



Supernatural Spaces in the Early Modern World

Thursday 19 and Friday 20 May 2016

John Rylands Library, Deansgate, The University of Manchester

Convenors: Jenny Spinks (jenny.spinks@manchester.ac.uk) and Sasha Handley (sasha.handley@manchester.ac.uk) with the assistance of Stephen Gordon. The workshop has been supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the John Rylands Research Institute, and the History Department and Faculty of Humanities at the University of Manchester.

Practicalities: all papers will be 20 minutes in length, with an extra 10 minutes for discussion. Sessions will be held in the Christie Room on the first floor of the John Rylands Library. There will be powerpoint facilities. Speakers are requested to bring powerpoints on a USB stick, and should also feel free to email powerpoints to Jenny or Sasha in advance. *Please note that due to limited space this is an invitation-only event.* The Manchester Piccadilly train station is a c. 30-minute walk or 15-minute taxi ride from the John Rylands Library: <http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/rylands/visit-us/how-to-find-us/>

Workshop Programme

Thursday 19 May 2016

12.30-2.00: Buffet lunch, John Rylands Library café (ground floor); if travelling from outside Manchester, please just arrive when you can

2.00-3.00: Session 1

- **Jenny Spinks & Sasha Handley** 'Introduction: Supernatural Spaces in the Early Modern World' and visit to 'Magic, Witches and Devils in the Early Modern World' exhibition (gallery adjacent to the seminar room)

3.00-4.00: Session 2

Chair: Sasha Handley

- **Ulinka Rublack**, 'The Astronomer & the Witch'
- **Charlotte-Rose Millar**, "'He appeared to her in the night": Emotions, the Domestic and the Demonic in Early Modern England'

4.00-4.30: afternoon tea

4.30-6.00: Session 3

Chair: Jenny Spinks

- **Thibaut Maus de Rolley**, ‘Sailors, witches, and birds of passage: Pierre de Lancre’s imagination of movement and space’
- **Jan Machielsen**, ‘Pierre de Lancre and the Body of the Witch’
- **Charles Zika**, ‘Spatial Environments and Emotional Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Images of Witches’ Dances’

6.00: drinks at Veenoo, 14 Brazennose Street

7.00 dinner for workshop speakers at The Restaurant Bar & Grill, 14 John Dalton Street

Friday 20 May 2016

Coffee, tea and pastries from 8.30 in the Christie Room

9.00-10.30: Session 4

Chair: Jenny Spinks

- **Louise Elizabeth Wilson**, ‘Medicine, Magic and Maleficia: Encounters with the Supernatural in Body and Soul’
- **Stephen Gordon**, ‘Emotional Contagion and the Vampire Epidemic in Early Modern Europe’
- **Ronald Hutton**, ‘Following the Goddess: But which Goddess?’

10.30-11.00: morning tea

11.00-12.30: Session 5

Chair: Sasha Handley

- **Thomas Wroblewski**, ‘Diagnosing the Demoniac: Medical Evidence of Demonic Possession in the Early Modern Courtroom’
- **Laura Sangha**, ‘“Take care that nothing be printed”: The Public and Private Lives of Supernatural Narratives in later Stuart England’
- **Phyllis Mack**, ‘Dreaming in the Enlightenment: The Rev. David Simpson and Hester Ann Roe’

12.30-1.30: lunch

1.30-3.00: Session 6

Guest chair: Laura Kounine

- **Pau Castell Granados**, ‘Testimonies of supernatural encounters in Iberian witchcraft trials (15th-17th centuries)’
- **Sasha Handley**, ‘The ghost of Old Jeffery: Family relations and the magical materiality of an early modern household’
- **Malcolm Gaskill**, ‘Silence and Suspicion: Witchcraft in a Seventeenth-Century American Household’

3.00-3.30: afternoon tea / wrap up session

Supernatural Spaces in the Early Modern World: workshop description

Early modern Europeans encountered and tested beliefs about witches, ghosts, demons, visions and other manifestations of the supernatural in a range of physical and imagined spaces: households, courtrooms, libraries, laboratories, woodlands and mountains, dreamscapes, and lands beyond European borders. This workshop will explore how the emotional, intellectual, social and cultural dynamics of supernatural encounters were shaped by the physical and perceptual environments in which they took place. Europe's changing geographical, religious, legal and scientific borders, as well as its ever-increasing print and epistolary networks, form a background to this workshop, which aims to examine the rich variety of ways in which a sense of specific environments – whether intimately familiar or far distant, tangible or imagined – helped to shape supernatural experiences, narratives and beliefs, and in which the emotions often played a central role. Papers at the workshop will range across a variety of topics, including the wild ride or the witches' Sabbath in remote locales; European reports of devils and sorcerers in Asia, Africa and the Americas; supernatural events in domestic environments and their relation to the boundaries of personal and public life; the enacting of contested attitudes in courtrooms and academies; and dreamscapes as locales where supernatural events could unfold and later be shared in communal settings.

Abstracts in running order

Professor Ulinka Rublack, St John's College, Cambridge, 'The Astronomer & the Witch'

My talk will draw on my recent book on the witchcraft accusation against Katharina, the mother of the famous astronomer, in order to focus on the ways in which Kepler made sense of biographies and witchcraft, in relation to changing strands within Protestantism and natural philosophy which attributed greater power to human reason and will. It will then introduce the opera project I have initiated, and its relation to Paul Hindemith's and Philip Glass's operas about Kepler.

Dr Charlotte-Rose Millar, The University of Melbourne, "'He appeared to her in the night": Emotions, the Domestic and the Demonic in Early Modern England'

In early modern English witchcraft pamphlets, accused witches often confessed that the devil, in the shape of a familiar spirit, appeared to them in the night. More often than not, the familiar spirit joined the witch in her bed. In some rare encounters the familiar was believed to sit on the witch's chest, a phenomenon akin to a "nightmare" experience. This paper will attempt to speculate on how we should understand these encounters and explore what they tell us about the relationship between witch and devil. It will also ask why these experiences commonly occurred in a witch's chamber, at night, in bed. Witches apparently reacted fearfully to devils sitting on their chests, as did many of the accused when devils appeared to them at night. These stories also appear to contain a sexual element, as familiars were believed to suck at teats on a witch's thighs, genitalia and breasts while lying in bed with her. This paper will focus on the relationship between witch and devil, the fear associated with their first encounter, the

domestic space where their relationship was formed and the sexual overtones of their liaison.

Dr Thibaut Maus de Rolley, University College London, ‘Sailors, witches, and birds of passage: Pierre de Lancre’s imagination of movement and space’

During the summer and autumn of 1609, the Bordeaux judge Pierre de Lancre led a brutal witch-hunt in the Pays de Labourd, a territory in the complete south-west of France. In his *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et démons* (*On the inconstancy of evil angels and demons*, 1612), Lancre described this fragment of the French Basque country as an exotic and hostile country, a New World of sorts inhabited by barely civilized people. Stuck between the Pyrenees and the tumultuous Atlantic Ocean, this savage and infertile land appeared in many ways as an inverted image of the judge’s own family land: a prosperous and peaceful estate in Sainte-Croix-des-Monts, in the wine-making region of Bordeaux. In Lancre’s eyes, the Pays de Labourd was a place of frenzy and movement, as if this land of fishermen had been pervaded by the inconstancy of the sea. The Basque people were constantly on the move, and revelled in many “exercises of inconstancy”: running, jumping, dancing, sea bathing, seafaring... and flying. This extreme agitation and mobility made the Pays de Labourd the devil’s natural abode, and horrified Pierre de Lancre, whose very name (a combination of the stone and the anchor) suggested constancy and steadiness. In this paper, I will attempt to explain the imagination of space at work in Lancre’s *Tableau de l'inconstance*, and examine the personal, literary and cultural roots of his demonization of movement. Replacing the *Tableau de l'inconstance* within the wider context of Lancre’s other writings, I will argue that Lancre’s view of the Pays de Labourd and discourse on witchcraft was shaped to some extent by a neo-Stoic condemnation of travel and mobility. Demonic transvection, in other words, could be seen as a form of *périgrinomanie* – an excessive passion for travel.

Dr Jan Machielsen, Cardiff University, ‘Pierre de Lancre and the Body of the Witch’

Pierre de Lancre’s *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et démons* (1612) is known for its graphic description of the witches’ sabbath, visually represented in a famous engraving by the Polish artist Jan Ziarnko. Lancre based himself on testimony he had gathered as one of the judges sent to investigate a witchcraft epidemic in the Pays de Labourd, a Basque-speaking territory in the complete south-west of France. Virginia Krause, drawing in part on Lancre’s *Tableau*, has recently pointed out how early modern demonology relied on an ‘auricular regime’. Demonologists could not see the sabbath for themselves, they could only hear testimony: ‘witchcraft theory emerged out of an auricular regime in which the truth had to be spoken by the witch herself, or rather extracted from her mouth’. Lancre does indeed rely on such testimony, but he does not give up on the idea of seeing witchcraft for himself. This paper explores how Lancre treated the body of the witch as a relic to be studied and observed, and seeks to capture Lancre’s ‘gaze’.

Professor Charles Zika, Centre for the History of Emotions, The University of Melbourne, ‘Spatial Environments and Emotional Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Images of Witches’ Dances’

A critical change in witchcraft iconography from the 1590s was the introduction and growing prominence of dancing as one of the key rituals of the Sabbath. Witchcraft was increasingly represented as a large collective event, often situated in an expansive country setting, with its dances figured as social performances driven by sexual desire and bodily frenzy. The introduction of the specific mountainous environment of the Blocksberg from the 1620s helped link witches’ dances to tales of the wondrous and exotic as well as of moral disorder and excess. The expansiveness of this environment also served to open out a complex emotional narrative into which individual viewers could be drawn. The ritualized performance of dancing witches made visible their abject surrender to transgressive pleasure and their unified and resolute commitment to an aggressive agenda that threatened the foundations of Christian order. The contemporary fascination of artists with the dancing bodies of peasants at the village Kermis, of savages performing New World rituals, and of Bacchanti and other ancients participating in frenzied Bacchanalia, seems also to have played into this process, creating associations that would generate feelings of revulsion, fear and condemnation, as well as curiosity and desire.

Dr Louise Elizabeth Wilson, University of Bristol, ‘Medicine, Magic and Maleficia: Encounters with the Supernatural in Body and Soul’

The paper will explore how medieval medical perceptions of the physical and imagined spaces of the human body and soul, and their relationship with the celestial and terrestrial environment, influenced the intellectual and cultural dynamics of encounters with the supernatural. The idea that demons could possess or inhabit humans was prominent in ancient Greek, Judaic, early Christian and Islamic medical and theological writings. Medical authors from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries responded to this by offering methods to shield oneself from supernatural encounters with demons, harmful magic and witchcraft. Later English and Latin medieval medical texts and recipes followed suit, proffering a range of incantations, charms and herbal remedies designed to repel supernatural forces and to restore afflicted individuals to health. The paper will demonstrate the ways in which medical discourse is fundamental to the formation of medieval and early modern experiences and beliefs about the supernatural, and the ways in which demons and harmful magic were believed to affect and interact with the human body and soul.

Dr Stephen Gordon, The University of Manchester, ‘Emotional Contagion and the ‘Vampire’ Epidemic in Early Modern Europe’

The belief that sufferers of ‘bad’ death were able to return from the grave and haunt the living circulated widely in Early Modern Europe. There are many such accounts of ‘revenants’ (walking corpses) attacking the unwary as they slept, spreading disease amongst local communities and, ultimately, causing further deaths. For the townsfolk amongst whom revenants walked, the destructive nature of the undead corpse was never in doubt. Decapitation, staking and/or cremation were the main methods used to prevent

the deceased's influence from spreading. While contemporary scholars came to dismiss 'vampires' as being a product of a diseased, unenlightened mindset, little emphasis has been placed on the importance of the emotional makeup of the local community in propagating such beliefs. With reference to recent research on practice theory and the concept of 'emotional contagion', this paper will explore the relationship between the aetiology of infectious disease, social stress, and the agency of the troublesome dead.

Professor Ronald Hutton, University of Bristol, 'Following the Goddess: But Which Goddess?'

It has long been known that medieval and early modern commoners, across a large span of Europe, claimed to take part in nocturnal journeys in the retinue of a superhuman lady or ladies. This belief has for almost as long been presumed to be a survival of ancient paganism, and Carlo Ginzburg in particular has named it 'Following the Goddess' and hailed it as a major foundation of the construct of the witches' sabbath. This paper is intended to examine more closely than before the origins and nature of the tradition.

Thomas Wroblewski, The University of Manchester, 'Diagnosing the Demonic: Medical Evidence of Demonic Possession in the Early Modern Courtroom'

The majority of demonic possession cases in England saw some form of involvement by physicians. Yet there has been little scholarly attention on the role of the physician in these cases. This paper addresses this by examining the use of medical evidence in the courtroom, in particular relation to the high profile London witchcraft trial of Elizabeth Jackson, accused of the demonic possession of Mary Glover in 1602. The trial hinged upon proving Mary was truly possessed and a group of physicians were called upon to offer medical testimony. They presented two competing medical discourses: Mary was truly possessed; Mary was suffering from hysteria. This paper analyses these two medical discourses within the courtroom and broader print culture by focussing on three key areas: the physician's authority to discern between natural and supernatural diseases; the diagnosis of the demoniac; and the presentation of evidence in court.

Dr Laura Sangha, University of Exeter, "'Take care that nothing be printed": The Public and Private Lives of Supernatural Narratives in later Stuart England'

Although recent scholarship has made it abundantly apparent that popular belief in the supernatural persisted well into the eighteenth-century and beyond, the consensus is that in educated circles, articulate scepticism about witchcraft and related phenomena was firmly established by around 1750. Yet despite this, Michael Hunter has acknowledged 'a continuing undercurrent of supernaturalism among the educated', and has invoked the concept of 'schizophrenia' to describe those who continued to accept the reality of supernatural phenomena in private, but who preferred to keep such matters to themselves. Jonathan Barry has argued along similar lines for a division between 'public infidelity and private belief', identifying a disparity between what people were prepared to acknowledge in print, and the views that they expressed in correspondence or manuscript narratives. Leaving the question of differences between popular and educated belief aside, it is apparent that Hunter and Barry envisage print as a 'public'

space, whereas by contrast correspondence and oral culture are conceived of as ‘private’ arenas, which are therefore more accurate as guides to conviction and belief.

In this paper I would like to probe this preconception, and to consider the extent to which different media had the capacity to operate as ‘public’ or ‘private’ spaces when it came to supernatural belief. In later Stuart England narrative accounts of supernatural phenomena circulated freely in a number of media: in conversation, in correspondence and in print. Yet concepts of public and private space do not map easily onto these three arenas, since correspondence and conversations could easily become public, whilst ‘publication’ in print did not necessarily mean a work would become available to a wider public. This paper will therefore examine more closely the relationship between oral/manuscript/printed supernatural narratives, and public and private space, asking how useful such concepts are when reconstructing the development of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century disenchantment.

Professor Phyllis Mack, Rutgers University, ‘Dreaming in the Enlightenment: The Rev. David Simpson and Hester Ann Roe’

In thinking about dream narratives as spiritual documents, I am not concerned with Freudian theories of wish fulfillment or the latent content of dreams, but with historical actors’ own interpretations and analysis. How did people decide which dreams were spiritual and which were caused by the dreamer’s bad health or the day’s events? What was the relationship between the dream theory published by writers and ministers and the actual dreams of the laity? How might dreams function in the life of a religious community? Finally, what was the role of gender in dreaming and dream analysis? My evidence – discussed here with the examples of a minister and his parishioner, a teenage girl, suggests that if dream theory was monopolized by male ministers and writers, dream experience, especially as it touched on sanctification and the supernatural, was pre-eminently the terrain of women.

Dr Pau Castell Granados, Universitat de Barcelona, ‘Testimonies of supernatural encounters in Iberian witchcraft trials (15th-17th centuries)’

As shown by recent studies, the northern part of the Iberian Peninsula was the scenario of an intense persecution of the crime of witchcraft during Late Medieval and Early Modern times. The witnesses interrogated during the judicial inquiries (*inquisitio*) refer to different kinds of *maleficia* allegedly perpetrated by the defendants against people or cattle, whose diseases often triggered the accusation itself. Besides the common accusations related to bewitchment and poisoning, a fair number of trials contain a different type of narrative patterns concerning a series of supernatural encounters that preceded the death or the illness of a member of the victim’s family. The pillaging of cellars, the abduction or crushing of little children and the nocturnal attacks during sleep are common in many of the trials, in which both witnesses and suspects provide a series of accounts that evoke the suffocating attacks of the Nightmare, the nocturnal travels of the Fairy Society, and the infanticidal activities of the *strigae* and *lamiae*.

Dr Sasha Handley, The University of Manchester, ‘The ghost of Old Jeffery: Family relations and the magical materiality of an early modern household’

In the winter of 1716-17, the spirit known as ‘Old Jeffery’ visited Epworth rectory in rural Lincolnshire. This was the home of the Reverend Samuel Wesley and his family, which included the young John and Charles Wesley who went on to found the Methodist Church as adults. This paper analyses the family’s responses to Old Jeffery’s threat to probe the now well-known duality of public skepticism and privately held beliefs about ghostly encounters within the intimate setting of a single family, and within the distinctive space of a single household. The family’s diverse interpretations of Old Jeffery’s activities expose the emotional fault lines that divided the Wesley family from one another and that underpinned their fractious relationships with the wider parish community. These rich and fulsome recollections also offer a rare opportunity to trace the mundane material foundations of supernatural beliefs by drawing a ‘magical map’ of the household’s fabric, revealing the spaces and objects that were most powerfully associated with divine and diabolical forces.

Professor Malcolm Gaskill, School of History, University of East Anglia, ‘Silence and Suspicion: Witchcraft in a Seventeenth-Century American Household’

In the late 1640s, in the Massachusetts town of Springfield, Hugh and Mary Parsons made enemies of their neighbours, and, behind closed doors, of each other. They inhabited a new world where restless commerce, land-grabs and population growth clashed with foundational ideals of communitarian godliness. And out of this tension, both were accused of witchcraft. Space is key to explaining this outcome – how colonists’ thoughts and beliefs became words and actions – ranging from the cosmos to the wilderness, down to the community, household and bedchamber. At every turn, and in every sphere of life, this is also a story steeped in emotion, mainly guilt produced by collisions of envy and charity, manifested as anger. We see here how individualism and suspicion went together in an era of social and economic change. This paper is part of a Leverhulme-funded project which examines how, across six centuries, emotion bridged the gap between individual and object and the supernatural, indeed how things and places were invested with magical significance to bring power and meaning to people’s lives. My study of Springfield, like the wider investigation, is committed to understanding authentic early modern experiences of the supernatural, and therefore its true significance.