

# Pin-Swallowing and Self-Destruction in Early Modern British and Irish Supernatural Narratives

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores self-destructive behaviours in early modern Britain and Ireland through the phenomenon of pin-swallowing, as depicted in cases of bewitchment and possession. It argues that the involvement of witches and demons enabled the expression of self-destructive feelings without condemnation for such thoughts and actions. As supernatural belief was increasingly located within the mind of the individual in the eighteenth century, people were deprived of this outlet. The suicidal connotations of pins and their supernatural cause also sheds light on the different explanations which men and women were able to ascribe such impulses and behaviours.

## KEYWORDS

Suicide; self-harm;  
witchcraft; possession;  
supernatural

## Introduction

On 14 November 1621, in Fewston, Yorkshire, a twenty-year-old woman named Helen Fairfax fell into a trance.<sup>1</sup> A finely dressed young man approached her bedside and began to speak with Helen. When she demanded ‘in the name of God’ that he reveal ‘what he was’, he rebuked her for using the Lord’s name. Helen swiftly concluded that this well-dressed young man must be the devil, and informed him as such, which prompted the apparition to depart. When he returned a little later, the devil offered Helen a knife, ‘moving her to kill herself therewith’. Helen refused. She was then offered a rope, which she again refused. Next, the devil told her to ‘take a pin out of her clothes and to put it into her mouth’. Helen retorted that she had no pins in her clothing, but the devil informed her that a ‘great pin’ lay in her petticoat, which would ‘serve her turn’. Finally, the devil suggested she drown herself in the river behind her parents’ house, which Helen also refused. Before any further suggestions for methods of suicide could be made, their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a family friend, Mr Cooke. Having heard a short relation of the conversation from Helen, Mr Cooke, and Helen’s brother who had also arrived, recited prayers which caused the devil to flee. Helen emerged from her trance, and, unaware that she had already explained the events to Mr Cooke, relayed the whole affair to her concerned family. The explanation for these strange events, and what prompted Helen’s father to record the family’s experience, was witchcraft.<sup>2</sup>

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During her conversation with the devil, Helen was offered several recognisable methods of killing herself: cutting her throat, hanging herself, and drowning herself. What is curious, is that a less familiar means of harm, that of putting a pin into her mouth, was also suggested. Though not made explicit, the devil's suggestion seems to have been that Helen swallow the pin, and thereby end her life.

This article explores self-destructive behaviours in early modern Britain and Ireland through the phenomenon of pin-swallowing, as depicted in cases of bewitchment and possession from the late sixteenth to early eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Pins were the only object that possessed and bewitched people described deliberately swallowing and inserting into their bodies, often with the explicit purpose of harming themselves. Other inedible objects were doubtlessly swallowed in this period, but the ingestion of pins prompted major concern and evoked self-destructive meanings, more so than any other item. While scholars working on bewitchment and possession have drawn attention to the phenomenon of pin-vomiting as a cultural sign of supernatural affliction, comparatively little has been explored about the act of pin-swallowing, with the result of obscuring the agency of self-destructive people.<sup>4</sup>

I argue that the impulse to destroy oneself was not always seen in completely condemnatory terms, and that the supernatural offered an outlet for such desires. The supposed involvement of witches and demons allowed people to express self-destructive desires without being condemned for their actions. Through the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, legal and medical frameworks increasingly located belief in supernatural phenomena within the mind of the individual, rather than attributing it to external influences.<sup>5</sup> As this occurred, individuals were deprived of supernatural explanations for self-destructive desires, instead being labelled as fraudulent, or insane. Lyndal Roper has explored how, in reference to German witchcraft, supernatural explanations enabled individuals to talk about mental turmoil 'but be believed rather than be diagnosed as psychotic'.<sup>6</sup> Such supernatural explanations, operating within early modern conceptions of bewitchment and possession, enabled the externalisation of the guilt and shame associated with expressing these feelings.<sup>7</sup>

The example of pin-swallowing allows access to past instances of self-destructive acts. As these individuals, in most cases, did not die, this affords insight into the ways self-destruction was treated without the narrative being clouded by suicide, a criminal and sinful death. This is a particularly fruitful avenue for investigation, due to the long association, both historiographical and cultural, between self-destructive behaviours and demonic influences, such as the early modern legal framing of suicide as 'at the instigation of the devil'.<sup>8</sup> Despite the enduring connection, one emphasised by influential suicide scholars Michael MacDonald and Terence R. Murphy, this area has been the focus of neither work on the supernatural nor suicide.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, MacDonald and Murphy conflate sixteenth- and seventeenth-century supernatural belief with 'intolerance' towards self-destructive desires, which in their view gave way to increased 'sympathy' with the 'decline' of supernatural explanations in the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> In recent years, scholars of suicide have sought to distance self-killing from supernatural influences.<sup>11</sup> This is despite work in the broad field of the supernatural and magic demonstrating the persistence of such beliefs into the nineteenth century and beyond.<sup>12</sup> Complexifying the range of explanations for suicide is an important

endeavour, though this article seeks to position the supernatural as a means for the expression of otherwise forbidden desires rather than the source of its condemnation.

'Self-destruction' is applied as an umbrella term here for a range of acts, including those presented as explicitly suicidal, those intended to harm but not necessarily kill, and those whose intention was more ambiguous.<sup>13</sup> It is not my concern to identify precisely what past people felt or meant, an impossible aim, nor to retrospectively diagnose individuals with various mental disorders, which is neither helpful nor appropriate.<sup>14</sup>

This article focuses on a small number of individuals who considered and attempted to swallow pins in the context of bewitchment and possession. In exploring this phenomenon, it is also necessary to discuss the related behaviour of pin-vomiting. Some cases of pin-insertion, of embedding pins in one's own flesh, will also be discussed. Material is drawn from pamphlet accounts, and treatises which compiled examples of supernatural occurrences, such as the publications of anti-Saducee writers. Medical treatises, trial records, trial reports, and manuscripts which detail occurrences of pin-swallowing, vomiting, and insertion are also discussed. Following Laura Kounine's recent study of witchcraft and emotion, the aim here is to explore the 'psychological landscape' of the period. My concern, however, lies with those who claimed to be subject to bewitchment and possession, rather than the witches themselves.<sup>15</sup> Pin-swallowing was not a common practice, though it does appear to have been broadly understood as a self-destructive act across multiple levels of society suggesting that early modern people were more familiar with self-destructive behaviours than we have been led to believe. In exploring pin-swallowing, this article seeks to reveal the complex meanings and expressions of self-destructive behaviour in early modern Britain and Ireland.

### Possession, bewitchment, and self-destruction

Possession and bewitchment were closely associated states in early modern Britain and Ireland.<sup>16</sup> Though they technically had different causes, possession resulting from the occupation of the body by a demon and bewitchment from the external malefice of a witch, in practice these states overlapped, to the extent that Erika Gasser has referred to 'witchcraft-possession'.<sup>17</sup> In many cases, the origin of affliction was uncertain or contested; witches might be described as causing demonic possession or even as possessing their victims themselves.<sup>18</sup> Possessed and bewitched people behaved in much the same way. They fell into fits, writhed and screamed, demonstrated extreme strength, prophetic knowledge, and blasphemed, amongst other behaviours.<sup>19</sup>

Self-destructive acts were a motif of early modern supernatural narratives. Building on Biblical precedent, possessed and bewitched people are described as trying to harm themselves and even end their own lives in a variety of ways. Many possessed and bewitched people echoed the behaviour of the possessed boy healed by Jesus in the Gospel of Mark when they threw themselves 'into the fire and into the water'.<sup>20</sup> As the evangelist describes, this was intentionally done 'to destroy' the boy, a purpose invoked in descriptions of many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century demoniacs and bewitched people. The story of the Gerasene demoniac as described by Mark speaks to modern self-injurious practices in his 'crying, and cutting himself with stones'. This detail only appears in Mark, though his account agrees with Matthew and Luke's that, when the

demons were exorcised, they entered a herd of swine, which promptly drowned themselves.<sup>21</sup>

James Sharpe has observed the ways in which possession and bewitchment enabled transgression of the normal boundaries of acceptable behaviour. This was particularly the case for girls and women, the typical victims of affliction, who were expected to be quiet and obedient.<sup>22</sup> Possession and bewitchment could also afford an outlet for transgressive thoughts of self-destruction.<sup>23</sup> The typical symptoms of these states formed a 'cultural script' of norms and expectations, which were transmitted through printed and oral accounts of affliction, and evolved over time to include new elements, such as clairvoyance.<sup>24</sup>

The vomiting of foreign objects became embedded in the cultural narrative of both bewitchment and possession in the early modern period.<sup>25</sup> Though there was no Biblical precedent for this, early modern medical writers pointed to strange items ingested by people with both demonic and natural causes. Pin-vomiting may first have been connected with possession and bewitchment in the Florentine physician Antonio Benivieni's late fifteenth-century text *De Abditis Morborum Causis*.<sup>26</sup> This account of a Florentine woman who vomited a variety of items was cited in several early seventeenth-century English works which discussed medical problems caused by supernatural means. Commenting on the story in 1612, the Cambridge scholar James Mason stated that such strange phenomena could only be brought about 'by enchantment' and 'the divell'.<sup>27</sup>

In the material that survives to us, not all pin-swallowers vomited pins, nor did all pin-vomiters necessarily swallow pins prior to their ejection, though a connection between the two behaviours is certainly implied. Pin-swallowing and pin-vomiting are thus not inherently separate conditions, though vomiting has thus far received the bulk of attention from scholars. Possessed and bewitched people in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries vomited various items, including nails, straw, dung, buttons, and stones, though pins were the item most commonly vomited. Pins may, in part, have occupied this place due to their prevalence in the early modern world, particularly within the domestic context where many instances of possession and bewitchment were located.<sup>28</sup> Pins were used in dress to fasten clothes and hair, for sewing in both domestic and commercial settings, and in business and administrative settings to secure documents together.<sup>29</sup> Thus, they appeared in everyday life across all sections of society.

Conformity to the cultural script positioned affliction by a witch or demon as a credible explanation for self-destructive behaviour. As both James Sharpe and Philip Almond have observed, these scripts could be adopted by those who faked symptoms of supernatural affliction.<sup>30</sup> However, conformity to the script does not necessitate that individuals were self-consciously crafting their desires into narratives of supernatural affliction, and an awareness of the symptoms does not itself imply fraud. The 'idiom of the demonic' was often, but not exclusively, the lens through which self-destructive temptations were understood in this period.<sup>31</sup> Thus when individuals experienced self-destructive desires, of which pin-swallowing was an example, they may understandably have attributed them to supernatural forces and either consciously or unconsciously participated in the cultural scripts of such afflictions.

It was not only the afflicted person who determined the origin of such symptoms, or who participated in the script. Gasser describes supernatural affliction as 'communal' because 'a possession only became a possession as a result of observation and

interpretation'.<sup>32</sup> The material used in this article is drawn from the testimony of the supposed pin-swallowers, those who saw them, and those who reported on them, who may not have always witnessed the swallowing first-hand. Frances Dolan has rightly observed the vexed issue of obtaining 'authentic' narratives of early modern experience from source material like pamphlets and court records, which contain multiple layers of mediation.<sup>33</sup> As Marion Gibson points out, when we claim to be looking for 'truth' or 'accuracy' in early modern witchcraft pamphlets, we might define this as 'closeness to events', though in any case it is impossible to reach the 'absolute truth of events'.<sup>34</sup> It is not my concern to determine whether or not these events and the supernatural explanations behind them 'really happened'. It is possible, though perhaps unlikely, that some (or all) of these instances of pin-swallowing were fabricated by the author, or by witnesses. The sensationalist nature of cheap print has been much discussed, and those involved may have falsely testified about pin-swallowing, or distorted the motivation behind such an act to ramp up the diabolical nature of events.<sup>35</sup> This may be more immediately understandable in witchcraft cases, where such visceral testimony might help secure a guilty verdict.<sup>36</sup> In possession cases too, there could be motivation to misrepresent events with potentially normal explanations – possession (and successful dispossession) had significant polemical power, to demonstrate God's favour for a particular interpretation of His word.<sup>37</sup>

These accounts (or stories) and their communication in print, from the cheap pamphlet to the costly treatise, suggest that the action of swallowing a pin with self-destructive purpose was believable to early modern people. The crucial element is the *perception* of pin-swallowing in this period. Pin-swallowing was certainly regarded as a potentially fatal act, one construed as self-destructive and highly dangerous.

### Pin-swallowing and thoughts of self-destruction

In 1671, the astrologer-physician Joseph Blagrave published *Astrological Practice of Physick*, a work which extolled his ability to cure natural and supernatural afflictions through understanding the planetary movements. In this work, Blagrave described a case of possession, visited upon the daughter of one Alexander of Basingstoke, whom he claimed to have cured. The Alexander girl was reportedly 'perplexed with very strong fits' that a series of doctors had been unable to cure. Through his astrological methods, presumably twinned with the 'terrible' fits and other symptoms exhibited by the girl, Blagrave diagnosed her as 'either bewitched or possessed'. It seems that others had previously come to a similar conclusion, as the father informed Blagrave about a local minister, Mr Webb, who had failed to exorcise the demon. Besides her fits, the girl was averse to religious activity, and demonstrated prophetic knowledge, naming the thief who had stolen a bag of corn from the local market.

Aside from these typical symptoms of possession, another detail emphasised by Blagrave was that, during each fit, 'three pins' were mysteriously 'brought unto her'. Upon receiving each pin, which came 'one at a time', she 'seemed to rejoice and smile', before she 'put the pin into her mouth'. Her parents, who attended her constantly, reacted with alarm, 'instantly get[ting] it from her'. Sometimes, they would physically struggle with their daughter to remove the pin, as 'she would be very unwilling to part with it'. Their desperation reflected their fear that 'she should choak herself'. So often had

this occurred that her parents had a 'box near full of them'. This continued for a year, but when the demon was exorcised by Blagrove, two pins immediately manifested, after which no more ever appeared.<sup>38</sup> This story was clearly an evocative one, and it was republished in an anonymous pamphlet in 1691. Some small details in the story were edited, such as recasting the girl as a 'maiden gentlewoman', instead of a turner's daughter, and its length was vastly reduced, but the key elements remained, including the pins.<sup>39</sup> The story probably resurfaced around this time due to a reprinting of Blagrove's text in 1689.<sup>40</sup> In publishing it in pamphlet form, the story of a possessed girl who had happily placed pins into her mouth much to the concern of those around her, was communicated to a much wider audience.

This kind of parental concern about pin-swallowing is evidenced elsewhere. A decade before Blagrove's publication, in 1661, the strange condition of James Barrow was similarly attributed to possession. After recovering from a serious fever, the young James began to behave oddly, emitted strange noises, claimed to be approached by spectral rats and cats, and fell 'lame, blind and dumb'. Of particular concern to John Barrow, James' father, was the boy's interaction with a pin. John, 'seeing him have a pin' enquired as to his purpose 'with that pin'. Instead of answering, James 'hung down his head as though he had been ashamed', which so alarmed the father that he 'hastily' confiscated the pin. James became upset, and, when asked again what he had intended, attempted to change the subject by asking 'whether God were not above the Devil'. His father reassured him of God's supremacy but concluded that the Devil was preventing his son from revealing his, presumably mischievous, purpose.<sup>41</sup> Quite what was intended by the pins in these accounts is ambiguous, though negative intent was clearly suspected by Mr Barrow. Yet other accounts of possession and bewitchment involving pins included clear statements of self-destructive intent.

In Hertfordshire in 1712, a sixteen-year-old serving girl named Anne Thorn claimed to have been bewitched by Jane Wenham. Anne Thorn worked for the Gardiners, and it was in and around their household that many of her bewitchment symptoms manifested. Like the Alexander girl, Anne had pins come to her by 'invisible means' during her affliction. Unlike the turner's daughter however, Anne reportedly articulated the intent behind the pins' appearance, when she unambiguously described a temptation to 'destroy herself by pins'. Those around her confiscated her clothes, hair, and sewing pins, but yet Anne was still able to gain access to pins which she would 'convey . . . to her mouth'. Those keeping watch even restrained her, yet she would still 'endeavour to get her hands to her mouth'. That Anne had managed to swallow pins was attested to by one of her attendants, George Chapman, who described having 'felt a pin striking against his hands' when he put his hand down her throat, which he was unable to retrieve from her body.<sup>42</sup>

The desire to swallow pins in order to harm oneself had wider cultural currency and is reported in a number of cases relating to supernatural affliction. In *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, the non-conformist minister and collector of supernatural narratives Richard Baxter noted the case of 'the sanguine strong maid of Bewdley'. This young woman experienced 'strange hysterical fits' throughout the 1640s, which were attributed to demonic possession. Baxter described having met her on several occasions, including when she attended one of his lectures, and claimed to have participated in her cure. While discussing her case with locals, they showed him 'needles and pins, and cords' which had been 'brought to her, none knew how, to kill herself'.<sup>43</sup> Whether the woman had verbally



professed her desire to end her own life, or the appearance of these items was interpreted by onlookers as self-evidently self-destructive, is unclear.<sup>44</sup>

Both the young woman of Bewdley and Helen Fairfax, whose case was discussed at the outset of this article, rejected the temptation to swallow pins for self-destructive purposes. In some instances though, this impulse could not so easily be ignored. In Taunton, in 1663, an unnamed domestic maid claimed to have been bewitched by Julian Cox, after being threatened by her in her master's household. The young woman reported that the witch had appeared spectrally to her and 'offer'd her great pins' which she was 'forc'd to swallow'. Onlookers reported seeing the maid motion 'as if she did eat something'. When, the following day, pins began to protrude from swellings on the maid's body, she explained that they were the same pins that she had been 'forc'd . . . to eat' from the walls of the house.<sup>45</sup> How Julian Cox compelled the girl to swallow the pins is unclear, though other cases describe the use of both threats and physical force. The unnamed seventeen-year-old stepson of one J. H. became bewitched after travelling to stay with his mother in Somerset in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>46</sup> He was apparently 'commanded' by the witch tormenting him to cut his throat. If he did not, she threatened, she would 'choke him with pins'. The young man's attempts to carry out her instruction was prevented by those around him, who confiscated his pen-knife and razor. He subsequently 'cast out of his mouth pins, and needles, in great abundance'.<sup>47</sup> Presumably, the witch had made good on her threat.

Some kinds of pins were perceived as particularly dangerous. Rather than convincing the child to kill herself, the witches afflicting Christian Shaw, an eleven-year-old girl living in Renfrewshire in the 1690s, were intent on killing her themselves and framing it as a suicide. Christian explained that, if the witches got their way, 'the World would believe she had destroyed her self'. One of ways the witches reportedly tried to kill her was to 'choak her, by putting pins in her mouth'. The cultural construction of pin-swallowing as a means of self-destruction might also have contributed to the interpretation of Christian's death as a suicidal one in the minds of witnesses, were she to die under such circumstances. When she later 'voided at her mouth a crooked pin', Christian explained that the pin had been 'forc't into her mouth' by one of the witches, and was 'design'd to choak her'.<sup>48</sup> Annie Thwaite has described crooked pins as bearing particularly vexatious power in the early modern imagination. Through the metaphor of the 'crooked pin in the pudding', she also identifies a fear of accidentally swallowing pins, which speaks to wider societal concerns about pin-swallowing.<sup>49</sup> In the cases of the stepson of J. H. and Christian Shaw, among others, either voluntarily or forcibly swallowing pins for self-destructive purposes were connected to their vomiting.<sup>50</sup>

In his *Daimonomageia*, a 1665 tract aimed at physicians treating diseases caused by witchcraft and possession, the apothecary William Drage noted that 'if the sick voids things that naturally cannot be bred in the body' then supernatural affliction might be suspected.<sup>51</sup> Yet Drage also noted that the capable physician 'must inquire what went before, what was eaten'.<sup>52</sup> How then, could cases in which individuals clearly described swallowing pins for self-destructive purposes, still be seen as supernatural in nature? As James Mason argued in his 1612 medical tract, the devil makes use of 'natural means' when tormenting people. Witches and demons, as his servants, could naturally harm people and convince or force them to swallow pins. This is a method they might prefer over magically conveying them into the body. Mason also observed that the devil would

utilise what was ‘nearest at hand for that present time’.<sup>53</sup> The confessed compulsion to swallow pins did not exclude supernatural explanations, and thus the afflicted individual was not necessarily to blame for their self-destructive thoughts and actions.

### Changing meanings of and responses to pin-swallowing and pin-vomiting

Across the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, supernaturally induced pin-swallowing shifted in its efficacy as an outlet for self-destructive desires. Even though pin-swallowing and other self-destructive behaviours using pins became a hallmark of madness and hysteria in the eighteenth century, these items retained dangerous connotations. Belief in the ability to bring about harm through pins persisted into the nineteenth century, with several cases of ‘attempt[s] to destroy’ oneself, or another person, through this act. In 1854 *The Lancet* reported on a Viennese girl who had ‘attempted to destroy her life by swallowing a quantity of pins’. She had reportedly swallowed 242 pins in total.<sup>54</sup> Sarah Chaney has noted the early twentieth-century interest in how objects, ingested or inserted for the purposes of self-injury, changed once inside the body.<sup>55</sup> This is reflected in the Vienna case, in which it was noted that the retrieved pins were ‘all of them a black colour’. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century narratives of pin-vomiting display a similar interest in the physical properties of emerging objects, thus connecting the pin-vomiting of the early modern period to the self-mutilation investigations by doctors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1690 the Calvinist clergyman Samuel Petto reflected on a witchcraft trial which had taken place at the beginning of the 1660s. Petto discussed nine- and eleven-year-old sisters Deborah and Elizabeth Pacy, who had featured as the star witnesses against two accused witches from Lowestoft, and whose pin-vomiting helped to convince others of the supernatural nature of their affliction. Petto asked, ‘Can any imagine that these pins were from a natural cause, engendered in their bodys and thus bent?’<sup>56</sup> In asking this question, he queried the ability of pins to become bent inside the body by natural means, but also highlighted the belief held by many that such behaviour was impossible to fake.<sup>57</sup>

A related phenomenon, that of pin-voiding, is also suggestive of self-destructive practices identified in subsequent centuries. We have already noted the case of the Taunton maid afflicted by Julian Cox, who had pins emerge from swellings in her body.<sup>58</sup> In Youghal, County Cork in 1661, a serving maid named Mary Longdon claimed to be bewitched. In a reverse of the events at Taunton, where swallowed pins had subsequently emerged from the flesh, Mary described having pins stuck into her arms by the witch but later vomited them. Mary ‘cryed out’ in her fits that the accused witch, Florence Newton, was ‘stick[ing] pinnes into her Armes’. She would be ‘taken with vomiting’, though the pins could also be observed ‘stuck betwixt the skin and the flesh’ of her arms, embedded ‘so fast that a man must pluck three or four times to get out the pin’.<sup>59</sup> This is suggestive of the self-harming practice of self-embedding, the insertion of foreign objects into the skin. It is also redolent of the examples of the so called Victorian ‘needle girls’, who pierced their skin with needles and pins, in acts constructed as self-harm.<sup>60</sup> These needle girls were viewed as ‘hysterical persons’, particularly because such behaviours were normally observed in the confines of the asylum, or could prompt committal.<sup>61</sup> Such an attitude is exemplified in the case of a Copenhagen girl who voided pins, also reported in *The Lancet*, in 1825. The fourteen-year-old Rachel Hertz had fallen



ill in 1807, and her episodes, consisting of 'fainting', 'violent epileptic attacks', 'ravings', and recitations of literary works, persisted until 1822. In 1819, swellings, described as 'tumours', had been noted on her body. When these were incised, needles were found within. A total of 395 needles were extracted over a period of three years. Her doctors concluded that 'she must have swallowed the needles during her delirious fits', something that was perceived to indicate her 'hysteric nature'.<sup>62</sup> The attitude of Paul F. Eve towards the girl, who collated this case with a number of others in his volume *A Collection of Remarkable Cases in Surgery*, is made clear in his decision to omit some of the 'tedious' details about her 'delirious fits'.<sup>63</sup>

Unlike these later cases, however, early modern instances of pin-swallowing and pin-vomiting were generally received without overt judgement on the character, or the mental state of those suffering. The prime responses seem to have been those of care and concern, exemplified by the removal of objects and the close attention paid to pin-swallowing individuals by friends and family. Edward Fairfax, father of Helen, noted that their 'calamity was increased' when his younger daughter Elizabeth too began to suffer the effects of witchcraft, which eventually escalated to the girl's own temptation to swallow pins.<sup>64</sup>

The credibility of pin-vomiting shifted across the period. As pin-swallowing was related to vomiting in the contexts of possession and bewitchment, this too impacted on the reception of the swallowing of pins. Until the mid-seventeenth century, all cases of pin-vomiting had either been designated as fraudulent, or the victim's claim that a supernatural entity was responsible had not been accepted by the authorities which ultimately took charge of proceedings. Possession and bewitchment were troublesome to the English establishment at the turn of the seventeenth century due to their association with both Puritanism and Catholicism. Activists in both camps had utilised possession for polemical purposes, arguing that through their ability to dispossess those infested with demons, God demonstrated His favour for their doctrines.<sup>65</sup> This association with religious polemic appears to have affected the reception of pin-vomiting cases in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, with witchcraft and possession cases being viewed with a high degree of scrutiny.

The pin-vomiting of Agnes Briggs and Rachel Pindar in 1574, of Anne Gunter in 1604, and William Perry in 1620 were all designated fraud. The surviving pamphlet which describes the experiences of Briggs and Pindar was intended to publicise their 'counterfeyted possession' and included 'the examination and confession' of both girls as to their fraudulent pin-vomiting, which, the girls asserted, they would never do again. The pamphlet does not go so far as to explicitly blame the overzealous Protestants involved for orchestrating Pindar's possession, but implies that they were too willing to believe what was an obvious fraud.<sup>66</sup> Of these cases, only Anne Gunter explicitly described swallowing pins, though this information came in the context of her confession of fraud to the Star Chamber. She described how she had 'swallowed down many great pins, so to have dispatch't herself', just one of the methods of suicide she attempted in order to escape from her controlling father, who was ultimately blamed for forcing his daughter to fake bewitchment in an attempt to secure the execution of a local woman.<sup>67</sup> The pin-vomiters Margaret Muschamp in 1647, and two unnamed Yorkshire women in 1658 were not deemed fraudulent, but their claims were rejected. Margaret's case never reached trial, despite the extensive efforts of her mother to prosecute those accused by

her daughter. As her mother Mary described it, Margaret's vomiting was caused by the witches, who had inserted crooked pins into her daughter's mouth with the aim to 'choak her'.<sup>68</sup> In the Yorkshire women's case, the judges were concerned about the possibility for 'some artificial combination of the two women', but do not seem to have been able or willing to pursue their suspicions to an accusation of fraud. It was not explained how the pins came to be inside the bodies of these two women.<sup>69</sup>

In the 1660s, the reception of pin-vomiting seems to have shifted. The cases of Honora Fitzmaurice in Cork in 1660, of Mary Longdon, also in Cork, in 1661, and of the five girls and young women including the Pacy sisters in Suffolk from 1661 to 1662, came in quick succession.<sup>70</sup> These cases may have established pin-vomiting as a credible mark of affliction by witchcraft, as the execution of a witch, which occurred in the 1662 trial, created a legal precedent for the successful prosecution of a witch for causing individuals to vomit pins.<sup>71</sup> The details of Honora's experience are scant, but both Mary Longdon and the Pacy sisters attributed their pin-vomiting to the machinations of witches, who had forced them to swallow pins, or otherwise inserted them into their bodies. The extant cases of pin-vomiting also multiplied from the 1660s. Ten cases are known to have occurred prior to the Restoration, while nearly five times that many are recorded for the period 1660 to 1720. In part, this can be attributed to the increased survival of material after the Civil War, though it also appears that accounts of possession proliferated around the same time. One reason for this was the rise of the sects in the 1640s and 1650s, especially groups like the Ranters and the Quakers.<sup>72</sup>

Quakerism was cited as the instigator of several cases of possession during this period, including by the pamphlets *A Sad Caveat to all Quakers* and *Quakers are inchanters and dangerous seducers*. Both William Pool and Mary White, whose experiences were described in the respective pamphlets, were believed to have killed themselves due to the influence of sectarian teachings.<sup>73</sup> Though these individuals neither swallowed nor vomited pins, the continued growth of Protestant non-conformist groups into the Restoration period may have influenced the narrative around pin-vomiting, which, from the 1660s appears to have included more overt references to self-destructive behaviour. Perhaps the changing religious, social, and political context of the period, as well as the changing narrative around supernatural occurrences more broadly, contributed towards the increase in self-destructive behaviours, manifested in pin-vomiting particularly, that were exhibited in narratives of supernatural affliction in the latter part of the seventeenth century.<sup>74</sup> A heightened concern for sin in the aftermath of the Civil Wars and into the Restoration period, and therefore greater scrutiny over temptations from the devil, may have contributed to an increase in anxiety over self-destructive desires. Compounding this was the readiness on the part of some to accept pin-vomiting in the Restoration period, influenced by the anti-atheist agenda which began to co-opt much of the publishing activity around witchcraft and possession.<sup>75</sup> Writers such as Joseph Glanvill, Richard Baxter, and George Sinclair dedicated themselves to proving the existence of the 'invisible world' and envisioned themselves as fighting against a rising tide of atheism. Demonstrating the continued operation of witches, demons, and other supernatural agents in the world was integral to these aims.<sup>76</sup> Pin-vomiting was an attractive facet of witchcraft and possession cases, given the visceral nature of the phenomenon. The physical evidence of the affliction corresponded with the interest in empirical verification manifested by *The Royal Society*, of which several anti-Sadducee

writers were associated. Writers believed that the cases on which they reported were so compelling as to be undeniable even by the most sceptical of readers.<sup>77</sup>

Towards the end of the seventeenth century pin-vomiting appears to have become more explicitly connected with self-destructive intent. The unambiguous admission of Deborah Pacy following her pin-vomiting, that the witch 'Amy Duny has been with her, and that she tempted her to drown herself, and to cut her throat, or otherwise to destroy herself' seems to have cemented this aspect of temptation in the phenomenon of pin-vomiting, which drew on far older beliefs about the ability to harm oneself through pin-swallowing.<sup>78</sup> Self-destructive intent with pins was invoked by those reporting on the cases of the stepson of J. H. in 1684, Christian Shaw in 1696 and Anne Thorn in 1712.<sup>79</sup> That these admissions and behaviours were taken seriously is evidenced by the reactions of witnesses, who confiscated pins and other items, and kept those afflicted under watch to prevent them from harming themselves.

Yet in the first half of the eighteenth century, pin-vomiting became an increasingly suspect behaviour. In 1718, the sceptical writer Francis Hutchinson, remarked while discussing the Anne Thorn case that there was 'no manner of reason to think of witchcraft' in many pin-vomiting cases, which might be affected by 'tricks' or 'sleight of hand'.<sup>80</sup> While the court had initially accepted Anne Thorn's pin-vomiting and other marks of supernatural affliction, which she attributed to Jane Wenham, the accused witch was subsequently reprieved.<sup>81</sup> Hutchinson viewed witchcraft beliefs, of which the Wenham case was a firm example, as 'dark superstitious tempers' accepted by 'the credulous multitude'.<sup>82</sup> Further exemplifying a turning tide of attitude, the image of a pin-vomiting individual featured in William Hogarth's 1762 print 'Credulity, superstition, and fanaticism'.<sup>83</sup> Crouched beneath the lectern, behind the rabbit-birthing Mary Toft, the pin-vomiting figure casts a variety of items out of their mouth. In depicting this character in his 'medley' intended to ridicule Methodism, Hogarth explicitly linked pin-vomiting with religious enthusiasm. This indicated to his audience that the once credible phenomenon should be viewed by intelligent members of society as ridiculous, and reports of pin-vomiting should not be believed. Pin-vomiting, instead of indicating blameless supernatural affliction, came to represent insanity. This is signalled in the engraving by what Euan Cameron has described as Hogarth's 'thermometer of psychological morbidity', a scale of fanatical behaviours which ranges from 'madness' to 'suicide'.<sup>84</sup>

It has been persuasively demonstrated by historians like Owen Davies that supernatural beliefs persisted long after the supposed 'disenchantment' of the world.<sup>85</sup> Yet the changing conception of pin-vomiting, from a credible mark of supernatural affliction to a behaviour denoting religious enthusiasm and linked to madness, must have had a significant impact on the ability of early modern people to express self-destructive desires and behaviours. As the medical establishment increasingly attributed the seeing of spirits and other such phenomena to the inner working of the brain, individuals were deprived of the ability to present this self-destructive practice as a supernaturally induced behaviour that originated externally.<sup>86</sup> For those experiencing pin-vomiting, the supernatural provided a degree of agency, and the opportunity to articulate otherwise 'unspeakable' desires.<sup>87</sup>

This was not a linear change. Earlier pin-vomiters had indicated their self-destructive intent through other behaviours, such as William Perry's 'offering violence to himself'.

Yet in being designated frauds, these individuals were deprived of this means of expressing their self-destructive desires, as their behaviours were written off as conspicuously acted, and often linked to their own guilt. The same can be said for all self-destructive behaviours, not just pin-swallowing, in cases of supernatural affliction. The hyper-conformist minister and client of Richard Bancroft, Samuel Harsnett summed up this attitude when he dismissed the suicidal behaviours of the demoniac William Sommers, concluding that Sommers' exorcist had deliberately extolled the typicality of a possessed person 'seek[ing] to kill himself' within 'the hearing of the said Sommers'. Harsnett believed that, having been 'instructed', the boy had only made an insincere 'shew' of self-destructive behaviours.<sup>88</sup> Even in the later seventeenth century, pin-vomiting could be designated as fraudulent, though this outlet was lost entirely as the credibility of supernatural explanations waned. This made it yet more difficult for individuals to express self-destructive thoughts and behaviours. By the nineteenth century, pin-swallowing and pin-insertion were behaviours recorded in the context of the asylum, and thus these self-destructive expressions had become firmly linked with mental instability, particularly hysteria.<sup>89</sup> Pins retained their vexatious power, yet the way in which the individuals who employed these objects to harm themselves were viewed had changed significantly.

## Conclusion

In early modern Britain and Ireland, pin swallowing was perceived of as a highly dangerous. As I have argued, the pin was both an object and index of self-destructive behaviour in early modern British and Irish narratives of bewitchment and possession. By charting a path between the scholarship on suicide and self-harm, through the broad category of self-destruction, this article has explored the insight that can be gained by considering aspects of such behaviour that did not result in the self-inflicted death of the individual.

Despite the taboo nature of suicide, the self-destructive behaviour of pin-swallowing does not appear to have been met with overt condemnation. Supernatural and religious beliefs have long been regarded as incompatible with toleration of or sympathy towards self-destructive behaviours.<sup>90</sup> For several decades, from the Restoration to the beginning of the eighteenth century, pin-swallowing and vomiting operated in a space where an individual's self-destructive desires could be articulated and enacted without being dismissed outright as a mark of fraud or madness. The perceived involvement of witches and demons may have absolved individuals of blame for their behaviour. Thus, the involvement of witches and demons did not necessarily cast one's self-destructive behaviours as inherently sinful. It is also possible that, without a self-inflicted death having occurred, there was little to condemn the individual for. In being denied supernatural explanations in the eighteenth century, the blame and judgement for these behaviours was relocated to those considering and attempting self-destruction. This transference of responsibility from an external entity to the individual themselves deprived these people of a means of expressing self-destructive desires.

For many early modern people, opportunities for self-destruction were in constant reach. The temptation, and even attempts, to harm oneself by such means were not treated with the same vitriol that we have come to expect of suicidal behaviours in the early modern period, particularly the seventeenth century. The temptation to self-

destruction and its connection to the supernatural was a facet of the mental landscape in early modern Britain and Ireland. Pin-swallowing and pin-vomiting invites us to reconsider how those ‘possessed’ by self-destructive desires were regarded by themselves and by others.

## Notes

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2. Edward Fairfax, *Daemonologia: A Discourse on Witchcraft as It Was Acted in the Family of Mr. Edward Fairfax, of Fuyston, in the County of York, in the Year 1621*, ed. William Grainge (Harrogate, 1882), 38–39.
3. Ireland had its own Parliament in this period. For an explanation of the legal system and its connection to witchcraft see Andrew Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Magic in Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 25–33. No Welsh examples of pin-swallowing have been identified. For the different context of witchcraft accusations in Wales see Sally Parkin, ‘Witchcraft, women’s honour and customary law in early modern Wales’, *Social History* 31:3 (2006), 295–318.
4. Only Andrew Pickering has studied pin-swallowing in any depth, and his concern is different to mine, “‘Great News from the West of England’: Witchcraft and Strange Vomiting in a Somerset Village”, *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 13:1 (2018), 71–97.
5. Owen Davies has shown that belief in witchcraft and other supernatural agents continued after the end of the witch trials in ‘Witchcraft Accusations in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe’, in *The Routledge History of Witchcraft*, ed. Johannes Dillinger (London: Routledge, 2019), 289–298, though legally and among the medical establishment such explanations were no longer available.
6. Lyndal Roper, *The Witch in Western Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 165.
7. Diane Purkiss reads witchcraft confessions as a means of displacing guilt in *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), 165.
8. Michael MacDonald and Terence R. Murphy, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.132.
9. MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls*. See also Jeffrey Watt, ed., *From Sin to Insanity: Suicide in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).
10. The chronology of this turn towards ‘sympathy’ has been challenged by Carol Loar: “‘Under Felt Hats and Worsted Stockings’: The Uses of Conscience in Early Modern English Coroners’ Inquests”, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 41:2 (2010), 393–414; ‘Medical Knowledge and the Early Modern English Coroner’s Inquest’, *Social History of Medicine* 23:3 (2010), 475–491.
11. Sara M. Butler, ‘Women, Suicide, and the Jury in Later Medieval England’, *Signs* 32:1 (2006), 151; Rebecca MacNamara, ‘The Sorrow of Soreness: Infirmary and Suicide in Medieval England’, *Parergon* 31:2 (2014), 11; Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason and Religion 1250–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 37. See also the work of scholars in the emerging field of self-harm who have further nuanced the meanings of such behaviour: Sarah Chaney, *Psyche on the Skin: A History of Self-Harm* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017); Alanna Skuse, “‘One Strok of His Razour’: Tales of Self-Gelding in Early Modern England”, *Social History of Medicine* 33:2 (2020), 377–393; Skuse, ‘Biting one’s tongue: autoglossotomy and agency in The Spanish Tragedy’, *Renaissance Studies* 36:2 (2021), 278–294.

12. See Karl Bell, *The Magical Imagination: Magic and Modernity in Urban England, 1780–1914* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012); Willem de Blecourt and Owen Davies, eds., *Witchcraft Continued: Popular Magic in Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).
13. See Chris Millard for a discussion of the overlap in understandings of suicidal and self-harming acts prior to the twentieth century: *A History of Self-Harm in Britain: A Genealogy of Cutting and Overdosing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), 2, 5.
14. Laura Kounine, 'Emotions, Mind, and Body on Trial', *Journal of Social History* 51:2 (2017), 226; Millard, *A History of Self-Harm in Britain*, 18; see also Jonathan Barry for the difficulties of accessing emotional experiences in witchcraft pamphlets in 'Witchcraft, The Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England by Charlotte-Rose Millar (review)', *Preternature* 7:2 (2018), 281–283.
15. Laura Kounine, *Imagining the Witch: Emotions, Gender, and Selfhood in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 9.
16. There were few cases of possession (or 'witchcraft-possession') in Scotland and Ireland until the end of the seventeenth century. See Brian Levack, 'Demonic Possession in Early Modern Scotland', in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller, eds. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 166–184; Andrew Sneddon has drawn comparisons between Scottish and Irish practices and beliefs in 'Medicine, belief, witchcraft and demonic possession in late seventeenth-century Ulster', *Medical Humanities* 42 9 (2016), 81–86.
17. Erika Gasser, *Vexed with Devils: Manhood and Witchcraft in Old and New England* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 16.
18. Blagrave, *Astrological Practice of Physick* (London, 1671), 173; T. I, *A world of wonders* (London, 1595), f.C3,r.
19. Brian P. Levack, *The Devil Within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2013), 6–14.
20. Mark 9:17–27 King James Version; Anon, *The most strange and admirable discouerie of the three witches of Warboys* (London, 1593), f.O,r; Anon, *The triall of Maist. Dorrell* (Middelburg, 1599), 17.
21. Mk 5:5 KJV; Luke 8:32; Matthew 8:32.
22. Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and True Story of Deception, Witchcraft, Murder, and the King of England* (London: Routledge, 2000), 144; J. A. Sharpe, 'Disruption in the Well-Ordered Household: Age, Authority and Possessed Young People', in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle, eds., (New York: Macmillan, 1996), 191–2.
23. Kathleen Sands has interrupted demonic possession as an outlet for the religious distress of the possessed person, *Demonic Possession in Elizabethan England* (London: Praeger, 2004), 9.
24. Gasser, *Vexed with Devils*, 4, 16; Brian P. Levack, 'The Demonic Possession of Richard Dugdale', in *Religion, the supernatural, and visual culture in early modern Europe*, Jennifer Spinks and Dagmar Eichberger, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 64; Almond, *Demonic Possession*, 28.
25. William W. Coventry, *Demonic Possession on Trial: Case Studies in Early Modern England and Colonial America, 1593–1692* (New York: Writers Club Press, 2003), 4, 49; Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, 279.
26. Antonio Benivieni, *De Abditis Morborum Causis* ([Florence?], 1507).
27. James Mason, *The Anatomie of sorcerie* (London, 1612), 41–43; see also John Cotta, *The Tryall of Witch-Craft* (London, 1624), 17.
28. The domestic nature of witchcraft is discussed by Diane Purkiss in 'Women's Stories of Witchcraft in Early Modern England: The House, the Body, the Child', *Gender & History* 7:3 (1995), 408–432.
29. Abigail Shinn, 'Cultures of Mending', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Culture Early Modern England*, Andrew Hadfield, Matthew Dimmock, and Abigail Shinn, eds. (London: Ashgate, 2014), 246.



30. Anne Gunter claimed to have learned how to fake bewitchment from printed accounts: Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, 9; Philip Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: Contemporary Texts and their Cultural Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 41–42.
31. Roper, *The Witch in Western Imagination*, 175.
32. Gasser, *Vexed with Devils*, 16; Almond, *Demonic Possession*, 42.
33. Frances Dolan, *True Relations: Reading, Literature, and Evidence in Seventeenth-Century England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 16–20, 25–6.
34. Marion Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches* (London: Routledge, 2009), 5, 9.
35. Charles Zika, *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 2007), 179; Marion Gibson has problematised the discussion around sensationalism, and notes the impossibility of determining precisely which elements of the accounts surviving to us are ‘overdrawn’ in *Reading Witchcraft*, 8–9.
36. See also Marion Gibson for a discussion of the varied motivations authors had for publication in *Reading Witchcraft*, 113–146.
37. Francis Young, *A History of Exorcism in Catholic Christianity* (Basel: Springer International, 2016), 100–106; Sands, *Demonic Possession in Elizabethan England*, 10.
38. Blaggrave, *Astrological Practice of Physick* (London, 1671), 168–175.
39. Anon, *The evil spirit cast out* (London, 1691).
40. C. H. Coote, ‘Blaggrave, Joseph’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
41. John Barrow, *The Lord’s arm stretched ovt in an answer of prayer* (London, 1664), 5–7.
42. Francis Bragge, *A Full and Impartial Account of the Discovery of Sorcery and Witchcraft* (London, 1712), 19, 20.
43. Richard Baxter, *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits* (London, 1691), 194. See also James Dalton, *A Strange and True Relation of a Young Woman Possest with the Devill* (London, 1647).
44. See also John Hart, *Trodden Down Strength, by the God of Strength, or, Mrs Drake revived* (London, 1647), 30; Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, 12.
45. Anon, *The Compleat Wizzard* (London, 1770), 212.
46. The exact date is unknown, though the narrative positions the onset of the son’s affliction as taking place at least twenty-two years before the 1684 publication.
47. Richard Bovet, *Pandaemonium* (London, 1684), 193–4.
48. Anon, *Sadducimus Debellatus* (London, 1698), 4, 12, 33.
49. Annie Thwaite, ‘Magic and the material culture of healing in early modern England’, PhD thesis, University of Cambridge (2020), 42, 122–5, 139–40.
50. See also Mary Moore, *Wonderfull Newes from the North* (London, 1650), 11–2, 16; Anon, *A Tryal of Witches* (London, 1682), 27, 29.
51. Bernard Capp, ‘Drage, William’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); William Drage, *Daimonomageia* (London, 1665), 3.
52. Drage, *Daimonomageia*, 5.
53. Mason, *The Anatomie of sorcerie*, 42–3.
54. Paul F. Eve, *A Collection of Remarkable Cases in Surgery* (Philadelphia, 1857), 235–7.
55. Sarah Chaney, ‘Curious appetites: surgery and the foreign body’, *The Lancet* 380, issue 9847 (2012), 1050–1051.
56. Samuel Petto, *A Faithful Narrative of the Wonderful and Extraordinary Fits which Mr. Tho. Spatchet (late of Dunwich and Cookly) was under by Witchcraft* (London, 1693), preface.
57. See also Watkins, *The Disclosing of a Late Counterfeyted Possession* (London, 1574), ‘The examination and confession of &c’; Anon, *Strange and Terrible News from Shorditch* (London, 1674), 5–6; Brinley, *A Discovery of the Impostures of Witches and Astrologers* (London, 1680), 60; Bell, *The Tryal of Witchcraft* (Glasgow, 1700), 7; William Drage, *Daimonomageia* (London, 1665), 3–5; Cotta, *The Tryall of Witch-Craft*, 98.

58. See also Tobias Gilbert, *Letter from Tobias Gilbert to Richard Baxter* (1680s) <http://yodelout.com/superstitions/witchcraft-in-suffolk/>, accessed 10 April 2022.
59. Andrew Sneddon, 'Select document: Florence Newton's trial for witchcraft, Cork, 1661: Sir William Aston's transcript', *Irish Historical Studies* 43:164 (2019), 303–313.
60. William M. Wraight, H.J.C.R. Belcher, and Hugo D. Critchley, 'Deliberate self-harm by insertion of foreign bodies into the forearm', *Journal of Plastic, Reconstructive & Aesthetic Surgery* 61:6 (2008), 700–703; Chaney, 'Curious appetites', 1050–1051.
61. Chaney, 'Curious appetites', 1050–1051.
62. Chaney, 'Curious appetites', 1050–1051; Eve, *A Collection of Remarkable Cases in Surgery*, 238–40.
63. Eve, *A Collection of Remarkable Cases in Surgery*, 238–40.
64. Fairfax, *Daemonologia*, 61, 133.
65. Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, 147–8.
66. Watkins, *The Disclosing of a Late Counterfeyted Possession*.
67. Hart, *Trodden Down Strength*, 30.
68. Mary Moore, *Wonderfull Newes from the North* (London, 1650), 16; see also Purkiss, 'Invasions: Prophecy and Bewitchment in the Case of Margaret Muschamp', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 17:2 (1998), 235–253.
69. Henri de Heer, *The Most True and Wonderfull Narration Of Two Women Bewitched in Yorkshire* (London, 1658), 4.
70. Memoirs of Roger Boyle, first earl of Orrery, c.1558/9 (BL, Sloane Ms 4227, f. 81 r.) from Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Magic in Ireland*, 63 n.91; Sneddon, 'Florence Newton's trial for witchcraft', 303–313; Anon, *A Tryal of Witches*.
71. Gilbert Geis and Ivan Bunn, *A Trial of Witches: A Seventeenth-Century Witchcraft Prosecution* (London: Routledge, 1997), 7.
72. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 580.
73. Anon, *A Sad Caveat to all Quakers* (London, 1657); Anon, *Quakers are inchanters and dangerous seducers* (London, 1655).
74. This has been offered as an explanation for the apparent rise in concern over madness, gloom, and suicide: Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 2–3.
75. Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witchcraft Trials in England', in *Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, Brian P. Levack, ed. (Oxford, 2013), 297.
76. Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 270–285.
77. See repeated references to 'truth', 'matters of fact' and 'evidence' in Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus triumphatus, or, Full and plain evidence concerning witches and apparitions* (London, 1681). See particularly the discussion of the witchcraft of Julian Cox and the 'pins produced in court' at 197.
78. Anon, *A Tryal of Witches*, 29; Geis and Bunn have explored the 'Puritan' influences proceedings at the 1662 Bury St Edmund trial, in *A Trial of Witches*, 162–3, 186.
79. See also Mary Dunbar who attempted to throw herself from a window and vomited pins, some of which were produced in court in William Tisdall, 'Account of the Trial of Eight Reputed Witches, 4 April 1711', *Hibernian Magazine* (1775), 47–51.
80. Francis Hutchinson, *An Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft* (London, 1718), 6, 9. Hutchinson did not outright deny the existence of witches or witchcraft, but advised caution in prosecution. See Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Magic in Ireland*, 107; Michael Hunter, *The Decline of Magic: Britain in the Enlightenment* (London: Yale University Press, 2020), 62–66.
81. Mark Knights, *The Devil in Disguise: Deception, Delusion, and Fanaticism in the Early English Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 227.
82. Hutchinson, *An Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft*, viii.
83. William Hogarth, 'Credulity, superstition, and fanaticism: a medley' (1762); Owen Davies has suggested that the pin-vomiting figure represents William Perry, the Boy of Bilson, in 'Methodism, the Clergy, and the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic', *History* 82: 266

(1997), 252; Bernd Krysmanski argues that the figure is a female shoeblack, but does not offer a specific pin-vomiting case as the model for Hogarth's depiction in 'We See a Ghost: Hogarth's Satire on Methodists and Connoisseurs', *The Art Bulletin* 80:2 (1998), 297, 308n.38.

84. Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 303.
85. Owen Davies, 'Newspapers and the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic in the Modern Period', *Journal of British Studies* 37:2 (1998), 139–165; Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (London: Yale University Press, 2006).
86. Shane McCorristine, *Spectres of the Self: Thinking About Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England, 1750–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 32.
87. Jacqueline Pearson, "'Then she asked it, what were its sister's names?': Reading Between the lines in Seventeenth-Century Pamphlets of the Supernatural", *The Seventeenth Century* 28:1 (2013), 63.
88. Samuel Harsnett, *A Discouery of the Fraudulent Practises of Iohn Darrel Bachelor* (London, 1599), 127, 131–133.
89. Chaney, 'Curious appetites', 1050–1051.
90. MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls*, 6.

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