Demons, Monstrous Births & Witches

How to Make Cock Ale, 1697

"To make Cock-Ale. Take nine Gallons of Ale, and let it Work; and when done Working, have in readiness four pound of Raisins of the Sun, stoned and bruised in a Mortar, two Nutmegs, and as much Mace bruised; then take two Cocks, flea them, and take out the Guts, then hold them in a pot of boiling Water, just to Plump them; then break their Bones, and bruise them in a Mortar, so put them in a Vessel to your Ale, (Before you put in all the Blade Fruit and Spice,) so stop them close: let it stand a Fortnight; and when you Bottle it, put in every Bottle two or three bits of Limon-Peel, and as much candied Ginger-Root, with a Lump of Sugar; stop it close: let it stand a Fortnight or three Weeks, then drink it; it is very pleasant, and good against Consumption."

A New Book of Knowledge (1697)
THE WORLD TURND UPFIDE DOWN:
OR,
A BRIEFE DESCRIPTION OF THE RIDICULOUS FASHIONS OF THESE DISTRACTED TIMES.
By T.J. A WELL-WILLER TO KING, PARLIAMENT AND KINGDOM.

Making Sense of the Turmoil

- belief in a well ordered, godly community of the realm grew out of belief in a godly well ordered universe - the two went hand in hand: turmoil means something is WRONG with the world

- Renaissance, Reformation, Exploration or ‘Revolution’ & Social Conflict raise questions
  - Is social conflict and strife the result of demonic interference and action in the world?
  - What is going on!?? Is the devil ‘making a move’ on creation?
  - Are there hidden forces at play that Europeans need to understand and control? Is the Apocalypse coming?

- Period of transition between 1500-1700 sees...
  - Re-evaluation of how people understand their place in the universe
  - How are tensions surrounding religion and expansion in cultural terms? What’s all the anxiety about?
  - Is the world a cosmic battle field between supernatural forces of Good and Evil?
  - Can human beings do anything about it? Or do they just suffer through it?
Battlefield Earth?

- A ‘Sacralized’ Universe
  - Sacred is embedded within creation
  - Human existence is morally configured

- Psychomachia – Virtue vs Vice / Good vs Evil
  - Mapped onto human actions and practices
  - Pre-Reformation Sacraments ‘officially’ sanctioned actions to help battle against evil, but tip of the iceberg
  - Wide range of everyday practices aimed at helping combat diabolic influence in the world
  - Blessed objects - salt, holy water, palms, herbs, spittle, cream, holy oils, relics offer access to the sacred which helps protect from demonic influences

- Inversion
The Soldiers – Saints & the Godly

- Proper godly living seen as element of battle – Battlefield Soul?
- Moral comportment within the home, personal spiritual development
- On the side of Godliness – Saints, and Godly Men and Women

Catholics

- Saints are retained as exceptional spiritual individuals
- Determined by the church
- Can cause miracles
- Fight against evil internally through temptation, but also assist others (charity) in battle against ills

Protestants

- Saints are the ‘elect’, predestined with faith
- Suffer persecution
- Are unknown theoretically, but come to be seen as outwardly devout people
- Can’t do anything but pray
The Soldiers – The Army of Evil


- Belief in witches learned, rational, and cogent - it makes sense
  - Witches are inversions of godly christians
  - They are arch-heretics, they mimic christian rituals

- The idea and culture of witchcraft and demonology evident in
  - 'Language' - how does talking about demons and witches shape understanding of the way the world operates; theories - contrariety, the Devil is God's 'Ape', the feminization of witches
  - 'Science' - how demons move and interact with the human body as spirits part of natural philosophy. Natural and Demonic magic, the causes of witchcraft, its relationship to the New Science
  - 'History' - how demons figure in writing about European memory and historical events. The witch as portent, the Antichrist
  - 'Religion' - how demons fit into the scope of salvation, how do different religious groups try to contain belief in them, ritual actions or prayer? Superstition, confessionalized ideas of Witchcraft
  - 'Politics' - how demons are understood to influence communal and social relationships, from local to international levels. Witchcraft prosecution; Spectacles; monarchy and witchcraft, political demonology.
The Soldiers – The Army of Evil

- Witches – found in scripture
  - White witch of Endor
- Figure of the witch changes over late medieval period
  - Initially those who used magic for evil deeds (maleficia) like killing animals, cursing villagers, preventing the making of butter or milking
  - Witchcraft (maleficium) was the infliction of harm with diabolic help. In Europe, witchcraft was usually blamed on women, though there were some male witches.
- Hammer of Witches (Malleus Maleficarum 1486) by German Dominican Inquisitors, Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger
  - Emphasizes female sexuality as means for demonic influence
  - How to detect, battle, and prosecute witches
- Jean Bodin, De la demonomanie des Sorciers (1580)
- Reginald Scot, The Discoverie of Witchcraft (1584)
- James VI of Scotland (I of England),Daemonologie (1597)
- Matthew Hopkins, Discovery of witches (1647)
The Soldiers Witches

- Comparative witches?
  - On the continent more sociable - meet in covens on the Sabbath to celebrate Black Masses or flying to communal celebrations on Walpurgis Night; fly on brooms
  - In England generally solitary, or occasionally associated with a few other family members or neighbors; no flying on brooms

- Why is witchcraft associated with women?
  - More susceptible to demonic influence and sexuality
  - Sociological explanations: fear of sexually available single, or post-menopausal, women within patriarchy society creates unease
  - Sexual relations with demons?
    - female shape = succubus for male witch; male shape = incubus for female witch

- Witches make a pact with the devil
  - Has sign or mark on the witch’s body
  - Unnatural protuberance (usually in the armpit or crotch) that was insensitive when pricked

- Witch’s Familiars - animals
Witchcraft Laws & Social Politics

- England: 1542 (repealed in 1547), 1563 (repealed in 1604) and that of 1604 (repealed in 1736)
- Scotland: 1563,
- Accusations of witchcraft
  - often extremely political
  - typically started at grass-roots community
  - magistrates and central government almost always acted to check
  - Often Wives and widows of leading families
The Continent

The Devil re-baptising a male witch. (From Francesco Maria Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, 1610 edition.)
A MOST
Certain, Strange, and true Discovery of a
WITCH.

Being taken by some of the Parliament Forces, as she was standing on a small plank-board and stying on it over the River of Newbury:

Together with the strange and true manner of her death, with the propheticall words and speeches she vied at the same time.

Printed by John Hammond, 1643.
Witchcraft - between c.1550 c.1685

- Persecution of Witches across Europe in the late 16th through 17th centuries
  - The ‘Witchcraze’

- England & Scotland: fewer than 5,000 witchcraft trials (more than half of them in Scotland)
  - Most not guilty; England, fewer than 500 witches executed, in Scotland 1,000-1,500
  - Largest trial – Chelmsford in 1645, 19 witches executed

- Empire: 50,000 trials
  - High rates of conviction and execution linked to judicial torture
  - In Bamberg, Würzburg, Mainz and Cologne, between 1625 and 1635, approximately 6,000 witches were burnt
Demons & Exorcisms

- Fear of demonic possession on the rise in the 15th century
  - Women more easily possessed / influenced by devils than men – more ‘spaces’ in their bodies
  - Demons enter by the senses
  - Eating demon on a piece of lettuce?!

  Gregory the Great’s Dialogues

- Used to explain madness or mental illness
  - Senselessness – lack of control of physiology

- Exorcism – a form of blessing
  - At baptism uses spittle and holy oils to ‘cleanse’ child
  - List of body parts, blessed in sequence to cleanse body
  - Sealed with Host?
Demons & Exorcisms

- Protestants & Catholics differ on exorcisms, but NOT possession
  - No exorcisms among protestants
  - Too close to conjuring or false miracles
  - Exorcisms used by catholics to critique opponents

- John Darrell – accused of exorcisms in England 1590s
  - Says he preaches and prays only

- Catholic exorcisms become more public to demonstrate clerical power over demons and evil
  - Jesuits & Dominicans

- Heyday is late 16th – early 17th century
Divine Assistance & Interaction in the World

- Augustine of Hippo – 4\textsuperscript{th} Century
  - All of nature is ‘miraculous’ simply because it exists

- For protestants age of miracles ended in 3rd century
  - Miracula – Miracles, disrupt natural order or are above it
  - Mira – wonders, within the natural world

- God sends signs of his presence, favour and displeasure through the natural world
  - fortune or misfortune – health or disaster
  - prognostications – weather and natural events, like births
  - Astronomical signs like comets

- Signs indicate divine omnipotence over creation
**Providence**

- Providentialism means nothing happens in the world without God’s permission.
  - Divine Will & Predestination
  - Signs are providential - indicate God's favour or disfavour
  - Way of understanding success or failure
  - Vindication of actions or events

- Creation is the ‘Theatre of God’s Judgement’
  - Cautionary tales
  - ‘visible’ sermons

- Used to create myths and beliefs in
  - Divine ‘favour’ – ie New Israels, or chosen peoples
  - National identities – England, in particular
Spanish Armada 1588
Signs and Wonders - Weather

- Bad weather a divine warning
  - Caused by immorality and ungodliness
  - Affliction to cause repentance
  - Hail & Rain / Storms
  - Flooding
  - Drought
- Good crops sign of Godly favour
  - Abundant harvests
  - Sunny weather on auspicious days
Signs and Wonders – Monstrous Births

- Sin and sexual activities affect the formation of fetus in the womb
  - Wrong positions in intercourse
  - Mother’s sins
- Communal sin and immorality can pollute a woman’s body, misshaping fetus
- God can misshape fetus to send a message of repentance
- Ambroise Paré (1510?-1590),
  - French surgeon
  - child born with the body of a calf
  - in 1517 child "born having the face of a frog"
  - by the power of the mother's imagination
Of Monsters and Prodigies.

L. 18. 25.

There are some who think the infant once formed in the womb, which is done at the utmost within two and forty days after the conception, is in no danger of the mother's immodest liberty of form outside the womb, because when it hath got a perfect figure, it cannot be altered with any external form of things, which whether it be true, or no, is not here to be inquired of; truly I think it best to keep the woman, all the time she goeth with child, from the sight of such shapes and figures.

In Streeter a village of Saxony, they say, a monster was born, with four feet, eyes, mouth, and nose like that of a calf, with a round and red excrescence of flesh on the forehead, and also a piece of flesh like a hood hung from his neck upon his back, and it was deformed with its thigts torn and out.

The figure of an infant with a face like a Frog.

The effigies of a horrid Monster, having feet, hands and other parts like a Calf.

Anno Dom. 1517. In the parish Kingswood, in the forest Eliza, in the vale to Fontenay-Blent, there was a monster born, with the face of a Frog, being seen by John Bellanger, chirurgeon to the King's Engineers, before the Justices of the town of Hatney, principally John Brisoe the King's procurator in that place. The father's name was Amadsworth Little, his mother's name was Sarboata, who troubled with a fever, by a woman's permision, held a quick frog in her hand until it died, she came thus to bed with her husband and conceived; Bellanger, a man of an acute wit, thought this was the cause of the monstrosity of the child.
Apocalypticism

- Increased demonic activity - witchcraft and diabolic possession clear sign the end is near, hasten the end times

- Jan Matthys & Anabaptists in Munster
  - take over the council in elections in 1533/4
  - Anabaptist theocracy; eject anyone refusing rebaptism or believer’s baptism. The regime became increasingly radical, abolishing private property, and instituting polygamy in the city
  - April 16 1534 Easter – The Second Coming?
    Matthys is killed. Jan van Leiden is proclaimed King of Munster.
  - After 16 month experiment and siege, city reconquered

- Nuns of Loudun - mass possession
  - 1634, France
  - Bewitched nuns bark at priests
  - Eventually public exorcisms attended by thousands of people; Parish priest is executed and burned
Magic & Superstition

- Reformation challenges how human beings can participate in the battle
  - Protestants – helpless, suffer and endure evil
  - Catholics – sacraments give means to wage war
- Protestants challenge the idea of 'good magic'
- Doing witchcraft is against religion, is idolatry, and involves dealings with the devil
  - Francis Bacon “Witchcraft is the height of idolatry”
  - False Practices, superstitious rituals
Magic & Superstition

- Conjuring – Dr Faustus
  - Makes a pact with the devil
  - Ends up serving devil
  - Conjuring spirits is an undergraduate ‘pasttime’ in 17th century Oxford & Cambridge

- Superstition in Religious Polemic
  - Protestants accuse Catholics of superstitious practices
  - The Mass is a ‘Conjuring’, a ‘show’, Mistress Missa is the Whore of Babylon come to fool women and men
  - Exorcisms don’t work because no power to compel demons, no miracles or wonders
  - Devil is angel of light – can trick and fool – illusions; false miracles
The Natural, Preter-, & Supernatural

- What is ‘super’-natural?
  - 1. Is the supernatural ‘above’ nature – does it do nature ‘violence’ by transgressing its laws?
  - 2. Or is the supernatural a higher ‘order’ of nature?
  - Late medieval to early modern shift from #2 to #1

- Magic as 'hidden knowledge' - natural philosophy examines hidden, or uncommon, knowledge
  - Alchemy very close to these ideas

- Natural Philosophy & the New Science Entirely compatible with demonology until mid-18th century
  - Natural magic is efficacious
  - Francis Bacon 'pretergenerations' or prodigies (sorcery, witchcraft, charms, and divinations) should be part of a natural history
  - Can be used to force nature to reveal her secrets
  - Spiritual beings part of the natural world
Political Power

- Demonology and the judicial persecution of witches wax and wane with the theocratic concept of kingship - the divine right of kings
  - The king is divinely ordained authority whose laws follow God's laws
  - The witch is the ultimate rebel against the divine
- Those kings whose power is viewed as quasi-divine with the Royal Touch are also those who persecute witches the most
  - e.g. James VI / I
  - Jean Bodin's Political Demonology in *Demonomanie* connected to his *Six Books of the Commonwealth* - two sides of the same coin?
Print & Culture

- early 16th century engravings
Print & Culture

- These themes rife in early modern print & culture!
Providential Signs fill news and musical life
**Scepticism**

- **Johann Weyer (1515-1588)**
  - Dutch Physician
  - 1563 *De praestigiis daemonum* (On Demonic Illusions) & 1577 *De Lamiis* (On Witches)
  - Witchcraft and possession are actually mental illnesses, imbalances, not demonic actions
  - Witches are deluded; demonics need medical assistance
  - Nonsense to believe old women made pacts with the devil and fly to Sabbaths, possess magical powers
  - Mass-hysteria for witchcraft and possession – e.g. contagious in monasteries

- **Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592)**
  - French Essaist & general skeptic about everything...
  - 1580 *De la force de l'imagination* (On the force of Imagination) & 1588 *Des Boyteux* (Of the Lame or Cripple)
  - Skeptical critique of popular assumptions associated with supernatural and learned treatises on witchcraft
  - Responds demonological tracts with doubt, defends victims
  - There are evil people in the world, but no evidence people have supernatural powers
Disenchantment & Desacralization

Max Weber, *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (1904-5)

- Traditional understanding of the reformation is that it leads to loss of the sacred in the world – the ‘triumph’ of rationalism over ‘superstition’
  - Reformation as part of a ‘great historic process’ which he later called ‘the disenchantment of the world’
  - Alex Walsham explains Weber’s argument:

  “Protestantism fostered a fundamental rejection of sacramental magic as a mechanism for aiding salvation and promoted the evolution of a transcendental and intellectualized religion in which numinous forces were removed from the sphere of everyday life. It helped to undermine a way of seeing, understanding, and seeking to manipulate the surrounding universe that operated as a major obstacle to the emergence of capitalist modes of production and consumption.”

- But she, and other says – this is not the case, or it’s more complicated
From Sacralized to Moralized Universe?

  - Reformation removes sacramentals and blessed objects, but NOT BELIEFS that shape them
  - God intervenes in universe along moral terms, rather than sacramental ritual – ill calls retribution onto the entire community
- Not a loss, but a renegotiation of how human beings interact with the supernatural, spiritual world, and what it means
  - Longer process of ‘detachment’, only really begins with Enlightenment
  - Protestants adapt to new parameters – e.g. Exorcism, Providence, Witches
  - Divine & demonic activity in the world still goes on, but can’t participate in the same way
- Such practices are seen as ‘superstitious’, ‘magical’, false or idolatrous by Protestants
  - Devil’s tricks
Demons, Monstrous Births, & Witches

- Early modern turmoil understood as part of a cosmic battle, a moral one, between good and evil
- Has characters beyond human beings, the cosmos is a stage where this war is waged
- The presence of strife and conflict is understood as part of this struggle
- Study of ‘supernatural’ or numinous, demons, monsters, signs, witches, portents, magic, explores how early modern men and women managed their place within a supernatural cosmos, and how they might seek to control, manipulate, and exploit it
- Complicated understandings of magic and superstition – is the world a ‘rationalized’ and ‘enlightened’ place in the 17th century? NO
- Wonders and news about the fantastic is everywhere!

Terms
- Providence
- Exorcisms
- Witches’ Sabbath
- Johann Weyer
- Malleus Maleficarum
- Faustus
- Psychomachia