with Sycorax is also highly questionable; if they are supposed to embody different types of magic, then why do they use the same spirit to do so? Both Traister and Orgel highlight the ambivalence associated with both Prospero’s character and his craft, but both locate the ambivalence in an uncertainty of the nature of Prospero’s magic.³ *The Tempest’s* ambivalence is characterised not by an inability to determine the origins of the magic based on its practitioner and its usage. Instead, the ambivalence – or a dissonance – arises from the impulse to empathise with Prospero’s intent while being certain of the demonic origins of his magic. Other recent scholarship has emphasised the more sinister side to Prospero’s character, although mainly in post-colonial readings of the play which cast Prospero as conqueror and oppressor of the native population, an invading malevolence that has very little to do with the magic itself.

The Tempest’s Demonology

A closer look at the magic, and its similarity to that performed in other devil plays, demonstrates that Prospero’s art is unequivocally demonic. For one thing, while Prospero makes no reference to Ficino, he makes frequent mention of the devil. Furthermore, each instance of magic in the play can be understood wholly in demonological terms. Casting

¹ Berger, “Prospero’s Art”, p.212.

² Berger, p.214. Berger claims that Prospero’s magic is ‘spiritual’ and was influenced by second-hand knowledge of Ficino that was transmitted to England via Agrippa’s *De occulta Philopsophia*. p.212.

³ Traister suggests that the ambiguous nature of Prospero’s magic is the real strength of the play while Orgel, remarking on the historical tendencies to “ignore [the magic’s] ambivalences, sweeten and sentimentalise it”, states that “the play’s attitudes towards magic are...profoundly ambivalent”, p.125; William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p.52.

illusory storms that leave no permanent damage, commanding a pageant of spirits to entertain, summoning food, and tampering with people's eyesight and perception are all recognisable as instances of demonic magic. The Faustian connection is particularly apparent. A learned magician aided by an airy spirit he keeps concealed from those closest to him, a total reliance on books and spirits to perform the magic, an attempted renunciation of magic at the end of the play and mysterious (yet undeniable) references to a Faustian pact make the association hard to miss.

If we put *The Tempest's* magic in context with other devil dramas of the time, then the demonic connection is immediately obvious from the play's opening. The titular storm, as described by Ariel, is a spectacularly impressive piece of magic, the one supernatural act that sparks the action of the entire play. But supernatural storms were widely considered to be the work of the devil. Gifford writes that the devil "hath greatly bewitched the blind worlde, for it is a common opinion, when there are any mighty windes and thunders with terrible lightnings, that the Deuill is abroade and doth it".¹ On the stage, thunder and lightning usually signaled a malevolent supernatural presence.² In *Macbeth*, for example, which begins with the stage direction "Thunder and Lightning. Enter Three Witches" (I.i.s.d). Later in the play, the weird sisters conjure up a storm to waylay a sailor, each promising to channel a wind while sailing in a sieve.³ This latter detail comes directly from James I's *Demonology*, in which he states that witches

can rayse stormes and tempestes in the aire, either upon Sea or land, though not universally, but in such a particular place and prescribed boundes, as God will permitte them so to trouble: Which likewise is verie easie to be discerned from anie other naturall tempestes that are meteores, in respect of the suddaine and violent raising thereof, together with the short induring of the same.⁴

¹ George Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtill practices of deuilles by vvitches and sorcerers*, (London, 1587), sig.D3. Gifford also notes that this is why church bells were always rung in storms: "When any violent tempest came, they had the hollowed bell in euery steeple to bee rung, which did repell and keepe him backe. For hee could not come within the sound of that", sig.G2.

² Leslie Thomson outlines: "*thunder and lightning* was the conventional stage language – or code – for the production of effects in or from the tiring house that would establish or confirm a specifically supernatural context in the mind of the audience". Leslie Thompson, "The Meaning of *Thunder and Lightning*: Stage Directions and Audience Expectations", *Early Theatre* 2 (1999), p.11.

³ "I'll give thee a wind"; "and I another"; "I myself have all the other" (1.3.10, 12-13). That witches could summon storms at sea is also mentioned in *Malleus Maleficarum* which validates the existence of such magic on the grounds that witches have admitted to it: "But witches have often confessed to doing them, so there can be no doubt that witches can cause hailstorms, lightning, and storms at sea." Kramer, p.174.

⁴ James I, p.178.

That Shakespeare used *Demonology* as a source for *Macbeth* has been widely acknowledged, though its obvious connections to *The Tempest* have been neglected. This is surprising, considering that James himself is often associated with Shakespeare's last play. James I's description of a witch-powered storm fits *The Tempest's* tempest perfectly: Prospero's storm is incredibly localised, not a universal storm but one "in such a particular place and prescribed boundes". Only one boat of a fleet is caught in the storm. Such storms are described by other demonologists. Jean Bodin writes of a witch who summoned a very specifically-located storm in order to ruin a party she wasn't invited to: "[s]oon afterward, the sky which was beautiful and clear, darkened and violently hailed, but only on the village and on all those who were dancing".¹ James I himself claimed to have experienced a very localised storm exactly like the one described in *The Tempest*, when his ship was split from the rest in a tempest conjured up by witches. According to *Newes from Scotland*, "the Kinges maiesties Ship at his comming foorth of Denmarke, had a contrarie wind to the rest of his Ships".² Prospero is only able to summon his enemies to the island when they come in close proximity. He thus reveals the limitations of his and Ariel's powers to cast a storm, since they can only do so within a limited space. That he has had to wait twelve years for such an opportunity evidences the limitations of his powers.

The possibility of a person controlling the storm is introduced very early on in the play. As the storm rages, the Boatswain asks Gonzalo if he can "command these elements to silence", inadvertently implicating that it could be possible for the storm to be the work of a person's command or a spirit commanded by a person, since the illusory storm is the work of a demon in Prospero's control (I.i.19). Storm-causing demons appear frequently in early modern sources: in *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels* (1635), Heywood describes "Spirits of th'Aire" that "have the cleare subtill aire to work upon by causing thunders and tempestuous show'rs", while Gifford outlines that the devil "will shew himselfe by some likelines in the middest of the storme...now there is great feare, for many beleeeue that the

¹ Bodin, p.136.

² "Newes from Scotland" (1591) in King James VI & I, *Demonology*, ed. G. B. Harrison (San Diego: The Book Tree, 2002), p. 17. "Newes from Scotland" claims that the storm was caused by witches Christening a cat in a ritual using "the cheefest partes of a dead man, and seuerall ioynts of /his bodie", p.16.

deuil is abroad indeede, and hath rayseed vp the windes, and brought the thunders”.¹ In *The Tempest*, the storm is thus one of the first pieces of evidence that indicates Prospero’s magic is no different to the devil-powered art of Faustus, Friar Bacon, and the Lancashire Witches.

The limitations of Prospero’s magical skills are also made evident by the lack of permanent damage inflicted by the storm. The tempest is, quite simply, another demonic illusion, a convincing shadow of the real thing that leaves no trace that it once existed. Could the boat really be split in half and then repaired with no permanent damage? Miranda claims she has seen the boat “dashed all to pieces” yet her father assures her “there’s no harm done” (I.ii.8, 15). Orthodox demonology decreed that it was impossible for the devil to do humans physical harm: “touching the bodies of both men and beasts, or of anie other creature, he can doe nothing but vpon speciall leaue and commission granted vnto him. He can not doe violence to the bodie of a poore swine, naie he can not at his pleasure kill so much as a seelie flie”.² Ferdinand claims he saw his father die “with mine eyes” but later discovers his father is alive (I.ii.34). Any damage caused by the supernatural storm is mere visual trickery, an elaborate but temporary necromantic illusion. The temporal nature of devil-storms is acknowledged in *Macbeth*: “though his bark cannot be lost, / Yet is shall be tempest-tost” (I.iii.23-24). Like the witches, Prospero and Ariel are only capable of a brief diversion that cannot really inflict physical change. The illusory fire and water are unable to damage the boat. Indeed, when the other characters wash up on shore they find their attire in a better condition than when the storm began: “our garments being, as they were, drenched in the sea, hold notwithstanding their freshness and glosses, being rather new-dyed than stained with salt water” (II.i.59-61).

The play’s other instances of magic can also be clearly understood in demonological terms, not least because every piece of magic performed by Ariel and Prospero can be found in other devil plays that predate *The Tempest*. There is nothing remotely new about Shakespeare’s magic; *The Tempest* displays well-known and often-used stage tricks usually associated with the devil. Following on from the storm are a series of devilish insubstantial

¹ Thomas Heywood, *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells: Their names, orders and offices the fall of Lucifer with his angels* (London, 1635), p.505 ; Gifford, sig.D3.

² Gifford, sig.D2. See discussion of the word ‘touch’ in Chapter Five.

pageants. Like *Faustus*, the play contains several magical shows: the opening storm, the banquet-harpy sequence, the betrothal masque, and the mysterious hunting dogs that chase Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano. All of these instances of magic appear in other devil plays, and all of them are grounded in demonic illusion. The banquet-harpy sequence, for example, illustrates perfectly that the devil cannot physically harm people and must resort to other methods to taunt his spectators. Prospero's banquet is brought in by spirits, the "several strange shapes" suggesting that they are in neither human nor animal form but perhaps an odd mix of both – a clear indication of devils (III.iii.s.d). Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, and the others are first welcomed by the "marvelous sweet music" and invited to eat at the table (III.iii.19). The spirits appear to be offering both comfort and sustenance. The incident recalls a scene in *John of Bordeaux*, when Bacon summons a group of 'spirits' to bring a feast into the forest for the eponymous John to satiate his hunger. The food is merely an insubstantial illusion, however, and can neither be touched nor consumed. While this sequence may seem mysterious, the magic itself is by no means unusual. Ariel and his spirits operate in exactly the same way devils do; they use sight and sound – but not physical contact – first tempting the humans with food they are not permitted to touch, and then passing judgment in a fearsome display of thunder and lightning.

The wedding masque is the longest and most sustained piece of magic in the play, yet Prospero makes it abundantly clear that this pageant is an empty illusion that works in exactly the same way as Mephistopheles's supernatural shows. Prospero first informs Ariel "I must / Bestow upon the eyes of this young couple / Some vanity of mine art", indicating that the masque is designed to appeal directly to their eyes (IV.i.39-41). While the newly-wed couple can hear the speeches Juno, Ceres, and Iris deliver, they must on no account converse with the apparitions, or make a sound at all, just as Faustus advises the scholars to be quiet when they see the apparition of Helen. Prospero orders "no tongue! All eyes! Be silent!" and later outlines that any sound will destroy the show: "hush and be mute, /Or else our spell is marr'd" (IV.i.59, 126-7). While much of Prospero's magic is kept secret from the others on the island, here he takes no pains to hide the nature of the show

at all, informing Ferdinand (who has guessed, anyway) that the goddesses are merely “Spirits, which by mine art / I have from their confines called to enact / My present fancies” (IV.i.119-121). His celebrated nihilistic “our revels now are ended” speech confirms that the spirits are “insubstantial” and “baseless”, and can melt “into thin air” (IV.i.148-155), just as *Macbeth’s* witches vanish “Into the air; and what seem’d corporal melted / As breath into the wind” (I.iii.79-80). Prospero’s masque is also reminiscent of other devil pageants, not only that in *Faustus*, but also the apparition of Hercules and the tree of the Hesperides in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, and the “shades” of Hector and Achilles in *The Birth of Merlin*. In all of these plays the devilish spirits are disguised as classical deities or heroes called up to entertain with a historical re-enactment. Since the summoning up of ‘shadows’ from a mythological past is a particular specialty of stage devils, Prospero’s show is immediately recognisable as another demonic pageant. The episode in which hunting dogs pursue Trinculo, Stephano, and Caliban is also sourced straight from another devil play: the B-text of *Doctor Faustus*. After causing the impudent Benvolio to sprout horns, Faustus promises: “I’ll raise a kennel of hounds shall hunt him so as all his footmanship shall scarce prevail to keep his carcass from their bloody fangs” (B-IV.i.146-8). Faustus then summons Belimoth, Argiorn, and Ashtaroth, evidently disguised as hounds, to chase them. *The Tempest’s* “Enter diverse spirits in the shape of dogs and hounds” calls for the same kind of shapeshifting demonic spirits who use the magic for the same purpose: to humiliate and punish those who threaten the magician’s authority (IV.i.s.d).

All of this magic is centred on manipulation of the eyes and visual perception since as Clark has observed, “the devil could control (and subvert) each of the stages of Aristotelian cognition – manipulating the world of perceived objects, tampering with the medium through which visual *species* traveled, and altering the workings of both the external and internal senses”.¹ Through his command of Ariel, Prospero is able to control the visual perception of everyone who sets foot in his domain. In Act 2, Scene 1, it becomes apparent that each character perceives the island very differently, both seeing and

¹ Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, p.3.

hearing very different things to his companions. When Gonzalo declares “how lush and lusty the grass looks! How green!” Antonio contradicts him, announcing that “the ground indeed is tawny” (II.i.51-2). Indeed, Ariel’s power seems to extend to the complete control of the senses of the shipwrecked Italians. As well as visual perception, the eerie music that echoes around the island is also a sign of demonic activity. As Caliban famously notes, “the isle is full of noises, / Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not” (III.ii.127-8). Yet we actually see the workings of this mysterious music in action when Ariel sings in Ferdinand’s ear. The music is caused not by disembodied voices, but by Prospero’s invisible spirits that haunt the island, a perfectly natural demonological explanation.

The musical interludes in the play do not affect everyone, demonstrating that Prospero’s devils speak differently to different people. Nor are they always “sweet airs that give delight and hurt not”. In 2.1 Ariel appears “invisible, playing solemn music” which sends everyone but Sebastian and Antonio to sleep (II.i.s.d). Sound and music, along with visual manipulation, are Ariel’s (and therefore Prospero’s) most effective weapons. Ariel is able to send Gonzalo and some of his companions to sleep in a much more gradual way than Prospero does to Miranda, through “solemn” music. This magic is focused specifically on them. Antonio and Sebastian are immune to its effects, despite the fact they are standing right next to Gonzalo. When they awake, Alonso confesses he heard nothing, Gonzalo claims he heard “a humming, / And that a strange one too” (II.i.315-16). Neither heard the “din to fright a monster’s ear” that set Antonio and Sebastian on edge (II.i.311). Differing aural perception is also the work of demons, since devils were understood to speak to humans not directly (unless inhabiting a human or animal corpse) but leaving an impression of the sound through the ear. Agrippa outlines this idea:

for he would slide into the hearer without any noise, as an image in the eye, or glass. So souls going out of the body, so angels, so demons speak: and what man doth with a sensible voice, they do by impressing the conception of the speech in those to whom they speak, after a better manner than if they should express it by an audible voice.¹

The stage directions even specify that Ariel “sings in Gonzalo’s ear”, demonstrating how such spirit-human communication is personalised in the play (II.i.s.d). This is also

¹ Agrippa, p.530.

reminiscent of Faustus's complaint that the Good and Evil Angels "buzzeth in mine ears" (II.iii.14). In 3.2, Ariel is able to mimic the voices of Trinculo and Stephano, disrupting the conversation by speaking to Caliban in a voice only he can hear.¹ In 3.3, Alonso describes the spirits: "such shapes, such gestures, and such sound, expressing – / Although they want the use of tongue – / A kind of excellent dumb discourse" (III.iii.37-9). In accordance with orthodox demonology, the spirits do not converse in the traditional way (with tongues), but they are still capable of communicating through sound. Or perhaps, as with Ariel's music, not everybody can hear the sound, or not everybody hears the same thing. Visual and aural manipulation form the basis of all the magic in the play, and such magic is never able to transcend the boundaries of demonic magic.

The frequent references to devils throughout *The Tempest* confirm how similar Ariel's magic is to the supernatural displays exhibited in other devil plays. At least half the characters refer to devils at some point, and demons are frequently assumed to be the cause of the magic encountered on the island. Such references have largely been ignored by scholars determined to see some form of secular or enlightened angelic 'science' in Prospero's craft. However, the first reaction most characters have to the magic, or the island itself, is one of suspected devilry. This includes the opening storm which is recognisably demonic not just to early modern audiences but to the characters themselves. Ariel reports Ferdinand's observation that "Hell is empty / And all the devils are here", identifying the origins of the storm as unnatural rather than natural (I.ii.214-15). Indeed, Ariel's first action in the play, as he "flames amazement", is to terrorise those aboard a sinking ship, an act that can hardly be construed as angelic or enlightened (I.ii.196). The other shipwrecked characters suspect the devil's involvement throughout the play. Act 2 Scene 2, where Trinculo and Stephano first encounter Caliban under the gaberdine, is rife with human-demon confusion to comic effect. Caliban assumes that the approaching Trinculo is "a spirit" of Prospero's, come "to torment me", reiterating that "the spirit torments me" when Stephano leans in to inspect (II.ii.14, 58). Stephano likewise assumes

¹ David McInnis links Ariel's voice tricks with devils in "Old World Sources for Ariel in *The Tempest*". McInnis identifies Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* as a source, noting Münster's description "Of the region of Tangut, and of the great desertes, and voyces of deuylles hearde in the same". *N&Q* 55.2 (2008), pp.208-13.

that the two men under the cloak are demonic in origin: “What’s the matter? Have we devils here?” and “this is some monster of the isle, with four legs” (II.ii.52, 59). Trinculo then assumes the voice he hears is demonic: “I should know that voice. It should be - but he is drowned and these are devils” (II.ii.76-7). He is convinced that demons are imitating Stephano’s voice to confuse him. Stephano then suspects the ‘creature’ in front of him is “a devil, and no monster” based on the fact that it somehow seems to know his name. He thus establishes a firm distinction between the demonic and the monstrous (II.ii.85). Caliban’s deductions are appearance-based; Trinculo’s are based on sound; Stephano deduces from both. All three reactions imply that a demon is manipulating their sensory perception. While this scene is inherently comedic, it is particularly revealing about the prominent place demons occupied in the early modern mind. The readiness to assume that the unfamiliar – or the too familiar – was the work of devils manipulating senses demonstrates the widespread awareness of how demons could operate in the natural world. While Trinculo, Stephano, and Caliban all eventually realise that each of them is human, the demonic identity of Ariel and his spirits remains unchanged throughout the play.

Elsewhere in *The Tempest*, the distinction between humans and devils is anything but clear. Trinculo and Stephano are uncertain if Ariel’s invisible music is the work of the devil: “If thou beest a man, show thyself in thy likeness; if thou / beest a devil, take’t as thou list” (III.ii.121-2). Trinculo’s choices do not extend to any other kind of spirits: the sound can either come from a human or a devil. In the world of *The Tempest*, the only kind of magic that can produce these effects is that sourced from a demon. Miranda is similarly unable to tell the difference between spirits and humans. She assumes Ferdinand is a “spirit”, prompting Prospero to distinguish between humans and spirits on the grounds that a human “eats, and sleeps, and hath such senses/As we have” (I.ii.411-12). The distinction Prospero makes here is not based on appearance, or behaviour, or individual characteristics. The differences are instead based entirely on material concerns. The corporeal human has senses and functions in a physical, tangible way, while the incorporeal spirits do not.

Such confusion not only highlights the prominence of the devil's place on the island in the minds of its visitors, but also emphasises the similarities between humans and devils in behaviour as well as appearance. The scene in which the shipwrecked nobles are entertained by the spirits provides a greater insight into the identity of Prospero's 'spirits' in both form and conduct. The stage directions specify: "Enter several strange shapes, bringing in a banquet, and dance about it with gentle actions of salutations" (III.iii.s.d). The "several strange shapes" resemble the more traditional, human-animal hybrid devils discussed in Chapter Three. On seeing the spirits, Sebastian declares "Now I will believe / That there are unicorns; that in Arabia / There is one tree, the phoenix' throne" (III.iii.21-23). That the appearance of misshapen creatures confirms his belief in mythical creatures implies that the "several strange shapes" are an odd assemblage of mythical and real animal parts. Gonzalo specifies that "they are of monstrous shape" (III.iii.31), but also declares how well-behaved they are: "yet note / Their manners are more gentle, kind, than of our human generation" (III.iii.31-33). By asserting that the spirits surpass humans in manner, Gonzalo highlights the very humanness of the island's supernatural inhabitants. Prospero then establishes the demon-like potential of human behaviour, stating that "some of you there present / Are worse than devils" (III.iii.35-6). Later, Sebastian declares that "the devil speaks in [Prospero]" (V.i.129), suggesting a clear distinction between species. Prospero denies the accusation, however, instead claiming the alleged demonic voice as his own. Here Prospero has taken on the role of the devil, acknowledging the human capacity for devilry independent of external spirits; he is not denying his demonic involvement, he is just clarifying that a demon is not dictating his actions. He refuses to cite the source of his malevolence as an external demon, that an external demon is using him as an instrument of its own malice. In doing so, Prospero acknowledges that he has an equal capacity for malicious intent. Just as devils can behave like humans, humans are capable of behaving like devils.

But are spirits always devils? The numerous spirits who operate under Prospero and Ariel's control certainly exhibit demonic tendencies. They are airy, incorporeal demons at the command of both a magician and a more powerful spirit; the same, in fact, as the

minor devils in *Doctor Faustus*. While the stage directions always use the vaguer ‘spirit’ rather than ‘devil’, it is evident that Prospero’s spirits are devils in their similarity to other stage devils of the period. While the stage directions are vague about what they are, Prospero himself acknowledges their hellish origins.¹ He refers to his spirits more specifically as “goblins” in 4.1, commanding Ariel to “Go, charge my goblins that they grind their joints / With dry convulsions, shorten up their sinews / With aged cramps, and more pinch-spotted make them” (IV.i.252-54). ‘Goblins’ provides a more direct association with hell, usually used to denote a lesser demon, as the *OED* notes.² In *Friar Bacon*, Miles refers to devils as his master’s “hobgoblins” (xi.52). Prospero also threatens Caliban with “urchins” who “shall, for that vast of night that they may work, all exercise on thee” (I.ii.327). Caliban later asserts that Prospero’s spirits will not “pinch or fright me with urchin-shows”, thus demonstrating that Prospero’s supernatural servants are more explicitly demonic (II.ii.5). In *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Scot links urchins with “bull beggers, spirits, witches”, while in *Terrors of the Night*, Nashe describes “an old wiues tale of diuells and vrchins”.³ In *Comus*, Milton writes of “Urchin blasts and ill luck signs”.⁴ Since urchin also means ‘hedgehog’ or, as David Crystal specifies, “spirit in hedgehog form, or goblin”, the bestial form assumed by the spirit emphasises the demonic association.⁵ Hedgehogs are associated with witchcraft in *Macbeth* (“thrice and once the hedge-pig whined” (IV.i.2)). Marina Warner, one of the few critics to recognise the hellish presence on the island, notes that “the island’s denizens surrounding Miranda are monstrous and deformed, ghosts and spectres, diabolically enthralled to hell’s processes of disfigurement and bestial

¹ Both Jowett and Gurr have argued that the stage directions in the printed edition might not have been penned by Shakespeare. John Jowett, “New Created Creatures: Ralph Crane and the Stage Directions in *The Tempest*”, *Shakespeare Survey* 36 (1983), pp.107-120; Andrew Gurr: “*The Tempest’s* tempest at Blackfriars”, *Shakespeare Survey* 41 (1989), pp.91-102.

² The *OED* defines “Goblin” as “A mischievous and ugly demon”. “goblin, n.1”. *OED Online*. September 2013. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/79613?result=1&rskey=7YMoqr&> [accessed October 06, 2013]. Shakespeare uses ‘goblin’ several times in other works, usually associating the world with hell. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Puck is both a “Hobgoblin”; and a “Goblin”. As the chapter on *The Devil is an Ass* outlines, Puck is certainly associated with hell. Devils and hobgoblins are closely associated in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (and also associated with Fairy pinching). In *Hamlet*, the apparition of Old Hamlet is called “goblin damn’d”. In *The Winter’s Tale*, Mamillius has a tale “of sprites and goblins” while in *The Comedy of Errors*, ‘goblins’, are associated with “ouphs and sprites” and, “If we obey them not, this will ensue, / They’ll suck our breath, or pinch us black and blue” more closely linked with the ‘goblins’ Caliban describes (II.ii.181-3).

³ Scot, p.86; Thomas Nashe, *Terrors of the Night or, A discourse of apparitions* (London, 1594), sig.H1.

⁴ John Milton, “A Masque” in *Milton’s Selected Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Biblical Sources, Criticism*, ed Jason Philip Rosenblatt (London: W. W. Norton, 2011).

⁵ Crystal & Crystal, p.475.

transformation”.¹ In fact, *The Tempest* abounds with references to wild beasts, and it is unclear whether they refer to demons, real animals, or both. Caliban’s opening speech in 2.2 continues to describe the behaviour of Prospero’s spirits, behaviour that echoes the actions of demons in earlier plays: “sometimes like apes, that mow and chatter at me, and after bite me: then like hedgehogs, which lie tumbling in my barefoot way and mount their pricks at my footfall; sometime am I all wound with adders, who with cloven tongues do hiss me into madness” (II.ii.9-14). The cloven-tongued snake here is, of course, associated with devils, as the Arden editors note.² The transformative qualities of the spirits, and the animal forms they take are indicative of their demonic identity. Brownlow links this scene to Shakespeare’s continuing use of Harsnett’s pamphlet on the Denham possessions, used extensively in *King Lear*.³ In the Denham case, the devils were reported to pinch their human victims. As in *The Tempest*, goblins ‘pinch’ in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Comedy of Errors*, and in the latter play the exorcist is called ‘Dr Pinch’, perhaps referring to his method since pinching the devil back was employed also in the Denham case. In *The Tempest*, the spirits thus behave like goblins and demons, using enough force to taunt and annoy their human victims but unable to seriously harm them.

The Island of the Devils

The demonic elements of Prospero’s magic are reinforced by the island itself. More than a simple setting, the island takes on a life of its own, functioning as a sort of purgatory. The island is the realm of the magician, a place where all identity barriers are dropped so that humans, spirits, monsters, devils, books, the living, the dead, all become indistinguishable. But *The Tempest* is no pastoral romance, with its opposition of court and country enhanced by pagan fairy magic. Most of the visitors find themselves in something resembling Dante’s hell rather than an earthly paradise. Sebastian and Antonio are clearly experiencing a

¹ Marina Warner, “‘The foul witch’ and Her ‘freckled whelp’: Circean Mutations in the New World”, *The Tempest and Its Travels*, eds. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman (London: Reaktion, 2000), p.98.

² “Probably intended to connote an evil or Satanic connection”, Vaughan & Vaughan, p.207n.

³ F. W. Brownlow, *Shakespeare, Harsnett, and the devils of Denham*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993). *The Tempest’s* connection to Harsnett is also noted by Kenneth Muir in “Samuel Harsnett and *King Lear*”, *RES* 2.5 (1951), pp.11-21.

different island to the others, finding the air “[a]s if it had lungs, and rotten ones” or “perfumed by a fen”, likening the island’s atmosphere to the disease-ridden air surrounding a stinking marsh (II.i.46-47). When the Boatswain and other crew members come to at the end of the play, they reveal that their experience of the island has been exceedingly frightening: “but even now, with strange and several noises or roaring, shrieking, howling, jingling chains and more diversity of sounds, all horrible, we were awaked!” (V.i.233-35). Antonio likewise hears “a din to fright a monster’s ear, / To make an earthquake! Sure, it was the roar / Of a whole herd of lions” (II.i.311-13). Eventually, even Gonzalo begs to leave the highly unstable environment: “All torment, trouble, wonder, and amazement / Inhabits here. Some heavenly power guide us / Out of this fearful country!” (V.i.104-6). The spirits of the island disrupt the sensory perception of everybody, resulting in a dehumanising loss of reason. In his harpy-judgment of the three men, Ariel declares “I have made you mad: / And even with suchlike valour men hang and drown / Their proper selves” (III.iii.58-60). Demonic-inspired madness certainly features in other devil dramas: in *The Witch of Edmonton*, Anne Ratcliffe is driven to madness and then suicide, while in *John of Bordeaux*, Bacon commands his devil to make Vandermast mad, the ultimate punishment for Bacon’s long-standing rival. In *The Tempest*’s final scene of resolution, Ariel leads the bewitched characters to Prospero. They appear to have lost all control of their mental faculties: “they all enter the circle which Prospero has made, and there stand charmed” (V.i.s.d). Prospero admits their brains are “now useless, boiled within the skull” (V.i.60). Only Alonso is able to offer some form of resistance, entering “with a frantic gesture” (V.i.s.d). Of course, such bewitchment is temporary, and “the charm dissolves apace / ... / so their rising senses begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle / Their clearer reason” (V.i.64-68). The hellish experiences culminate in a total loss of reason, a temporary madness induced by the demonic forces at work on the island.

These hellish experiences are affirmed by the hellish, highly unstable environment in which they occur. The weather on the island changes rapidly; there are in fact several tempests throughout the course of the play. After the opening storm has died away, thunder and lightning returns by 2.2 when Caliban first encounters Trinculo and Stephano.

The thunder and lightning also returns in 3.3, when Ariel appears as a harpy. Thomson's point that thunder and lightning is always used to signal not just the supernatural, but the sinister supernatural, is pertinent here. In the initial tempest, Ariel's "fire and cracks / Of sulphurous roaring" sound particularly hellish, and such hellish associations are reinforced by Shakespeare's choice of source material (I.ii.203-4). The demonic nature of the island's spirits is acknowledged in the *Mirror of Knighthood*, the English translation published in 1586. In Book 1, after surviving a terrible storm, the Knight of the Sun lands on "the Island of the Devil", home to a witch and her monstrous offspring, an obvious parallel to Sycorax and Caliban. Indeed, shipwrecks on magical islands were commonly associated with devils in the popular imagination. The infamous *Sea Venture* shipwreck of 1609 left 150 people stranded for nine months on Bermuda, often referred to as "The Island of the Devils" in the early modern period. Furthermore, the three accounts of the 1609 *Sea Venture* shipwreck in the Bermudas, from which Shakespeare probably drew for *The Tempest*, all describe a hellish, devil-infested island.¹ In *Newes From Virginia*, Bermuda is also referred to as "Island of Devils", and both the name and the concept of an island of demons surface in several other popular texts of the period.² Dekker's 1613 pamphlet *A Strange Horse Race* describes "The Iland of the *Bermudes* haunted as all men know with Hogs and Hobgoblins".³ Dekker also notes that the name came from the bestial sounds emitted from its local fauna: "*Bermudes* called the Iland of Diuels, by reason of the grunting of Swine, heard from thence to the sea".⁴ Peter Heylyn's 1652 *Cosmographie in Four Bookes* attributes the name to the frequent storms surrounding Bermuda: "the aire hereof very sound and healthy...yet terribly exposed to tempests of rain, thunder, and lightening: For which, and for the many shipwracks happening on the coasts thereof...the mariners have

¹ See Lindley's discussion, p.30.

² Richard Rich, *Newes from Virginia The lost flocke triumphant*. (London, 1610), sig.A1. For other references to Bermuda as 'Island of Devils' see Silvester Jourdain's *A Discovery of the Barmudas, otherwise called the Ile of Diuels by Sir Thomas Gates, Sir George Sommers, and Captayne Newport, with diuers others* (London, 1610); John Smith, *The generall historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles with the names of the adventurers, planters, and governours from their first beginning* (London, 1624), p.172; and Robert Fage, *Cosmography or, a description of the whole world represented (by a more exact and certain discovery) in the excellencies of its scituation, commodities, inhabitants, and history: of their particular and distinct governments, religions, arms, and degress, of honour used amongst them* (London, 1677), p.126.

³ Thomas Dekker, "A Strange Horse Race", *The Non-Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker* 5 vols., ed. Alexander B. Grosart (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), vol. 3, p.370.

⁴ *Ibid.*

pleased to call it the *Iland of the Devils*".¹ Again, storms are associated explicitly with demonic magic. Samuel Purchas's *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1613) describes "an island not inhabited...they say it is inhabited by Devils, and whosoever must passe by, maketh all possible hast to be gone, much affrights...self-fancies or deulish imaginations".² Purchas also notes "it was called Bermuda...it is also called the Iland of divels, which they suppose inhabit there; and the enchanted island: but these are enchanted conceits".³ A stranded boatload of travellers, unsettling weather, and ominous animal noises from an unidentifiable source are all consistent with *The Tempest*, the demonic associations now all too apparent. While Shakespeare's island is situated somewhere in the Mediterranean Sea, the Bermuda connections, both because of the infamous shipwreck and the 'hobgoblins' that haunt it, make the devilish presence in *The Tempest* more discernible. It is clear that in the early modern population imagination, shipwrecks on magical islands usually involve devils. *The Tempest* gives us no reason to suspect otherwise.

Prospero

Such a devil-infested environment serves as an ideal location for a magician capable of mastering demonic spirits, and control of these spirits requires a skilled necromancer whose own abilities and intelligence are an equal match for the devil. Prospero himself is strikingly similar to Faustus and Friar Bacon, both in the nature of his engagement with magic and the magic itself, and such similarities make it hard to deny his own association with the devil. Prospero's story follows the same pattern established by these very popular plays: an intense engagement with magic triggered by a thirst for learning, a morally questionable relationship with demonic spirits, and then an attempt to disengage from supernatural powers through the destruction of his possessions. While scholars have argued that James I, John Dee, Emperor Rudolf II, and Shakespeare himself were all models for Prospero, such connections are both problematic and difficult to prove,

¹ Peter Heylyn, *Cosmographie in four bookes: containing the chorographie and historie of the whole world, and all the principall kingdoms, provinces, seas and isles thereof* (London, 1652), p.113.

² Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his Pilgrimage, or Relations obserued in all ages and places discovered*, (London, 1613), p.746.

³ *Ibid.*

particularly since there are no direct references to any of them in the text. The contemporary devil-powered stage magicians are a much better fit when seeking a model for Prospero. Like the other magicians, Prospero is insufferably proud. He is as confident in his own abilities as both Faustus and Friar Bacon, claiming he was “so reputed / In dignity, and for the liberal arts / Without a parallel” (I.ii.72-74). It is evident from the way Prospero describes his engagement with his studies that he too has undergone the necromantic transformation James I outlines in *Demonology*: “and so mounting from degree to degree, vpon the slipperie and vncertaine scale of curiositie; they are at last enlisted, that where lawful artes or sciences failes, to satisfie their resles mindes, even to seeke to that black and vnlawfull science of *Magie*”.¹ Like Faustus, Prospero speaks of his relationship with magic as something beyond the abstract. While Faustus declares “’tis magic, magic that hath ravish’d me” (I.i.112), Prospero claims that magic has affected him physically, “being transported / And rapt in secret studies” (I.ii.76-77).

The very secrecy of the magic Prospero cites here is especially revealing. Alonso is advised not to pry too far into the workings of Prospero’s art, as the magician advises him “do not infest your mind with beating on the strangeness of this business” (V.i.247). Why is it necessary to keep it hidden?² Prospero’s efforts to conceal his art suggest that he is dealing with something particularly sinister. Not even Miranda knows of Ariel’s existence, even though she knows something about the spirits that inhabit the island. Friesen confirms that “Prospero’s magic is depicted as an illicit source of shame for the magician long before he renounces it. His reluctance to practise magic or to speak with Ariel while Miranda is present builds the perception that his practices are shameful or illicit”; indeed, ‘secret’ magic is usually associated both with learning and with the devil.² ‘Occult’, of course, means ‘hidden’ or ‘concealed’.³ Faustus describes his “magic and concealed arts”, and the chorus refers to the “secrets of astronomy” (I.i.104; III.Chorus.2).⁴ Prospero’s description of his “secret studies” (I.ii.77) echoes Friar Bacon’s frequent usage of the word

¹ James I, p.158.

² Ryan Friesen, *Supernatural Fiction in Early Modern Drama and Culture* (Brighton: Sussex Academic, 2010), p.197.

³ For example, Hamlet speaks of Claudius’s “occulted guilt” (III.ii.90).

⁴ In the *English Faustbook*, after his gruesome death, Faustus “appeared unto his servant lively, and showed unto him many secret things the which he had done and hidden in his lifetime”. Jones, p.180.

to describe his own magic: “secret cell” (ii.10) “secret gifts” (i.166), and “secret spells of art” (ii.110). Vandermast is similarly “skilful in magic and those secret arts” (vii.16). Bacon later admits he is “repentant for the follies of my youth that magic’s secret mysteries misled” (xvi.36-37). Shakespeare also uses ‘secret’ in a specifically occult sense in *Macbeth* when the eponymous character refers to the witches as “secret, black, and midnight hags” (IV.i.47).¹ These characters all openly solicit the power of devils in their ‘secret’ pursuits. We have every reason to believe that Prospero does the same; the magic he produces is grounded in the same demonological assumptions that govern Bacon’s and Faustus’s supernatural activities.

Prospero has been dabbling in dubious magic by his own admission. In his “Ye Elves of Hills” speech, Prospero confesses the true range and extent of his magical activities. It is important not to underestimate the significance of this speech. It reveals a great deal about the nature of Prospero’s magic, and its confessional tone emphasises the severity of his engagement with the supernatural. He has “bedimmed the noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds”, “rifted Jove’s stout oak with his own bolt”, “by the spurs plucked up the pine and cedar” and, most worryingly, confesses that “graves at my command / Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let ’em forth / By my so potent art” (V.i.41-50). In this last boast, of appropriating dead bodies for his magic, Prospero confesses to necromancy, a grave charge indeed and one expressly forbidden by both the 1563 and 1604 Acts against witchcraft. Here, Prospero is appropriating Medea’s speech from Book Seven of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Yet while Shakespeare has taken the speech from Golding’s translation of Ovid, he has done so carefully and deliberately. West observes that

when we match Prospero’s speech with that of Medea’s in Golding’s translation ... we see that of the dozen marvels she boasts, Shakespeare borrows only five by the most liberal count and drastically rephrases them all. He has used Ovid, but not unwarily. Whatever confirmation of illicitness in Prospero’s magic Shakespeare may give with the necromantic assertion is purposeful and calculated.²

The five items Prospero takes from Medea can all be performed by devils. Shakespeare’s appropriation of Ovid here still adheres to orthodox demonology. In fact, much of what

¹ See Crystal & Crystal, p. 390.: ‘Secret (adj.) 2. “Magical, mystical, occult.”’

² West, *Shakespeare and the Outer Mystery*, p.92.

Prospero lists here is related to elemental control, or pretence of it, since “bedimming the noontide sun” could easily be explained as thickening the air (another demonic specialty) to hide the sun rather than causing an eclipse.

The last item on Prospero’s list is especially revealing. The confession of necromancy makes his demonic associations irrefutable. Presumably, Prospero is summoning the dead bodies to serve as tangible avatars for his incorporeal spirits, as outlined in Chapter Four.

Agrippa explains:

hence necromancy hath its name, because it worketh on the bodies of the dead, and giveth answers by the ghosts and apparitions of the dead, and subterrany spirits, alluring them into the carcasses of the dead, by certain hellish charms, and infernal invocations, and by deadly sacrifices, and wicked oblations.¹

Early modern demonologies are full of descriptions of the use of body parts for magical purposes by both witches and devils. In *Metamorphoses*, Medea’s invocation is used to rejuvenate Jason’s father Aeson, but this was not considered possible, or rather, it was not possible for the devil to resurrect both body and spirit. This would be in utter defiance of death itself, and the ability to do so was reserved for God through the body of Jesus, and Jesus through his resurrection of Lazarus. Such a miracle could instead be simulated but not actually achieved by demonic forces. Agrippa confirms that “by what influences the body may be knit together again for the raising of the dead, requireth all those things which belong not to men but to God alone”.² Agrippa goes on to specify that “there are two types of necromancy, the one called necyomancy raising the carcasses, which is not done without blood; the other Sciomancy, in which the calling up of the shadow only sufficeth”.³ The devil could call up the ‘shadow’ of the deceased (generally understood to be a demon in disguise), or the cadaver, but not both. Prospero is not confessing to resurrection, but to the reanimation of corpses. Such dubious magic was almost always associated with demonic practice. James I argues that “what more is the rest troubled of a dead body, when the Devill carryes it out of the Grave to serve his turne for a space, nor when the Witches takes it up and joyntes it”.⁴ Cadavers – even just parts of one – could

¹ Agrippa, p.605.

² Ibid., p.606.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Neil Rhodes notes that ‘joyntes’ means ‘dismember’. p.392.

serve as a medium through which the devil could speak to his human summoners. This was, of course, a highly suspicious practice since it provided a source of illicit knowledge. As noted in Chapter Two, Edward Kelley, John Dee's quack medium, allegedly exhumed a corpse to interrogate it. John Weever describes the incident in *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631):

This diabolically questioning of the dead, for the knowledge of future accidents, was put in practise by the foresaid Kelley; who, vpon a certaine night...inuocated some one of the infernall regiment, to know certaine passages in the life, as also what might bee knowne by the deuils foresight, of the manner and time of the death of a noble young Gentleman...they made him (or rather some euill spirit through his organs) to speake.¹

Consequently, it is highly unlikely that Prospero's magic could be construed as 'white' or 'good', or divorced from the devil's involvement in the eyes of the early modern audience after this admission of necromancy.²

Prospero's magic is not only reminiscent of the more overtly demonic magic of Friar Bacon and Faustus. His magic is also closely aligned with that of Sycorax, the "damn'd witch" sent to the island "for mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible (I.ii.263-64). This association again links him firmly to the devil. As many critics have noted, Sycorax's story mirrors Prospero's.³ Like Prospero, Sycorax has been exiled to the island with her child and, once there, enlists the help of Ariel for her magical pursuits. Ariel, however, proves "too delicate / To act her earthy and abhorred commands" (I.ii.272-73). In fact, Prospero seems to slowly appropriate Sycorax's magical identity, freeing the spirit, taking control of her son, and using his magical command to control the entire island. Prospero's reference to Sycorax's ability to "control the moon, make flows and ebbs" is also taken from

¹ Weever, p.46-17.

² This begs the question: If Prospero only accessed his full powers when he met Ariel, then who has he been raising from the dead? The only body we know of on the island is that belonging to Sycorax, which suggests the intriguing possibility that Prospero has been using the witch's remains for his magic.

³ For example: Orgel outlines: "In Prospero's account, Sycorax was the embodiment of wickedness, but her history is curiously paralleled with his... from Caliban's point of view, and even at times Ariel's and Ferdinand's, Prospero looks very much like Sycorax. The rage, the demand for unwilling servitude, the continual threats of constriction and painful imprisonment are characteristic of both", p.19-20. Vaughan and Vaughan assert that "Prospero's darker side, moreover, is emphasised by his being the mirror image of Sycorax. Like Prospero she arrived with a child, though hers (Caliban) was still in the womb; like him, she used her magic (witchcraft) to control the elements", p.25; Marina Warner writes: "The contrast between the two magi of the play – the living male duke and the dead female hag – does not lie so much in polarities of white and black magic, or therapy and goety, as Frank Kermode developed so suggestively in his edition of *The Tempest*. It lies rather in the difference between metamorphosis and stasis, between a condition of continuing somatic, elemental and unruly mutation and a steady-state identity", p.98.

infamous Medea speech, linking the pair not just in histories but also by the magic itself (Vi.269). Prospero's appropriation of Ariel, originally Sycorax's supernatural servant, also implies that Prospero's magic is no different to the devil-sourced powers of Sycorax. Prospero behaves like Sycorax in other ways too, threatening to incarcerate Ariel in a tree: "I will rend an oak / And peg thee in his knotty entrails till / Thou hast howled away twelve winters" (I.ii.294-96). Prospero is quick to draw attention to Sycorax's relationship with the devil. In doing so, he confirms that his own magic is sourced from demons.

Caliban

There is only one character in *The Tempest* who is frequently – and explicitly – linked to the devil throughout the play, and that is Caliban. The way he is described, in both form and behaviour, is consistent with the characterisation of devils in other plays. Prospero claims that Caliban is "a devil, a born devil, on whose nature / nurture can never stick" and a "poisonous slave, got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam" (IV.i.188-89; I.ii.320-21). Caliban thus appears to be the most obvious link to the devil in the play. Yet Prospero's comments are entirely misleading. According to orthodox demonology, even if Caliban were indeed the offspring of a witch and devil, it would not be possible for Caliban to be a demon himself. Caliban's form, described as both monstrous and human at different stages in the play, could perhaps imply that he is half human, half beast, recalling the hybrid demons depicted in mediaeval illustrations, or that he perhaps has the ability to shape-shift, as Ariel does. Most of these descriptions come from Trinculo and Stephano, who refer to Caliban as "moon-calf", a "puppy-headed monster", and "a strange fish" (II.ii.94, 131, 25). Trinculo initially calls the gaberdine-clad Caliban a fish because of his smell, but after observing that he is "legged like a man – and his fins like arms". Trinculo thus concludes "This is no fish, but an islander" (II.ii.30-31). In the same scene, Trinculo again reevaluates his opinion which again de-monsters Caliban: "This is a very shallow monster...a very weak monster...a poor credulous monster", implying that he may have overestimated the monstrousness of the unfamiliar being (II.ii.122-24). It is also

worth pointing out here that Stephano is drunk, and therefore hardly a reliable source of information; additionally, we are routinely reminded not to trust appearances in *The Tempest*. Ariel's constant shapeshifting, the vastly different ways in which each person perceives the island, and the frequency with which we see Prospero alter or manipulate both appearances and vision itself serve as frequent reminders not to trust our eyes. Shakespeare never goes into specific detail about Caliban's true appearance. However, both Prospero and Miranda state clearly that Caliban is, in fact, human. Miranda claims Ferdinand is "the third man that e'er I saw"; the other two are undoubtedly her father and Caliban (I.ii.444). Prospero specifies that, aside from Caliban, the island is "not honoured with/ A human shape" (I.ii.283-84). This is a somewhat puzzling remark, not because its punctuation has been misunderstood by many who assert that Caliban himself is 'not honored with human form', but because Caliban assumes that the very human Trinculo is a spirit in 2.2. This assumption implies that Prospero's spirits appear in human form, or even confirms that the spirits can inhabit real human bodies as Prospero's "Ye Elves of Hills" speech outlines. But Caliban is very human, and both his actions and Prospero's comments locate his character firmly in the material world. The very earthiness of his character suggests that his perceived demonic qualities are explicable in terms of his animalistic tendencies that render him sub-human in a Renaissance reckoning which determined humanness by behaviour and capacity for rational thought rather than human form itself.

In a similar fashion to *The Late Lancashire Witches* and *Doctor Faustus*, the presence of demonic spirits on the island signals a descent to the bestial, both in behaviour and appearance for the comic sub-plot characters. This is, of course, a noted feature of devil plays. That Caliban is frequently referred to as an animal serves to enforce the spirits' (and therefore Prospero's) dominance over him. As mentioned above, Caliban is subject to frequent abuse by the spirits. In joining Caliban's company, Trinculo and Stephano assume the same animal-like characteristics which are later enhanced when Prospero chases the 'conspirators' off. The three humans are not adopting demonic qualities, but rather they are the victims of demonic magic. Ariel informs Prospero that

like unbacked colts they pricked their ears,
Advanced their eyelids, lifted up their noses

As they smelt music. So I charmed their ears
That calf-like they my lowing followed (IV.i.176-79).

Caliban also specifies that the conspirators could be turned into animals (or made to resemble them) physically too, in much the same way that Robin and Rafe are punished in *Faustus*: “We shall lose our time and all be turned into barnacles or to apes” (IV.i.243). The conspirators are chased by spirits “[i]n the shape of dogs and hounds” (IV.i.s.d). Prospero’s demons thus assert their dominance further by reducing the trio to animal prey. Such acts equate Caliban with those lowest in the demon/human hierarchies established in *Faustus* and *Friar Bacon* and the inverted hierarchy in *Lancashire*. The troublesome trio are the powerless humans who attempt to either dabble with magic or act in defiance of their powerful masters and are punished accordingly by demons.

While many critics have emphasised Caliban’s monstrosity, citing his demonic heritage, most fail to note that, according to the predominant demonological theories of the time, it was impossible for the devil to father a human child.¹ Prospero claims several times that Caliban is the product of a union of witch and devil. Yet any child produced from a demon-witch coupling was considered the offspring of the dead man whose body the devil had borrowed for the occasion, since the devil had to assume corporeal form for such a degree of physical interaction. James I specifies that the devil “borrowes a dead bodie and so visiblie, and as it seemes unto them naturallie as a man converses with them”.² *Demonology* makes it clear that the child resulting from the encounter is not the child of the devil, since “the Devils part therein is but the naked or expelling of the substance”; the devil merely enables the otherwise human transmission.³ James I states that this method cannot create monsters, and such stories are “*Aniles Fabulae*” (Old wives’ tales) and that it will “bread no monster, but onely such a naturall of-spring, as would have cummed betwixt

¹ See, for example, Hankins: “The offspring born to such unnatural unions are usually deformed in shape or possess some other singularity which makes them unlike normal human beings. Caliban’s parentage would thus account for his monstrous appearance, John E. Hankins, “Caliban the Bestial Man”, *PMLA* 62.3 (1947), p.783; and Friesen: “A child of illicit demonic and sexual magic, who possesses no such art of his own”, p.197.

² James I, p.189. James I also notes an alternative method, by which the devil “onely as a spirit, and stealing out the sperme of a dead bodie, abuses them that way, they not graithlie seeing anie shape or feeling anie thing”, p.189.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.189-190.

that man or woman”.¹ Clark writes that “[w]hat Satan could not be granted was procreative power; the incentive was absent and the incompatibility of the species too great”, a line of thought that stemmed from “such medieval heavyweights” Augustine, Aquinas, and Averroes.² James I describes the experience of conceiving a dead man’s child as uncomfortable at best: “but it is noted, that in whatsoever way he useth it, that sperme seemes intollerably cold to the person abused”.³ This is consistent with Meg’s description of her sexual encounter with a devil in *The Late Lancashire Witches*; she claims “his flesh felt cold” (V.v.225). Such stories are relatively rare in English witch trials, so Caliban’s parentage is particularly unusual, even for the early modern stage. In the *English Faustbook*, Faustus’s union with Helen does produce a child named Justus Faustus. However, when Faustus’s contract expires and he is dragged to hell, “the mother and the child vanished both together”.⁴ Like Helen, this ‘child’ is merely a demonic illusion, part of the delusional world that Mephistopheles helps Faustus construct. If Caliban were similarly illusory, he too would have disappeared when Sycorax died. On the stage, the most well-known child of a devil is Merlin, from Rowley’s *Birth of Merlin*, born fully grown (and conveniently off stage). As noted in Chapter Three, Merlin overcomes his demonic origins by imprisoning his father in a rock. But the wise-yet-slightly-malevolent Merlin is a world away from *Tempest*’s blundering Caliban and indeed, Merlin’s devilish heritage comes from the medieval romances of Chrétien de Troyes, predating early modern demonological thought. It is abundantly evident in *The Tempest* that Caliban is no sorcerer. He has no supernatural

¹ Ibid., p.189. Monsters are produced not from illicit unions but from instead from the devil’s usual trick of substitution following a phantom pregnancy: “It is possible to the craft of that devill to make a womans bellie to swel after he hath that way abused her...and when the time of her delivery should come to make her thoil great doloures, like unto that naturall course and then subtillie to slippe in the Mid-wves handes, stockes, stones, or some monstrous barne brought from some other place”. James I questions the validity of such a trick, however, since “this is more reported and gessed at by others, not beleevved by me”, p.190. Since Caliban exhibits a clear allegiance to his mother and grounds his claim to the island in the fact that it is his birthright, such an explanation of his origins is highly unlikely.

² Clark, p.190. Clark cites Boguet’s explanation that “coupling with witches is thus ‘real’ and ‘actual’ but the lack or loss of body heat and sexual vitality necessary for procreation, and the disproportion of the two species, make miscegenation a physical (as well as moral) impossibility”, p.197. Not all demonologists thought that human-demon sexual relationships occurred. Weyer deemed it impossible while Bodin, on the other extreme, believed procreation was possible. Bodin notes case of a witch who, having renounced God and her religion, produced a child with the devil: “and then he laid with her carnally, in the same manner and way that men do with women, except that his semen was cold”, p.131. This devil seems especially polite: “One day, the Devil asked her if she wanted to be pregnant by him, and she said she did not”, p.131. Bodin notes another case where a child was ‘dedicated’ to the devil in the womb: “in 1575 a German gentleman becoming greatly vexed at his wife that she would give birth to a devil. She produced a monster hideous to behold, thus he was reputed to be a great sorcerer”, p.134.

³ James I, p.189.

⁴ Jones, p.172.

powers whatsoever, confirming his ‘natural’ parentage. Caliban’s knowledge of the island, the manual labour he performs, and his servitude to Prospero – a role he resents, yet cannot escape – all emphasise his humanness. When he talks about the musical presence on the island, he implies he cannot see the spirit source of this music. He thus experiences the magic as a human would. Caliban is just as human as Trinculo, Stephano, and the other new beings he encounters in the play. The one character Prospero associates most with the devil cannot be anything but human.

Ariel

While at first Caliban seems the most likely character to embody the demonic, it is his foil – the soul without a body – who is recognisably a devil in *The Tempest*. In an early modern understanding of demonic magic, Ariel’s art is clearly – and undeniably – the work of the devil. Ariel is identifiably demonic in name, function, and form, in spite of the fact that Ariel is often viewed as an angelic, elemental spirit, a world away from Faustian demons. Even his name sounds angelic. As several critics have noted, the name may have biblical origins. In the Geneva Bible, “the Ebrewes worde Ariel signifieth the lyon of God, & signifieth the altar, because the altar semed to devoure the sacrifice that was offered to God”.¹ But ‘lion’ also implies a certain beastliness, a demonic dominance, and elsewhere in the Bible the devil is likened to “a roaring lion”.² The name recalls those of angels and is also reminiscent of Dee’s spirit ‘Uriel’.³ However, Dee’s experimentation and conversations

¹ Isaiah, 29. Lindley notes that “If there is an allusion to Isaiah, where ‘Ariel’ is the name of the city of Jerusalem, and glossed by the Geneva Bible as ‘the lion of God’, its significance is by no means obvious. It is, more likely, simply a name that emphasises his ‘airiness’”, p.89.

² 1 Peter 5:8. Edward Topsell notes in his *The Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes*, notes that “The Hebrewes haue for this beast male and female, and their younge ones diuers names: and first of all for the male Lion. in *Deut.* the 33 they haue *Ari*, and *Arieh*, where the *Caldians* translate it *Ariauan*, the Arabians *Asad*, the Persians *Gehad*, and plurally in Hebrew *Araijm*, *Araiot*, *Araoth*, as in the first of *Zeph. Aroath*, *Schoianim*, roaring Lions: and from hence comes *Ariel*, signifying valiant and strong, to be the name of a Prince: and *Isai* 29. *Ezech.* 43. it is taken for the alter of burnt offerings, because the fier that came downe from heauen, did continually lye vpon that altar, like a Lion in his denne: or else because the fashion of the temple was like the proportion of the Lion”. Edward Topsell, *The Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes* (London, 1607), p.456.

³ Uriel was an angel in Jewish mysticism. According to Agrippa, Uriel was a Prince of Angels who presided over the Southern wind, p.533. Heywood confirms this in *Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels*, p. 214. Uriel is also an important angel in *Paradise Lost*. French notes that Uriel instructed Dee on building a table for his showstone and described how the names should be inscribed on the seal. Peter French, *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), pp.117-119.

with ‘angels’ were regarded with extreme suspicion and he was plagued with widespread rumours that he was attended by a ‘familiar spirit’, not an angel. Agrippa points out that ‘Ariel’ is used for both angels and demons.¹ Angelic names are not at all unusual for demons, since devils are themselves fallen angels.

Others have instead located Ariel outside an overtly Christian framework.

Throughout the play, Ariel is associated with the elements, a fact that has prompted scholars to identify him as a ‘nature’ spirit, or even a Neoplatonic daemon. In Ariel’s final scene, Prospero promises him that after Ariel has produced “calm seas” and “auspicious gales” he will allow the spirit “then to the elements be free” which suggests he belongs in the natural world rather than hell (V.i.313-16). Again, his name also offers clues about his aerial nature and the dramatis personae specifies that he is “an airy spirit”, although it is evident that he is able to inhabit and manipulate all the elements. Ariel’s manifestation in the storm has been likened to St. Elmo’s Fire, a natural phenomenon, and in his first scene, Ariel claims he is able “to fly, to swim, to dive into the fire, to ride /On the curled clouds” (I.ii.190-1). Prospero reveals he has commanded Ariel to

tread the ooze
Of the salt deep,
To run upon the sharp wind of the north,
To do me business in the veins o’th’earth
When it is baked with frost (I.ii.252-56).

He later commands him to “make thyself like a nymph o’th’sea” (I.ii.302). Thus, by the second scene of the play, Ariel’s ‘natural’ identity is established.² Yet such elemental spirits were usually assumed to be devils anyway. Robert Burton outlines six standard categories of demons in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, including the spirits that inhabit fire, air, water, subterranean caves, and the earth’s surface.³ Greene makes the hellish connection clear in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*: Bungay states that

magic haunts the grounds,

¹ “Ariel is the name of an angel, and is the same as the Lion of God; sometimes also it is the name of an evil demon”. Agrippa, p.553.

² Vaughan & Vaughan suggest the neo-platonic associations of both of Prospero’s servants: “Ariel can be seen as one pole in a neo-Platonic dualism: Air as opposed to Caliban’s earth”, p.27. This doesn’t work however, since Ariel inhabits not just air but also fire, water, and earth. When Ariel sings, Ferdinand is not sure if the sound comes from the air or the earth. Berger also notes he is Neoplatonic: “Ariel...is certainly a heterogenous figure, but his nature, function, and methods become fully comprehensible only when it is recognised that he is a Ficinian spirit”, p.214.

³ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London, 1621), p.63.

And those strange necromantic spells,
That work such shows and wondering in the world,
Are acted by those geomantic spirits
That Hermes calleth *terrae filii* (ix.46-50).

Vandermast outlines that

earthly geomantic spirits
Are dull and like the place where they remain;
For, when proud Lucifer fell from the heavens,
The spirits and angels that did sin with him
Retain'd their local essence as their faults,
All subject under Luna's continent.
They which offended less hang in the fire,
And second faults did rest within the air (xi.56-63).

In *Demonology*, James I confirms the devilish nature of such elemental spirits: "at the fall of Lucifer, some spirits fell in the aire, some in the fire, some in the water, some in the land".¹ While Ariel does exhibit the traits of such 'elemental' beings, these spirits are obviously connected with the devil.

Ariel's form and substance are entirely in keeping with those of demons as outlined by early modern demonologists. He is obviously 'airy', possessing an 'incorporeal body' and thus not "weighed down by the sluggishness of the [human] body".² The 'airy spirit' description was commonly used for demons, referring not just to their presence in the air, but the way in which they used air to manipulate or obscure appearances. Ariel's ability to manipulate the air around him is consistent with the sort of magic performed by other demons. Randall Hutchins's 1593 "Of Specters" describes evil demons who

descend to lower regions quicker than thought and, having taken on bodies from the denser air, appear visibly at times...these spirits often disturb the air, stir up tempests and thunders. They do not retain one form, but take on various forms, and change those 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.³

'Aerial' demons certainly had an established presence on the early modern stage. Reed identifies an Ariel "prototype" in Munday's *John a Kent and John a Cumber*, the more

¹ This is also outlined by Agrippa (p.510): "[Devils] therefore being cast fourth into this valley of misery, some that are nigh to us wander up and down in this obscure air, others inhabit lakes, rivers, and seas, others the earth, and terrify earthly things, and invade those who dig wells and metals, cause the gapings of the earth, strike together the foundations of the mountains, and vex not only men but also other creatures".

² Weyer, p.26.

³ Randall Hutchins, "Of Specters" trans. Virgil B. Heltzel and Clyde Murley, *Huntington Library Quarterly* 11.4 (1948), p.407.

prosaically named familiar, 'Shrimp', who also "answers to the description of an aerial demon" and "with two or three exceptions, the major feats performed by Ariel are identical to those of Shrimp", and in Ariel "are embodied the important attributes of at least four of the six categories of demons".¹ Indeed, Ariel behaves in a very similar way to Mephistopheles, Belcephon, Dog, Puck, and the other stage devils: he appears invisible to create the effect of disembodied voices to confuse humans; he sends characters to sleep; and he both leads and chases the characters across the island. Prospero refers to Ariel's disguise as a "fine apparition", acknowledging the temporal nature of such appearances, and he has to keep reminding Ariel to stay invisible throughout the play (I.ii.318). The magic Ariel administers in the play can hardly be called benevolent. From the point of view of any other character, the magic is downright sinister. Ariel is not always "quaint", "delicate" and "dainty"; he can also be "tricksy", "malignant" and "moody" (I.ii.318, 445; V.i.225, 256; I.ii.256, 244). When trapped in the tree, he does not produce "sweet airs", but groans that "Did make wolves howl and penetrate the breasts / Of ever-angry beasts" (I.ii. 288-89). Dressed as a harpy, he terrifies his three spectators, invoking a similar fear in the three conspirators when he pursues them for plotting against Prospero. When he appears invisible, taunting and then comforting Ferdinand about his supposedly-dead father, his behaviour echoes Faustus's and Mephistopheles's tricks in the Vatican when they disrupt the pope's feast. Ariel's ability to transform his appearance, manipulate the air to cast illusions, turn invisible and taunt unsuspecting people is entirely in keeping with the behaviour of devils in the other dramas discussed in this thesis.

Prospero's Pact

But has Prospero, like Friar Bacon and Faustus, made a pact with the devil? *The Tempest* is riddled with hints suggesting that this is so. While Prospero was exiled from Milan for devoting too much time to his magic books, his magical ambitions are only realised when he encounters Ariel on the island since it is the spirit who actually performs the magic. Like

¹ Reed, pp.62-64.

Faustus, Prospero had an extensive knowledge of magic before entering into the demonic contact. However, in keeping with the reversal of the Faustian relationship, it is also significant that it was not Prospero's words that summoned Ariel but, rather, Ariel's screams that summoned Prospero to him. As outlined in Chapter Two, storing or trapping spirits in a material object is described frequently in early modern demonologies. Releasing a spirit seems easier than encasing one: while Prospero claims he freed Ariel with "mine art", he also implies it was a much more physical act "that made gape / The pine and let thee out" (I.ii.291-93). This release again suggests Ariel is demonic by association, and a demon trapped in a tree appears in other sources too: in *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraft*, George Gifford mentions a witch who "had a sprite which did abide in a hollow tree, where there was an hole, out of which hee spake vnto her".¹ Here *The Tempest* again recalls *The Birth of Merlin*, when Merlin traps his devil-father in a rock to prevent further mischief.

Ariel's relationship with Prospero is reminiscent of the one Faustus stipulates in his pact with Mephistopheles: Ariel is Prospero's servant, and "at his command"; he does "for him and bring him whatsoever", is "in his chamber or house invisible" and appears to Prospero "at all times in what form or shape soever he please" (II.i.98-105). Like Mephistopheles, Ariel is bound for twenty-four years: he has spent twelve years trapped in the cloven pine and a further twelve years in Prospero's service. Ariel makes it clear in his first scene that his service to Prospero is due to come to an end:

Remember I have done thee worthy service,
Told thee no lies, made no mistakings, served
Without or grudge or grumblings. Thou did promise
To bate me a full year (I.ii.246-50).

At some point, Prospero and Ariel have made some kind of formal agreement that binds the spirit to Prospero's service. The key difference between Faustus's pact and Prospero's pact is mastery; Prospero, like Friar Bacon, has the upper hand in the relationship which, as Chapter Three illustrates, is determined by individual character and natural intelligence, not one's human or demonic origins. Prospero's comment that Ariel "my slave ... was then [Sycorax's] servant" outlines the sharp distinction between Ariel's respective relationships

¹ Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraft* (London, 1593), sig.j4.

with his two masters and it echoes James I's assertion that witches are servants to the devil while necromancers are his masters (I.ii.270-71). Ariel was a disappointing servant to Sycorax and, unable to command him properly, she imprisoned him in the tree. Prospero, on the other hand, has absolute command of the spirit and is thus able to exploit the spirit's abilities much more effectively. Like the devils attached to Faustus, Friar Bacon, Mother Sawyer, and the Lancashire witches, it is Ariel – not Prospero – who performs the actual magic. In the Epilogue, Prospero asserts he now lacks “spirits to enforce, art to enchant” neatly outlining the division of labour (Epilogue.14). He performs the ‘art’ of magic through command, but the spirits ‘enforce’ it – that is, produce the magic itself – in much the same way that Prospero commands Caliban to undertake manual labour. Since Prospero has the upper hand in the relationship, he can release Ariel from the contract, not the other way around. West, one of the few scholars to acknowledge some form of pact, explains: “Ariel is bound for a term of service...and bound apparently by oath...rather than by assignment from his hierarchic supervisor. As was usual in the demonic hierarchy, Ariel has ‘meaner fellows’ whom he seems to order about”.¹ West could very well be describing Mephistopheles here; the implied agreement between spirit and human, the hierarchy of demons allowing Ariel to delegate some of his lesser tasks, and the execution of the magic are exactly the same in *Faustus* and *The Tempest*. As demonstrated here, *The Tempest* offers an intriguing reversal of the Faustian relationship in which the magician is entirely in control and the spirit longs to be free of the connection. Yet neither is this new. We see the same model in *Friar Bacon* in which Bacon is wholly in control of reluctant devils. In the penultimate scene, the nameless devil enters muttering mutinously about the number of magicians calling him up and, as Chapter Three argues, Peter Fabel of *Merry Devil of Edmonton* is similarly able to successfully dictate the terms of the relationship. The similarities between the Prospero-Ariel relationship, that of Bacon and his devils and the Fabel-Coreb partnership make it hard to deny that a similarly formal arrangement exists between Prospero and his spirit, an arrangement that is nearing its end when the play begins.

¹ West, *Shakespeare and the Outer Mystery*, p.90.

It is Prospero's repentance at the end of the play that most obviously signals a demonic pact, not least because it echoes the closing scenes of both *Faustus* and *Friar Bacon*. The action begs the rather obvious question: why would he need to abandon his magic if it were indeed a white, benevolent art rather than devil-powered malice? And why else would he be so concerned about his fate? Prospero's final line plea to "Let your indulgence set me free", which alludes to his earlier statement that he does "dwell / In this bare island by your spell", acknowledges the purgatorial function of the island (Epilogue.20, 6-7). The hellish environment is indeed a place of waiting: Caliban waits to gain control over the domain; Prospero waits to get his revenge; Ariel waits to be freed; and the shipwrecked newcomers to the island wait for their chance to escape, some receiving judgment from the harpy-dressed Ariel, others from Prospero himself. Yet Prospero needs both their judgement and forgiveness (and that of whoever he addresses in the Epilogue) before he can resume his role as Duke of Milan.

Like Friar Bacon, Prospero pledges to break his magical instruments, thus destroying that which enabled him to access the spirits. After promising to renounce his potent art, however, Prospero continues to exhibit a worrying concern for his spiritual wellbeing. He reveals that his fate is anything but certain. The undeniable religiousness of the Epilogue, absent from much of the rest of the play, imbues the story with a Faustian uncertainty about the effectiveness of the reversal of his actions. Prospero's insistence that "my ending is despair, / Unless I be relieved by prayer" echoes Faustus's last conversation with his scholars: "Ay, pray for me, pray for me!" (Epilogue.16-17; V.ii.57). While Faustus is adamant that "nothing can rescue me", the Second Scholar insists "we will pray that God may have mercy upon thee" (V.ii.59-61). After destroying his own magical device, Bacon declares "drown not in despair. / Sins have their salves. Repentance can do much" (xiii.98-99). He declares to Bungay that he'll "spend the remnant of my life / In pure devotion, praying to God / That he would save what Bacon vainly lost" (xiii.106-9). Prospero's version is nowhere near as confident. His prayer-like intonations thus signal both a Bacon-like attempt to purge his soul from demonic dealings and a Faustian anxiety about its effectiveness. Given the popularity of both *Friar Bacon* and *Faustus* and the similarity of

Prospero's magic, spirit, and spiritual concerns to these necromancers, Prospero's connection to demonic spirits through a formal agreement is all too apparent.

Although the role of the devil in *The Tempest* has been buried under four hundred years of scholarship, his presence is still discernible. As this chapter has argued, the demonic identity of Ariel and the other, nameless spirits becomes more apparent when viewed alongside the more obviously demonic magic of Mephistopheles, Belcephon, Astaroth, Puck, Dog, and the many other devils that populate early modern magic plays. This close examination of *The Tempest's* magic proves that it conforms to the dominant demonological theories of the time. Prospero and Ariel must work within the laws of nature because there is no way to transcend them. While Prospero seems to transcend Faustus's experience with magic because of his superior command of Ariel, it is evident that the magic itself has clear restrictions. *The Tempest* does not surpass Faustian limitations, it simply turns Marlowe's human-demon partnership on its head. In Shakespeare's play, the Mephistophelean qualities of the human tend to eclipse Ariel's own demonic nature. *The Tempest* thus further confuses the distinction between devils and humans in terms of character, rendering any real boundaries insignificant. Prospero is as devilish as he is human; Ariel is as human as he is demonic. In *The Tempest* it is often impossible to distinguish one from the other.

CONCLUSION

The Devil in the Detail

Confusing a human for a devil is a surprisingly easy mistake to make on the early modern stage, since human and demonic characters often switch identities. Human characters disguise themselves as devils in Lodge and Greene's *A Looking Glass for London and England*, Marston's *Histriomastix*, Fletcher's *Monsieur Thomas*, Davenport's *A New Trick to Cheat the Devil*, Davenant's *The Temple of Love*, *The Two Merry Milkmaids*, and Suckling's *The Goblins*. Meanwhile, devils appear as humans in *Doctor Faustus*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, *The Birth of Merlin*, *The Late Lancashire Witches*, *The Witch of Edmonton*, *If This Be Not a Good Play the Devil is in It*, and *John of Bordeaux* to name only a few. In Brome's *The Queene's Exchange*, or in *The Two Merry Milkmaids* when Landoff disguises himself as his own devil to fool Bernard, it doesn't matter that the disguised humans are not really devils; they still manage to achieve the same effects and function as demons are supposed to function. Conversely, in *The Devil is an Ass*, Pug's problem is that he looks too human and he consequently fails to gain recognition as a devil. He is then out-devilled by the more manipulative human characters. These plays make it clear how the distinctions between humans and devils are easily transcended.

The staging of demonic magic also highlights the performativity inherent in demonic magic. In many of the plays discussed in this thesis, demonic spirits appear in human form in the magic shows and pageants, the demonic plays-within-the-play staged simply to "delight the mind", as Mephistopheles explains to Faustus (II.i.85). The performative role of the devil is acknowledged throughout *Doctor Faustus*, where both devils and humans refer frequently to the act of 'performing' magic: spirits will "perform what desperate enterprise [Faustus] will[s]" (I.i.83); Mephistopheles must "perform" Lucifer's commands (I.iii.43); Cornelius describes "the miracles that magic will perform" (I.i.138); Mephistopheles's magic "shall be performed in twinkling of an eye" (V.i.90). Similarly, in *Friar Bacon*, Burden complains that "Bacon roves a bow beyond his reach / And tells of more than magic can perform", while Bacon chides the scholars for not believing that he

can “perform his head and wall of brass” (ii.75-76, 143-44). In *The Tempest*, Ariel has “performed to point the tempest” (I.ii.194). Prospero later praises him for “the figure of this harpy hast thou performed” (III.iii.83). In *The Late Lancashire Witches*, the spirits are told to “fly about the task / That we projected in our mask” (II.i.20-21). Ostovich explains that “the magical dance just performed represents the next act of witchcraft”; the witches ‘perform’ the magic that the devils then go on to perform themselves.¹ Mephistopheles’s own masque of devils shows Faustus “what magic can perform” (I.i.86). While the show is intended to distract Faustus away from the magic’s limitations, Mephistopheles nevertheless acknowledges that magic is, in fact, centred on performance, on illusions, on insubstantial visual delight. Demonic magic is inherently theatrical; the meta-theatricality of early modern stage devils is all too apparent.

But if magic is ‘performed’, is it thus fake? Does the staging of demonic magic undermine its credibility by proving that it can be easily simulated by human actors? In reference to Harsnett’s exposure of John Darrell’s exorcisms, Greenblatt writes that “Performance kills belief; or rather acknowledging theatricality kills the credibility of the supernatural”.² Greenblatt elaborates:

The [theatre] elicits from us complicity rather than belief. Demonic possession is responsibly marked out for the audience as a theatrical fraud, designed to gull the unsuspecting: monsters such as the fiend with the thousand noses are illusions most easily imposed on the old, the blind, and the despairing; evil comes not from the mysterious otherworld of demons but from this world, the world of court and family intrigue.³

Greenblatt’s comments certainly ring true for the faked possession scenes in *The Devil is an Ass*, *Volpone*, and *The Puritan Widow*, but the staging of fraudulent demonic possessions does not entail that all devilish magic is fake. In fact, rather than killing belief in the material presence of devils, the stage confirms it. In *The Devil is an Ass* the ‘possession’ is indeed fake, but the devils are certainly real. The fake devils in *The Queen’s Exchange* and *The Two Merry Milkmaids* are only successful because the disguised humans are taking advantage of a belief that devils can, in fact, manifest and perform magic in the material world.

¹ Helen Ostovich, *Richard Brome Online* (<http://hrionline.ac.uk/brome>, 25 September 2013), ISBN 978-0-9557876-1-4.

² Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, p.109.

³ *Ibid*, p.119.

“The Devil in the Detail” has demonstrated that the staging of demonic magic confirms rather than discredits its credibility in the early modern world. “The mysterious otherworld” of demons to which Greenblatt refers is neither ‘mysterious’ nor ‘other’, but an integral part of early modern cosmography. In early modern demonological thought, the ‘supernatural’ is encompassed within the ‘natural’. The theatre, as a discerner of truth in both word and action, confirms the devil’s ‘naturalism’ in both appearance and ability. The staging of demons in fact sorts the ‘real’ magic from the unreal magic, reinforcing the notion that the devil’s abilities are limited by the very fact that all the magic has to be simulated by the human actors; what is impossible for them is also impossible for the devil. A devil has to fetch food because an actor has to bring in the food offstage; to get the talking head to work, the devil has to project its voice from an inanimate object, as an actor would in order to stage the scene. Demons might be able to do things more quickly and more effectively, but this too can be understood within the confines of the ‘natural’. The magic lies in the expedited processes and crafty visual and intellectual manipulation, in the method rather than the result. Demonic magic is portrayed as a means to an end, not the end itself. Performing these feats does not expose them as fraudulent acts; it instead shows how the acts can be achieved. The staging of demonic magic does not kill belief. Rather, it confirms its existence by lending the ‘supernatural’ some credibility.

Early modern devil dramas present truth by considering and then ultimately disproving some magical feats, drawing a firm line between the possible and impossible. Other theories of magic – local superstitions, the marvelous, the miraculous – are all explored and rejected in the plays in favour of a more limited and thus more realistic demonic power. In fact, many of these plays demonstrate a need to repeatedly assert the extent and restrictions of demonic power in the material world. Mephistopheles exposes the limitations of his tricks to Faustus; the Justice of the Peace exposes the superstitions of the Edmonton community; Prospero proclaims his magic as an “insubstantial pageant”, the spirits “our actors” (IV.i.155, 148). Apparitions summoned in early modern drama can seldom be spoken to and must not be touched; food must be fetched, not created; people are disguised, not transformed. The devil’s limitations made his magic believable.

In *Thinking with Demons*, Stuart Clark contends that early modern demonology was “broadly, but genuinely, scientific” and a valid precursor of scientific thought.¹ In this thesis I have established that this rational understanding of demonic capabilities was both apparent and strictly adhered to in the early modern theatre. “The Devil in the Detail” demonstrates that early modern devil dramas reflect the same understanding of natural laws and demonic limitations as those outlined by James I, Johan Weyer, George Gifford, William Perkins, Cornelius Agrippa, Heinrich Kramer, and many other demonologists, and those described (if not believed) by Reginald Scot. In some cases it is evident the playwrights knew this material well: Shakespeare drew on James I’s *Demonology* for *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*; Dekker, Ford, and Rowley were clearly familiar with Gifford’s *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraft* when they wrote *The Witch of Edmonton*; the anonymous writer of *The Two Merry Milkmaids* quotes Reginald Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft* verbatim. Other plays simply feature devils operating in the material world in accordance with the laws of nature. Demonism is part of an early modern reality, not the subject of escapist, marvelous, fantastical fiction.

Each chapter of “The Devil in the Detail” shows how these devil dramas conform to the dominant demonological thought of the time and that, in acknowledging the ways in which demonic magic is limited, these playwrights humanise demons. In *Doctor Faustus*, Mephistopheles confirms what demonic magic can and cannot achieve, revealing that, in terms of power and ability, devils are limited in much the same way as humans are. These limitations are evident in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, a play which explores more closely the relationship between devils and the inanimate world. It is within the devil’s ability to make a brazen head appear as if it was talking autonomously; it is not within the devil’s powers to actually make the head talk by itself. The action in *John of Bordeaux* suggests that human-devil relationships and agreements are as unstable and unreliable as human-human agreements, and that humans are equally capable of using mastery and trickery to beat the devil. The similarities between humans and devils are also emphasised in *The Devil is an Ass*, in which a simple-minded devil is outwitted by more cunning humans. Both *John of*

¹ Clark, p.152.

Bordeaux and Jonson's play suggest that differences between humans and devils are thus not determined by a superior intellectual skill. The staging of hell as a place both close by and easily accessible likewise blurs the boundaries between the human and demonic worlds. *The Witch of Edmonton* presents the *Faustus* scenario of a human outwitted by a cleverer devil, yet the play also confirms the devil's limitations by demonstrating that, in 'supernatural' deaths, the motive and intent must come from the human, not the devil; the devil merely assists with an already-present human desire. He is an enabler rather than an instigator. Even the more far-fetched magic of *The Late Lancashire Witches* can be understood in rationalised demonological terms because Brome and Heywood carefully expose its workings, and thus its limitations. When the magic of *The Tempest* is considered alongside these other devil dramas, it is evident that Prospero's magic is also demonic in origin. The devils in *The Tempest* are hiding in plain sight.

In reinforcing the similarities between humans and demons in both appearance and behaviour, the staging of demons in the early modern theatre also suggests that devils are equally worthy of audience sympathy. In *Faustus*, Mephistopheles not only confirms that his powers are rather limited; he also establishes himself as a character in his own right. His plight is just as tragic as Faustus's, for Marlowe's devil made his own Faustian deal when he chose to support Lucifer. The plight of the devils in *The Devil is an Ass*, *Grim the Collier of Croydon*, and even *The Tempest* also call for audience sympathy, even if these demons are not quite as compelling or tragic as Mephistopheles. Consequently, it is sometimes difficult to determine who is the victim and who is the villain in the human-demon partnership. Faustus and Mother Sawyer are victims of the devil, but their victimisation is brought about by their own intent. Ariel, Pug, Belcephon, Astaroth, Rabsacke, and the *Lancashire* familiars are, if not victims, certainly servants of their respective humans and obliged to perform magic on behalf of human intent. The way in which their magic is used is thus directed by human evil, not demonic malice. That the human is in control means they are morally responsible. Even when the devil is clearly pulling the strings, as in *The Witch of Edmonton*, the human intent drives the relationship.

The representation of devils in the early modern theatre does not evidence the decline of magic. This rational basis underlying the display of devils on the early modern stage was consistent in the representation of the demonic throughout the Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline periods, from *Doctor Faustus* in the late 1580s to *The Late Lancashire Witches* in 1634. Devils featured in at least ten new plays in the 1630s, and while the tone of the later plays is essentially more comic, they nonetheless adhere to the demonic conventions established in the *Doctor Faustus*, *Friar Bacon*, and the other earlier devil plays. *The Late Lancashire Witches* purported to dramatise contemporary events, and at least one member of the audience attended the play expecting to learn something about “of tenet witches”.¹ There is no discernible trend towards the sceptical or the secular evident in these devil dramas. When the theatres closed in 1642, demonic magic was still considered a distinct possibility in the material world and remained so for quite some time. Several prolific ‘supernatural’ incidents in the mid-late seventeenth century reveal that the existence of demonic magic was still a very real concern, including the rumours surrounding Prince Rupert’s demonic dog during the Civil War, the infamous witch assizes instigated by Matthew Hopkins, self-appointed ‘Witch-finder General’ (1644-46), and the intellectual debate following the publication of Glanvill’s *A Philosophical Endeavor Towards the Defense of the Being of Witches and Apparitions* (1666). These controversies all testify to the fact that belief in the power of demons in the material world was still widespread, and that demonological convictions still had some intellectual currency in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Indeed, devils were also popular characters in the Restoration theatre, and the demonic nature of the magic in *The Tempest* was all too apparent. In the Dryden–Davenant–Shadwell adaptation of 1667, the spirits are staged explicitly as devils. The “several strange shapes” that bring in the vanishing banquet in 3.3 become “eight fat spirits, with cornu-copia in their hands” (III.iii.s.d).² Gonzalo confirms they are “a masque of fatten’d Devils, the /Burgo-masters of the lower Region” (III.iii.36-38). The island is the dominion of “some merry Devil” (II.i.38); Ferdinand refers to Ariel as “this evil spirit”

¹ Tomkyns, p.213.

² John Dryden [William Davenant, and Thomas Shadwell], “The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island” 1667, in *the Works of John Dryden* 10, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970).

whose advice “may be the Devil’s counsel” (III.iv.15,18); and Caliban confirms the devilish presence on the island, even distinguishing between different types of devils: “my mother left us in her Will a hundred Spirits to attend us, Devils of all sorts, some great roaring Devils and some little singing sprights” (IV.ii.40-42). The *Tempest* frontispiece on Nicholas Rowe’s 1709 *The Works of Mr. William Shakespeare* depicts a variety of tiny devilish creatures emerging from the clouds to reign down thunder and lightning on the boat.¹

The belief that devils had the power to create a storm at sea may appear to be irrational superstition, but considering this particular instance of magic in context reveals the underlying rationality that deemed this a plausible act in the early modern mind. In revealing the limitations of the devil’s magic, the early modern stage confirms the predominant demonological ideas of the time, demonstrating that these rationalised convictions were not restricted to intellectual debate but were also present in popular culture. The theatre has no obligation to adhere to a demonic verisimilitude, yet it nevertheless forces us to take the devil seriously by demonstrating how he could function in the material world. In fact, the theatre further endorses the ‘naturalism’ of the devil by giving him a human face and a human character. Examining the devil in the detail reveals that it is these natural, very human details that are essential to properly understanding the display of demons on the early modern stage.

¹ See Fig.9

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