

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



Early Modern Almanacs and *The Witch of Edmonton*

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Drenched and duped, Young Cuddy Banks returns from offstage and exclaims, ‘This was an ill night to go a-wooing in; I find it now in Pond’s almanac’ (III.1.96-97).¹ In Thomas Dekker, John Ford and William Rowley’s *The Witch of Edmonton* (c. 1621), the naïve and yet affable Cuddy retroactively wishes to have consulted one of the serial almanacs by Edward Pond before pursuing an unattainable Kate, having done so under the directives of the town witch Elizabeth Sawyer.² Throughout the play, Cuddy’s numerous references to almanacs and his ability to interact harmlessly with the demonic after his fall signal his growing recognition that astrological and preternatural influences must be actively withstood. Early modern almanacs describe a world replete with dire astrological conjunctions, planetary influences upon the body’s passions, and beings such as the demonic familiar, Dog. At stake, as Sawyer’s fate painfully demonstrates, is not only the physical wholeness of the self, but also the potential for eternal damnation. Nonetheless, Cuddy is the only character in the play whose contact with Dog is ultimately benign, and Cuddy’s almanac reading informs his singular relationship to the demonic familiar. Despite the apparent fruitless and unavoidable evil that affects everyone in Edmonton—including the innocent Susan or the somewhat complicit Winifred—I argue that we discover the clown’s reading of almanacs provides a model for how many early moderns coexisted with the demonic in an animate cosmos.

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¹ All in-text references to the play are from Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (New York: New Mermaids, 1998).

² Edward Pond’s almanacs, titled *Enchiridion, or Edward Pond his Eutheca* appeared yearly beginning in 1604. Pond was careful to maintain that his almanacs were based on observational precision, not mere speculation.

My discussion of Cuddy as perceptive almanac-reader departs from social and historical criticism of the play, which focuses primarily on the figure of Sawyer. As I argue below, an important historical and textual lens has yet to be brought into conversation with early modern drama—how almanacs provide a window into understanding the motives and actions of characters who live in a cosmos in which external influences act upon the self. These ephemeral texts articulate a narrative of human experience more interactive than that typically recognised by early modern scholars of the body and environment.³ In the period, the environment—including the heavens—consisted of invisible influences, or agents within the environment who could act upon human bodies. These agents were part of preternature, which, as Lorraine Daston explains, comprised that which was ‘beyond nature,’ and thus early modern philosophers ‘introduced new kinds of causes—astral influences, plastic virtues, the imagination, sympathies and antipathies—to meet the challenge of their new explananda’.⁴ Within early modern demonology, Stuart Clark observes, inquiry into the influences and properties of the Devil and his agents took on a ‘form of natural philosophy specializing in preternatural phenomena’.⁵ The demonic figure of Dog, in this case, is closely associated with the preternatural environment of the play. This calls for a reevaluation of the concept of nature itself, for Dekker, Ford, and

³ With the exception of the recent work of Mary Floyd-Wilson and Kristen Poole, most early modern body scholarship focuses on the humours and the ways in which the passions sway the body and the mind. See Floyd-Wilson’s *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and Kristen Poole’s *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare’s England: Spaces of Demonism, Divinity, and Drama* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For work on the body and the humours, see Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett A. Sullivan (eds.), *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2007); Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) and *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Floyd-Wilson (eds.), *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); and Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴ Lorraine Daston, ‘Preternatural Philosophy’ in *Biographies of Scientific Objects*, ed. by Lorraine Daston (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), pp. 15-41 (p. 18). See also Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), pp. 121-122. Additionally, Floyd-Wilson’s explication of the preternatural is helpful here: ‘any understanding of an animate early modern natural world must encompass what lies just beyond nature—the preternatural realm. Demons, spirits, and hidden, active effluvia comprised the invisible technology of nature’s marvels. These preternatural forces were known to influence the behavior of organic and inorganic entities’. See ‘The Preternatural Ecology of “A Lover’s Complaint”’, *Shakespeare Studies* 39 (2011), 43-53 (p. 43).

⁵ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 171.

Rowley's drama indicates that the natural world and the body's passions are not shut off from preternatural influences: preternature is part of the 'natural' or normative condition of experience. Critics have discussed at length the devil and witchcraft in *The Witch of Edmonton* but have not attended to the intertextuality with prognostic texts in this drama and, consequently, what this engagement with almanacs might reveal about a world in which the sense of touch or the sight of an apparition can almost inexplicably lead to murder, demonic pacts, or confession.⁶ Ultimately, I show that early modern almanacs reveal much more about the drama and other fictional texts of the period than previous criticism has acknowledged. We discover how characters navigate an animistic cosmos in which preternature operates upon both individuals and social structures like the village of Edmonton.

Scholarship on early modern almanacs focuses primarily on their circulation and medical content, indicating that literary studies has yet to explore how prognostications and ephemeral texts influence our understanding of the early modern notion of the environment.⁷ Criticism on *The Witch of Edmonton* locates the play's conflicts in its

⁶ In addition to the scholarship discussed below, see Viviana Comensoli, 'Witchcraft and Domestic Tragedy in *The Witch of Edmonton*' in *The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by J. R. Brink, A. P. Coudert and M. C. Horowitz (Kirksvilles, Mo.: The Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1989), pp. 43-60; Anthony B. Dawson, 'Witchcraft/Bigamy: Cultural Conflict in *The Witch of Edmonton*', *Renaissance Drama* 20 (1989), 77-98; Anthony Harris, 'Instruments of Mischief' in *Night's Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth-century English Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), pp. 90-108; Michael Hattaway, 'Women and Witchcraft: The Case of *The Witch of Edmonton*,' *Trivium* 20 (1985), 49-68; Kathleen E. McLuskie, *Dekker and Heywood: Professional Dramatists* (London: Macmillan, 1994) and 'Women and Cultural Production: The Case of Witchcraft,' in *Renaissance Dramatists* (Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), pp. 57-73; Katherine O'Mahoney, 'The Witch Figure: *The Witch of Edmonton*,' *Seventeenth Century* 24.2 (2009), 238-259; and Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996).

⁷ Historian Bernard Capp's *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs 1500-1800* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1979) remains one of the few monographs to cover the textual properties, the readership, and the social and cultural centrality of almanacs as integral documents in early modern England. Scholarship on early modern almanacs that precedes Capp's book includes, selectively, Cyprian Bladgen, 'The Distribution of Almanacks in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century,' *Studies in Bibliography* 11 (1958), 107-116; Eustace F. Bosanquest, 'English Seventeenth-Century Almanacks,' *The Library* 10 (1930), 361-397; and H. R. Plomer, 'A Catalogue of English Almanacs of the Sixteenth Century, with Bibliographical Notes,' *Notes and Queries*, 6th ser., 11 (1885), 221-222, 262-264, 301-302, and 382-384. More recent work on almanacs and their readership or medical advice includes R. C. Simmons, 'ABCs, Almanacs, Ballads, Chapbooks, Popular Piety and Textbooks' in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, edited by John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 504-513; Alison A. Chapman, 'Marking Time: Astrology, Almanacs, and English Protestantism,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 60 (2007), 1257-1290; and Louise Hill Curth, *English Almanacs, Astrology and Popular Medicine: 1550-1700* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007).

presentation of the social struggle for financial independence or social mobility, the scapegoating of deviant figures like the querulous old woman, or the problems of pregnancy out of wedlock. In each case, scholars focus on relationships among characters rather than the connections between characters and the preternatural environments they inhabit. Julia M. Garrett, for example, reads the play as theorising as much as actually enacting social deviance, while David Stymeist pairs the playwrights' deliberate use of scepticism regarding Sawyer's character with Jacobean interest in the lurid details of witch trials.⁸ David Nicol's work stands out by positioning *The Witch of Edmonton* as a demonological study, arguing for the relevancy of taking seriously the demonic presence in the play alongside Edmonton's social pressures for conformity.⁹ However, reading *The Witch of Edmonton* in light of early modern almanacs prompts a different interpretation than previous sociological studies of the play by instead establishing that, while victimisation certainly influences Sawyer's decision to turn to a pact with the devil, the preternatural environment of Edmonton itself plays a central role in the demonic infiltration of the village.

Combining multiple discourses and animate systems of belief on the external environment, almanac authors worked to establish the validity of reading the stars for knowledge of what and how bodies will be affected during the seasonal changes of the year. As C. L. Blagden notes, by the end of the seventeenth century some 350,000 to 400,000 copies of almanacs by various authors were printed each year.¹⁰ This circulation points to the centrality of these texts for early modern individuals. These texts, often authored by physicians and mathematicians, articulate a hybridity of knowledge derived from ancient astrological and medical texts, proverbs, folklore, and religious beliefs. Almanacs were for, among other groups, farmers and merchants, who may have had no training in reading astrological signs or the science of astronomy.¹¹ In these cases, authors of almanacs assert that they withhold from delving into the more arcane aspects of astrology to avoid confusing the common sort. For example, Gabriel Frende, in verse,

⁸ Julia M. Garrett, 'Dramatizing Deviance: Sociological Theory and *The Witch of Edmonton*', *Criticism* 49.3 (2007), 327-375 and David Steymeist, "'Must I be...made a common sink?': Witchcraft and the Theatre in *The Witch of Edmonton*', *Renaissance and Reformation* 25.2 (2001), 33-53.

⁹ David Nicol, 'Interrogating the Devil: Social and Demonic Pressure in *The Witch of Edmonton*', *Comparative Drama* 38.4 (2004-5), 425-445.

¹⁰ C. L. Blagden, *The Stationers' Company: A History, 1403-1959* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 188.

¹¹ Richard Allestree, for example, includes a definition of 'naturall Astrologie' in his almanac, but ironically or perhaps pretentiously in Latin. See Richard Allestree, *A New Almanacke and Prognostication, for the yeere of our Lord God 1634* (London: 1634), A4r.

promises that his almanac furnishes useful reading for both youthful and learned, elderly readers:

*I meane, to please such, as peruse such workes:
And pleasure such, as thereof shall haue vse.
Wherein, I hope, there no such matter lurkes,
As may Colde, or young yeeres, seeme an abuse.
Then take it, as I geue it, with goodwill,
Respect the geuers mynde, accept his skill.*¹²

By navigating among different classes and expectations, Frende calls attention to his mixed audience of readers.¹³ And yet, as practitioners of a science, almanac authors were keen to express the erudite and reliable qualities of their texts. Antonius de Montulmo, in 1555, compared ‘the science of Astronimy’ to ‘naturall theologie,’ which allows the astrologer to predict ‘thynges to come, as mutacions of the ayre, prestilencis, & al other infirmities, war, penury, peace, or plenty of victuals.’¹⁴ Importantly, for de Montulmo and others, almanacs provide medical and seasonal knowledge, in which all readers—educated and uneducated alike—gain access to information concerning when and how their bodies will be affected by the aspects of the moon and planets. This hybrid genre, in turn, calls for a heterogeneous understanding of the environment, in which popular and scientific discourses intermingle and provide valuable means for interpreting the cosmos.

Despite the varied readership and claims to knowledge that many early modern almanacs profess, there is also uneasiness in these texts about attempting to read the book of nature, an anxiety that carries over into the drama of the period when characters turn to almanacs to explain inexplicable events. Many almanacs briefly defer to God’s agency in determining humoral and climatic alteration before moving quickly and much more extensively to the power of the cosmos in conditioning change in the physical world.

¹² Gabriel Frende [Friend, Friende], *Frende. 1593. A new almanacke and prognostication, for the yeere of our Lorde God. M.D.XCIII. Composed according to lawfull and lawdable art, and referred specially to the meridian and eleuation of the northeren pole of Canterburie, but may serue vniuersally, without any great error, for most partes of Englande* (London: Richard Watkins, 1593), A2r.

¹³ Capp comments on the varying social classes who read and utilised almanacs: ‘The purchasers belonged to almost every social group’ (p. 60), although we mainly have extant copies from gentlemen’s libraries. Curth explores some of the problems in identifying the readership of early modern almanacs, noting, ‘[a]lthough authors provided clues as to the type of readers that they expected to attract, a particular title may, in fact, have attracted many different types of people’ (p. 94).

¹⁴ Antonius de Montulmo, *An almanacke and prognosticacion for the yere of our Lord God D.CCCCC.LV. [sic] Made by Master Antonius de Mortulind, an Italian, doctoure of phisicke and astronomy* (London: Thomas Marche, 1555), A2r-A2v.

Ultimately the astral and demonic in the world are secondary causes, following God as primary cause, and thus only allow humans to approximate accurate interpretation of their external environments. Evans Lloyd admits in his 1585 *Almanacke and Prognostication* that some of nature's secrets are hidden from the eyes of human observers, despite how carefully they may look:

And though there be farre more secretes and properties in nature, than any one mans vnderstanding and capacitie can comprehend (all kyndes and formes considered) sith the whole strength and property of anye one simple manne is not perfectlye knowen to anye: yet those thynges whiche by labour and diligence may bee knowen, which wor[t]hye wyttes haue founde, and by artificiall methode haue sette foorth, maye open a readye entraunce to the knowledge of the prouidence and bountie of the highest, and maye haue a manyfest vse throughout the whole life of man.¹⁵

For Lloyd, uncovering all of nature's 'secretes and properties' is not possible for human beings. This is precisely the problem that Bottom and company encounter in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Upon preparing for their theatrical debut before Duke Theseus and his royal court, the artisans of Athens consider the particularities of staging a proper play. Surfacing throughout their discussion is a fastidious concern with properly representing the moon, and Snout offers the practical question of 'Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?' (3.1.47-48).¹⁶ Bottom's immediate response is to turn to an available textual resource, which would afford both prognostic aphorisms concerning the good or ill luck to be found upon the day they stage their performance, alongside information on eclipses and the waning of the moon: 'A calendar, a calendar! Look in the almanac. / Find out moonshine, find out moonshine' (3.1.49-50). The almanac serves to map out quickly and helpfully the motions of the moon and acts as a textual, interpretative corollary to the material aspects of staging a play. And yet, Bottom's reading of the almanac only indicates the shining of the moon and not, as many almanacs of the period did, whether the night and the woods the Athenian artisans inhabit might contain other agents. Perhaps Quince did not read far enough into his text. Typically, almanacs first contained the astral chart of the moon's waxing and waning. A separate prognostication for the year often followed the chart and described specific

¹⁵ Evans Lloyd, *An almanacke and prognostication for this present yeere of our Lord God 1585. Wherein is plainly set forth the disposition of the ayre with other accidents that are likely to happen this yeere: supputated for the meridian of Shrewesbury, and may serue for all the west parts of Englande. By Euan Lloyd student in astronomie* (London: 1585), B2v.

¹⁶ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Orgel and A. R. Braunmuller (New York: Penguin, 2002).

alterations in human behaviour. John Securis, for example, notes the abundance of ‘manifold Eclipses, & maruailous signes appear[ing] in the Element, as also the multitude of straung monstres that hath bene sene in dyuerse places’.¹⁷ These ‘straung monstres’ might have included ghosts, demons or the very fairies that prompt Bottom’s metamorphosis.

Anomalies in seasonal weather and astrological change were thought to be particularly pernicious for living creatures. John Securis describes the effects of a momentous eclipse that will take place in 1569, during which ‘no man, woman, nor childe, nor a great manye of the brute beastes, shall escape free from them [effects of the eclipse], but al shalbe partakers of their influence, by one meanes or other’.¹⁸ This ‘influence’ is pernicious for humans within the environment, affected as they are by an obscured sun and the movement of the planets. The Great Conjunction of 1583 prompted Richard Harvey’s publication of *An Astrological Discourse*, which not only warned of the evils to befall that year, including ‘sundrie wofull, and cruell euils, together with many straunge and horrible euent[s] [that] shal sensibly appeare,’ but also foretold the potential end of the world in 1588.¹⁹ Speaking of the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in 1587, William Farmer promises, ‘[t]his Coniunction, sayth Guydo, signifieth wonderfull thynges to come in the worlde’.²⁰ Precisely what these ‘wonderfull thynges’ that shall appear in the world are, Farmer fails to say. Coupled with Harvey’s assertion, though, that these figures and events will ‘sensibly appeare,’ we should read this as a warning that the signs are harbingers to more corporeal and pernicious agents that might act upon the body,

¹⁷ John Securis, *A newe almanacke and prognostication for the yere of our Lord M.D.LXIX, being the yere since the creation of the vvorlde 5531 : made chiefly for Englande and applied sometimes to other countries* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1569), A1v.

¹⁸ John Securis, *A newe almanacke and prognostication for the yere of our Lord M.D.LXIX, being the yere since the creation of the vvorlde 5531: made chiefly for Englande and applied sometimes to other countries composed in Sarisbury by Iohn Securis* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1569): A7r.

¹⁹ Richard Harvey, *An astrological discourse vpon the great and notable coniunction of the tvvo superiour planets, Saturne & Iupiter, which shall happen the 28 day of April, 1583. With a briefe declaration of the effectes, which the late eclipse of the sunne 1582. is yet heerafter to woorke. Written newly by Richard Harvey: partely, to supplie that is wanting in cōmon prognostications: and partely by praediction of mischiefes ensuing, either to breed some endeuour of preuention by foresight, so farre as lyeth in vs: or at leastwise, to arme vs with pacience beforehande* (London: Henrie Bynneman, 1583), pp. 33 and 45.

²⁰ William Farmer, *The common Almanacke or Kalender, drawn foorth for this yeere. 1587. beyng the thyrde from the Leape yeere. Whereunto is annexed, and diarily compared the new Kalender of the Romans, which is very pleasaunt, and also necessarie for all estates, whosoeuer that hath cause to trauel, trade, or traffique into any Nation which hath already receyued this new Kalender, as wyll more playne appeare by the dayly vse thereof. And also a Prognostication for the same yeere, diligently calculated and referred to the Longitude and Eleuation of the pole Articke of the Citie of Dubline, and may serue likewise for Englande* (Dublin: 1587), D4v.

bewitching or possessing individuals through their very appearance. In 1664 Anthony Wood describes ‘a blazing starr’ that foretells and then produces ‘prodigious births’ and ‘the devill let loose to possess people’.²¹ The cosmos has the power to cause deformed, monstrous births and give agency to the devil to enter bodies at his will. In this astrological worldview, the planetary bodies render the subject’s corporeality prone to deformation or demonic possession. Similarly, almanac authors connect these uprisings to the supposed evil days produced by particular conjunctions of the planets and the moon. For example, Oronce Fine cautioned that when Saturn is in conjunction with the moon, it ‘[c]auseth an euell vnluckye daye for all matters, and principally it is not good to haue to doo with aged people, ne w[ith] rural folkes nor laborers’.²² The cosmology of the early modern period, and the preternatural forces believed to be acting within it, rendered necessary almanac authors’ advice on which days would entail evil. One preventative measure was to abstain from interacting with particular sectors of society, in this case with ‘aged people,’ ‘rural folks,’ and ‘laborers,’ who are, interestingly, perhaps the very readers of the almanac. Indeed, conceivably Cuddy reads similar advice in his many almanacs, for he eventually learns that the preternatural environment influences his interactions with others in the village of Edmonton. Elizabeth Sawyer, in this case, might fall into this category of people to avoid on certain days. In an early modern environment in which apparitions, devils, and faeries inhabited the same world as readers of almanacs, these readers might have guessed that this or similar conjunctions would lead to the appearance of preternatural beings who could work their harm during particular seasons of the year—harm that could be realised through specific bodily vehicles, such as older individuals or those from rural areas.

Not only could planets cause perturbations and evil to arise, but the planets themselves might also act maliciously upon individuals’ bodies. George Gossenne, for example, describes how the planet Mars is ‘an euill Planet’ that ‘gouerneth in the body of man, the gall and raines, the backe and sides. He ruleth on the Tuesday and Saterdag night’.²³ Gossenne intimates that one’s gall will be affected on specific nights, or that the passions

²¹ Anthony Wood, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary of Oxford 1632-1695*, ed. by A. Clark, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891-1900), II, p. 53.

²² Oronce Fine, *The rules and righte ample documentes, touchinge the vse and practise of the common almanackes, which are named ephemerides A briefe and shorte introduction vpon the iudiciall astrologie, for to prognosticate of thinges to come, by the helpe of the sayde ephemerides. With a treatise added hereunto, touchinge the coniunction of the planets, in euery one of the. 12. signes, and of their prognostications and reuolutions of yeres. The hole faithfully, and clerely translated into Englyshe by Humfrey Baker* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1558), F4v.

²³ George Gossenne, *A Newe Almanacke and Prognostication, seruing for the yere of our Lord God M.D.LXXJ* (London: H. Bynneman, 1571), B3v.

of anger and wrath—associated with the gallbladder—will be more active at these times, under the sway of Mars, than at others. Gossenne continues to go through the entire week to suggest that each day is ruled by a planetary figure who may harm or aid a particular body part or passion. Mars might also work upon specific professions, including those of a certain religious faith. In Miles Coverdale’s 1548 almanac, for example, clergymen are at risk: ‘By this theologicall Astronomye, Mars threateneth a verye euyl and vnfrutefull yeare to dyuerse spiritual prelates, as popish byshops, & popish preistes, & other mo’.²⁴ Planetary influences map onto a political or religious body, indicating that one’s own spiritual health, too, plays into how changes in the skies affect individuals.

To ensure preventative action, almanacs set forth the particular seasons and days in which to avoid bloodletting, communing with individuals, and when to ‘refrayne from carnall lust, and women’,²⁵ lest an individual overextend him or herself at an unseasonable time of year. Moreover, these precautionary measures are tied to the Galenic medical system of the period, in which the humours within the body are swayed by not only the passions and the diet of an individual, but also by the astrological influences upon the body. Although not always couched in technical terminology, early modern almanacs subscribe to similar constructions of the body as those that current scholarship uncovers in more academic early modern medical tracts, with an important difference: almanacs place more emphasis on the astrological and magical possibilities present in the world. Thus, alongside assertions such as Thomas Langley’s, that the body is full of ‘naughty and superfluous humours’,²⁶ we should also pay attention to how these errant humours were brought under a system that attempted to predict, prevent, or counteract what might have seemed the humours’ inexplicable changeability within the body.²⁷ Not only do almanacs

²⁴ Miles Coverdale, *A faythfull and true pronosticatio[n] vpo[n] the yere .M.CCCCC.xlviii and parperually after to the worldes ende gathered out of the prophecies and scriptures of god, by the experience and practise of his workes, very co[m]fortable for all Christen hertes deuyded into seuen chapters. And in the ende ye shal finde an almanack for euer, translated newly out of hye Almayne into english by Myles Couerdale*. (London: Rychard Kele, 1547), A7v.

²⁵ Frende, B8r.

²⁶ Thomas Langley, *Langley, 1638 a new almanacke and prognostication for the yeere of our Lord God, 1638: being the second after the leape-yeare: composed for the meridian of the famous towne of Shrewsbury, and generally for the north-west parts of Great Britaine* (London: F.K. for the Company of Stationers, 1638), B6r.

²⁷ Curth discusses the homogeneity of medical beliefs among almanac authors: ‘all remained firmly ensconced in a traditional, orthodox system of medical beliefs and practices consisting of a mixture of Galenic rationalism and astrological medicine, based on the theory that God would use the heavens to communicate his will to all living creatures. The movements of the planets and stars would result in humoral imbalances’ (Curth 131). This reading into the natural world for medical causes extends, I argue, to almanac

put forth a preventative means for determining the evil days and when to avoid purging, but these texts also serve as curative manuals for medical practitioners and argue that reading the signs in the skies could allow for better reading of the body. John Harvey's 1589 *An Almanacke or Annuall Calender*, in the separate section titled *A Compendious Prognostication*, reminds readers:

Consideryng how necessary an Almanacke and Prognostication fytte the vse of diuers persons, [...] I thought good to offer this vnto thy viewe: for the knowledge and due consideration of the Signes, Planettes, and tymes of the yeere, do not a lytle helpe for the curyng of the sayd bodyes: and (if the disease be not vncurable) to the restoryng agayne of their former state and health.²⁸

Harvey concedes that when harms to the body do take place, almanacs may serve as a textual means for determining how to restore the body to health, which involves close attention to the 'Signes, Planettes, and tymes of the yeere.' Not only are all readers encouraged to use the almanac to prevent their own bodily ills, but almanacs also give the reader ample methods for determining when and how the afflicted body is to be made whole again.

Beyond the maintenance of humoural health prescribed in almanacs, however, these authors also prognosticate the uprising of figures closely associated with harming the body or causing climatic alterations: witches. Thomas Stephins, for example, warns that in the Spring of 1569 '[t]here shalbe in this reuolution muche witchecraft, Sorcery, and Inchauntmentes vsed',²⁹ while in 1606 William Woodhouse foretells of an eclipse in October that will enable 'Witchcraft, Inchauntments, Impoysonings, craft and Deceit vsed in all affayres and trades'.³⁰ This cropping up of witchcraft is not merely reflecting the idea in the period that agrarian or mercantile catastrophes are due to witches or the devil alone.³¹ Rather, early modern almanacs recognise that witchcraft and the demonic

authors' understanding of the demonic or evil within the environment, which also determined a body's physical and spiritual health.

²⁸ John Harvey, *An Almanacke, or annuall Calender, with a compendious Prognostication thereunto appendyng, seruyng for the yeere of our Lord. 1589* (London: Richard Watkins and James Robertes, 1589), B2r.

²⁹ Stephins, B5r.

³⁰ William Woodhouse, *An almanacke and prognostication, for the yeare of our redemption, 1606 Necessary for all men, chiefly for gentlemen, lawyers, merchants, mariners, husbandmen, tranellers [sic], artificers, and all other. Faithfully supautated for the meridian & inclination of Woler Hamptom [sic] in Staffordshire, and may moste aptly serue for all England* (London: Company of Stationers, 1606), B4r.

³¹ Of course, many scholars rightly attribute the victimization of old women and other social outcasts to periods of natural disasters or tragedies. As Stuart Clark notes, the power ascribed to witches invariably

cooperate with astral influences. Warnings of witchcraft and black magic appear often in these texts, indicating that the fear is not so much regarding the devil's direct influence, but rather that particular agents will be inclined to open up their bodies to the evil influences in the environment during specific seasons. John Harvey proclaims that

The Oppositon of Saturne and Mercury, signifieth that many shall adict them selues to the studie of Negromancie, and such vnlawfull and deuilysh sciences, as are commonly tearmed the blacke Artes, iustly condemned by all wyse Lawes, and therefore woorthyly punished in all politique states, especially where Christian religion hath expelled heathenysh superstition: Through which studie, and such corrupt and deceytfull bookes, as these Nooueces of Negromancie shall especially folowe.³²

Harvey warns that the conjunction of Saturn (aligned with melancholy) and Mercury (with phlegm) will enable similar humoural bodies to acquire the audacity and, perhaps, the skill to practice in magic. Importantly, Harvey does not discount the power of these 'vnlawfull and deuilysh sciences', but rather concedes that certain individuals will be prone to practicing and communing with malevolent spirits during this planetary opposition.

Perhaps some of the impetus for distinguishing between magical, unsanctioned arts and astrological science derives from their close association in the period. According to Bernard Capp, 'There was a sustained attempt to link astrology with witchcraft, sorcery and demonism'.³³ The new heliocentric claims, alongside Calvinism, rendered the status of astrological knowledge questionable.³⁴ This anxiety is captured in John Harvey's letter to the reader, in which he asserts: 'We must learne to put a difference betweene Negromancie and Naturall Magicke, betweene superstitious and artitifiall Diuinations, betweene the blacke Artes of the Deuyll, and the fayre gyftes of God, betweene the

included their ability to manipulate the weather (p. 441). However, my point here is that additional causal influences, namely the preternatural influences of the stars, planets, and their subsequent encouragement to supernatural entities and their agents were cited in almanacs as explanations for both natural and social change.

³² John Harvey, *An almanacke, or annuall calendar, with a prognostication for the yeere of our Lord. 1585. beyng the fyrst from the leape yeere. Astrologically calculated, and referred to the longitude and aleuation of the ple Articke of the Citie of London* (London: 1585), C5r-C5v.

³³ Capp, p. 131.

³⁴ For the most part, early modern astrology posited a stationary earth with the zodiac circling around it. For a discussion of the rising friction between early modern astrology and empirical science, see the essays in the edited collection by Brian Vickers, *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

learning of Israel, and the learning of Egypt'.³⁵ For Harvey and other early modern almanac authors, natural magic consists of reading properly the signs of the environment, but also in recognising the astrological influences that are secondary causes for the harm or health of an individual's body. Natural magic is distinct from 'the learning of Egypt,' in which astrological observation is coupled with more nefarious practices, including the use of language and charms to invite the demonic into the body. The uneasy distinction between natural magic and the black arts informs the poem at the end of Arthur Hopton's 1606 almanac, which disclaims against any use of black magic:

Of Pyromancie I not speake,
Ne Geomanticke spells,
As do adiure such Daemons vp,
as in our Center dwells:
But onely of Astronomie,
which for my Countires sake,
And for her credite and her good,
this paynes did vndertake.³⁶

Indeed, William Farmer counselled that almanac authors withhold certain secrets of nature in order to prevent the misreading of their intentions in revealing planetary influences: 'Wherefore I iudge it as much folly in those Astrologians, which wyll blaze fourth the deepe and profounde secretes of this arte, and set it open to the viewe of the common people'.³⁷ Early modern almanacs emphasise the problems of language,

³⁵ Harvey, C5v. As one of the essay's readers rightly points out, the last example in Harvey's pairings seems to invert the order of black and white magic. I would suggest that the swapping between 'the learning of Israel' and 'the learning of Egypt' derives perhaps from the author's desire to end on an emphatic note: the associations between Egypt and false magic carry specific weight in the period, as Moses's 'good magic' was thought to have overcome the Pharaoh's magicians' 'black magic.' For this tradition see Paola Zambelli, *White Magic, Black Magic in the European Renaissance: From Ficino, Pico, Della Porta to Trithemius, Agrippa, Bruno* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

³⁶ Arthur Hopton, 1606. *An almanack and prognostication for this the second yeare after leape yeare. Commodious and commendable for all honest and well disposed men. Rectified and faithfully supputated for the latitude and meridian of the famous towne of Shrewsbury, seruing most aptly all neighbouring townes lying neare or under the same meridian, and not much altering the eleuation, as Arthur. 1606. An almanack and prognostication for this the second yeare after leape yeare. Commodious and commendable for all honest and well disposed men. Rectified and faithfully supputated for the latitude and meridian of the famous towne of Shrewsbury, seruing most aptly all neighbouring townes lying neare or under the same meridian, and not much altering the eleuation, as Chester, Ludlow, or Heriford, &c. with all towns eastwards, as Worcester, Stafford, etc. or westward to the seaside, and generally for the south parts of Great Brittain* (London: Company of Stationers, 1606), C8v.

³⁷ Farmer, E2r.

misinterpretation, and uncovering nature's secrets, and these texts often suggest and sometimes openly admit that the world is full of magical or astrological influences. Only the learned astrologer or observer, however, can foretell how these influences will act upon specific bodies. The astrologer, moreover, must work to establish the validity of his or her scientific observations and prognostications, avoiding associations with black magic or demonic practices.

With the stars and planets enabling or encouraging diabolic influence, reading these effects rests on admission of this possibility and careful observation of the preternatural environment. And yet, when we turn to the environmental and demonic in *The Witch of Edmonton*, the diabolic influences seem to overshadow any agency that the stars might wield. Nonetheless, this power of the demonic is embedded in the preternatural world, for the devil and his agents work amid a cosmos of climatic change, seasonal alteration, and humoral susceptibility to malevolent beings; in other words, neither the devil nor the natural world are monolithic entities but rather coexist amid additional influences inherent in the preternatural cosmos. This enables, then, the mobility of the demonic throughout the play. The familiar, Dog, crosses the boundaries of both plots and interacts with (we might say bewitches) both those of the gentry and the lowest in society: from the gentleman, Frank, to the old, scorned, and abused Sawyer, although Dog's interaction with Sawyer is much more intimate than his slight touching or prompting of Frank. Dog's ready access to bodies and souls is only part of a larger ecology of astral and spectral influences in the drama, in which the demonic transacts with individuals beyond the beastly and bodily means typically assigned to a familiar. Indeed, Dog's own invisibility to many of the malefactors in *The Witch of Edmonton* suggests that the ethereal is just as, if not more, insidious than what his own rubbing and touching can effect. Despite Dog's physicality in the play, he hints at the more unseen, permeating aspects of evil—a nearly atmospheric presence of spirits within and without the body. Cuddy is not only a reader of almanacs, but he is also a student of the demonic, seeking to understand and yet refrain from practising the ways of the devil in his unseen and visible qualities. In response to his question regarding how demons acquire physical bodies, Dog responds

Thou never art so distant
From an evil spirit, but that thy oaths,
Curses and blasphemies pull him to thine elbow.
Thou never tellst a lie, but that a Devil
Is within hearing it; thy evil purposes
Are ever haunted; but when they come to act,
As thy tongue slandering, bearing false witness,
Thy hand stabbing, stealing, cosening, cheating,

He's then within thee. (5.1.131-39)

The irony that these lines are spoken by a demonic familiar, who has throughout the course of the play rubbed, tussled with, and embraced characters in both the main- and sub-plots, would not have been lost on many in the early modern audience. Of course, Dog is the physical embodiment of demonic proximity for the other characters in the play, but his mention of 'spirit' and his admission that the devil might be 'within thee' indicates that there are unseen evil forces in Edmonton as well, moving the body just as the heavens might also occasion inexplicable changes in the self.

In *The Witch of Edmonton*, an individual opens up his or her body to these demonic and spectral influences through his or her passions. Damnable acts and language—presumably caused by one's emotions—provide entryway for the devil to work his will from within. Crucially, the invisible-to-Frank Dog rubs him right before he murders his second wife, Susan. Frank, already frustrated by his wife's devotion, is moved to commit the previously un-contemplated act of uxoricide. Frank perhaps somehow recognises what he cannot see: 'Thank you for that. / Then I'll ease all at once. / 'Tis done now. What I ne'er thought on' (3.3.15-16). Frank is already steeped in sin through his bigamous marriage to Susan and his continual lies to his father, father-in-law, and first wife. Frank has broken numerous oaths and these fruitless vows—and the passions he simulates when delivering them—open up his body to demonic penetration or influence. Throughout *The Witch of Edmonton*, the heavens and the demonic collude once language opens the body to enable the tragedy of Sawyer, Frank, and the citizens of Edmonton.

Earlier, Frank attempted to use the slipperiness of language and the forms of prognostication to reveal to Susan that their marriage is troubled, playing dangerously and falsely with the powers of soothsaying. Upon Susan's questions about Frank's darkened mood, Frank tells his second wife, "'Twas told me by a woman / Known and approved in palmistry, I should have two wives' (2.2.119-121). As another popular form of prediction, palmistry in the period would have been practised by old women versed in the changes of the seasons and eking out a living through calling upon magical means of reading the body for its signs.³⁸ In this way, Frank's supposed turn to a palmist mirrors Cuddy's own use of almanacs. Both are means for reading the environment and the body

³⁸ As Keith Thomas has demonstrated, palmistry was part of an early modern worldview of analogical thinking in which smaller members of the body mirrored the larger qualities of an individual: 'The doctrine of correspondences, or relationships between each part of the physical world, made possible the belief in systems of divination like palmistry and physiognomy; for, just as an individual man was believed to mirror the world in miniature, so the hand or the face mirrored the man'; see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 223.

to forecast the dangers ahead. Both, too, revolve around the social and physical conditions of human experience within time—by predicting what is to come, palmistry and almanacs offered means to ready the body for potential impinging tragedies. However, Frank has not actually consulted with this form of prediction and thus plays a dangerous game by mocking this means of prognostication, whereas Cuddy learns throughout the course of the play to take seriously the warnings offered by texts of foreknowledge.³⁹

Frank turns, hazardously, to the heavens in his vows. When Winifred early in the play worries that Frank will desert her, he promises

whenever
The wanton heat of youth by subtle baits
Of beauty, or what woman's art can practise,
Draw me from only loving thee; let heaven
Inflict upon my life some fearful ruin (1.1.63-67).

As the play's main plot proves, the heavens do visit ruin upon Frank and it is this initial vow that presages Frank's downfall. Importantly, too, it is without the confines of the home that Frank murders Susan: although this is a domestic tragedy, the transgressive act of murder occurs amid nature, where Frank's body is even more exposed to the movements of the heavens and the environment. Before the murder in the woods, Winifred complains to Frank, 'Your second adulterous marriage leads; / That's the sad eclipse, the effects must follow, / As plagues of shame, spite, scorn and obloquy' (3.2.10-12). Winifred, pregnant and cross-dressing as a male page, nonetheless recognises the bodily changes possible beyond her own free will; the eclipse of Frank's second marriage, Winifred suggests, will cause physical alteration that will darken their futures, producing 'plagues of shame, spite, scorn and obloquy.' In the community of Edmonton, these plagues are more dangerous than those of actual disease, for they have the power to castigate and isolate individuals to such a degree that one like Sawyer, or perhaps a pregnant and abandoned woman like Winifred, cannot obtain a livelihood. The eclipse of Frank's second marriage haunts him, Winifred, and Susan outside of the home in a space in which the body is open to unseen brushes with the devil.

³⁹ In a similar misuse of palmistry, in *A Warning for Fair Women* Mistriss Drewry falsely reads Anne's palm in order to convince her that she too will lose one spouse. Likewise, Anne, the receiver of this forged forecast, and Mistriss Drewry, who gambles with the fates in appropriating the craft of prescience for her own ends, suffer tragic fates similar to Frank's own downfall. I am grateful to Mary Floyd-Wilson for pointing out this connection.

Dog's admission that he has close physical and spiritual commune with the bodies onstage might strike modern readers as odd or uncanny. How can a corporeal demonic figure intimate the more unseen and insidious ways in which the devil's agents might act upon or within the body? Can one, in this worldview, ever escape the presence of the demonic? Dekker, Ford, and Rowley's drama indicates that the answer is that one must arm him- or herself against these influences: not solely by means of moral innocence, but rather through reading preternatural forces. For Cuddy, this is a lesson he must learn throughout the course of his interactions with Sawyer and her demonic familiar.

Before Cuddy first sees Sawyer, he and his fellow morris-dancers speak of the need for a hobby-horse in the entertainment. Affronted at the fact that his companions do not immediately appoint him the role of performing the hobby-horse, Cuddy turns to an almanac onstage:

For a hobby-horse? Let me see an almanac. [*Reads almanac*] Midsummer-moon, let me see ye. When the moon's in the full, then's wit in the wane. No more. Use your best skill. Your morris will suffer an eclipse. (2.1.56-59)

Not only does Cuddy accurately read the astrological position of the moon on the upcoming night of the morris-dance, but he also repeats and puts to good use the adage that the almanac provides: 'When the moon's in the full, then's wit in the wane,' suggesting that Cuddy can learn to interpret both the astrological chart of the moon's changes and the more proverbial sayings in the almanac, despite the fact that it foretells of Cuddy's own foolishness. Although partly motivated by anger from affront, his reading of the almanac proves true. Later in the play Dog disrupts the morris-dance as a favour to Cuddy. The foretold eclipse suggests that strange and disastrous events are to occur, including a demonic covenant, a spectral and evil apparition, an almost deadly fall, and, during the morris-dance, an eerie silence. Nonetheless, at this early point in the play, Cuddy's reading of the almanac does not uncover the preternatural dangers associated with the predicted eclipse. Instead, Cuddy requires further reading and interaction with Sawyer and the demonic in order to comprehend the dangers that preternatural influences pose to his own body.

This very darkening of the upcoming eclipse is emphasised when, moments later, Cuddy and his cohort come across Sawyer, who has yet to make a demonic pact with Dog. Upon seeing her, Cuddy and others cry out, 'away with the Witch of Edmonton' (2.1.97). The stage directions after these lines read '*Ex[eunt] in strange postur[es]*' (s.d. 2.1.97), indicating that Cuddy and his fellow dancers crawl or, in contorted positions, scamper from Sawyer. Although it is possible that Cuddy believes he has been affected by

Sawyer's curses here, because she has yet to give her body and soul to the devil, it is more likely that Cuddy uses this guise as a guard against what he believes are Sawyer's demonic powers. Stuart Clark lists some of the afflictions of those possessed by demons, including 'blindness, contortions, vomitings, and paralysis'.⁴⁰ Cuddy and his fellows are cognisant of the ailments that witches or demons could induce through their enchantments or powers. In this moment, Cuddy tries to mimic the body of the demoniac in order to prevent an actual bewitching, moulding his body in a shape that might please the demonic agents of the witch. Alternatively, this moment might represent an enactment of a counter-curse or preventative means for interacting with what Cuddy supposes is a demonic figure. Both possibilities, however, suggest that an act of reading and interpreting is taking place because Cuddy and his companion respond to the witch with a bodily and performative act. The strange postures, coming as they do after the warning of the eclipse in the almanac, indicate that Cuddy recognises and attempts to counteract the supposed evil in the play through his own form of physical charms, despite the fact that he misreads Sawyer as an agent of the devil in this moment even before her fatal contract.

Sawyer does acquire certain powers once she surrenders her own body and soul to the devil; her covenant with Dog appears to enable her to alter the elements and the weather of Edmonton. Upon Cuddy's exit, Sawyer again wonders in desperation why she is beleaguered with social disapprobation and later, in fear that Dog will tear her body to pieces, agrees to sign over her soul and body to the devil. The stage instructions here are illustrative of the ways in which the performance conveys to the audience the environmental change that evil agents can enable. Once Sawyer offers herself to Dog, the text reads, '[*Sucks her arm, thunder and lightning*]' (s.d. 2.1.144). The eclipse that Cuddy's almanac has foretold is preceded by this disruption of the weather, in a moment in which drawing blood from Sawyer's body produces a response in the skies. Sawyer, in turn, is able to move the environment in uncanny ways. When Cuddy re-enters with a request that Sawyer help him obtain Kate, this time willing to interact with the demonic in order to obtain what he wants, Sawyer uses her new powers to frighten Cuddy in justified revenge against him. She tells Cuddy to turn to the west (and thus away from the benevolent influences of the sun in the east) and calls for Dog. While she confers with her familiar, Cuddy wonders to himself:

Afraid, Mother Witch? Turn my face to the west? [*Aside*] I said I should always have a back-friend of her; and now it's out. And her little Devil should be hungry, come sneaking behind me, like a cowardly catchpole, and clap his talons on my

⁴⁰ Clark, p. 188.

haunches. 'Tis woundy cold sure. I dudder and shake like an aspen-leaf every joint of me. (2.1.245-250)

Cuddy has yet to distance himself from the demonic permeating the play, but the environmental changes that his body witnesses are ready indicators that Cuddy here fails to read. Painfully, Cuddy recognises that Sawyer has produced an unnatural coldness, although it is mid-summer, and his body responds with shaking and apprehension. Sawyer, through the agent of Dog, may, like the stars, have temporary control over the weather and Cuddy's body, but she lacks the ability to read into the causal connections between the power she wields over nature and the subsequent lack of agency she will experience once her demonic familiar no longer assists her. Cuddy, too, has yet to grasp the full implications of turning to the demonic or the witch during times of seasonal change and uncertainty—times such as during a mid-summer moon are dangerous for unsuspecting individuals.

Cuddy is willing to do anything to obtain the love of Kate, for a more benign force—one that is nevertheless described in demonic terms—has already bewitched him:

Bewitched me, *hisce auribus*. I saw a little Devil fly out of her eye like a burbolt, which sticks at this hour up to the feathers in my heart. Now my request is to send one of thy what-d'ye-call-'ems, either to pluck that out, or stick another as fast in hers. (2.1.225-229)

Hence, to gain sexual satisfaction, Cuddy actively seeks the aid of Sawyer and one of her 'what-d'ye-call-'ems' or demonic familiars to achieve his desires. Sawyer's solution, which is actually a trick, is to embed Cuddy in the environment as much as possible, telling him to go to his father's fields at night, where he shall see the appearance of his love. The night, Cuddy's dousing in the watery elements, and his quick turn to Dog for explanation all fully entrench him in the environmental and demonic of the play until Cuddy realises the dangers of such commerce.

The appearance of Kate, moreover, is of an elemental horror, a horror that Cuddy fails to recognise in its true form. Before Cuddy's fateful splash in the pond, he sees the apparition of Kate, a spirit who reveals to the audience that it has displaced its 'own essential horror' (3.1.74) to appear in the shape of the maid. Upon Dog's barking, Cuddy attempts to embrace her and falls into the muddy pool, emblematising Cuddy's baptism from foolishness to even-handed commune with the demonic, in which he treats preternature as the natural. This leap into the pond is the educative climax in the play for Cuddy, who now consigns preternatural beings to interpretative categories that can be

defined and thus managed or prevented through a proper 'reading' of the preternatural environment as a necessary condition of human experience. In this admission, the preternatural becomes normative and thus naturalised as part of Cuddy's worldview, a worldview that recognises the dangers inherent in the preternatural but nonetheless works to prevent these influences through a method of reading and interpreting. Cuddy resolves, 'I'll never go to a wench [Kate] in the dog-days again' (3.1.98-99), suggesting that Cuddy has now acquired the ability to avoid certain actions and take preventative measures during the 'dog-days', or days in which the body is prone to the lethargic and unhealthy seasons of unnatural heat (and thus days unfit for sexual relations). In fact, the almanac author M.D.L. describes the dog-days as 'days of great danger and peril'.⁴¹ In his subsequent interaction with Dog, Cuddy continually promises only material rewards for the demonic familiar, 'jowls and livers' (3.1.123) in exchange for Dog's participation in the morris-dance. Unlike Sawyer, Cuddy trades in offal with Dog instead of offering the precious commodities of his body and soul. By treating Dog as an equal or even an inferior creature, Cuddy is able to maintain a spiritual distance that Sawyer, seeking companionship and agency, loses early in the play through her cursing and the unavoidable contingencies of her own social position.

Cuddy willingly associates with preternatural entities, but his reading of the environment entails a newfound preventative method to his actions, exemplified in his desire to 'catechize' (3.1.112) Dog both here and later in the play. Cuddy's questions point to a desire to understand and thus categorise this preternatural being. His classificatory impulse is exhibited when Cuddy defends Dog from hanging. As he explains to Old Banks, Dog is a creature, but of a particular type:

The dog is no court-foisting hound, that fills his belly full by base wagging his tail; neither is it a citizen's water-spaniel, enticing his master to go a-ducking twice or thrice a week, whilst his wife makes ducks and drakes at home. This is no Paris-garden bandog neither, that keeps a bow-wow-wowing, to have butches bring their curs thither, and when all comes to all, they run away like sheep. Neither is this the Black Dog of Newgate. (4.1.244-251)

⁴¹ M. D. L., *A New almanack, or prognostication, for the year of Christ 1671. Being the third after bissextile, or leap year. Wherein are contained the moveable feasts, the eclipses, a description of the four quarters of the year, the changes of the moon, her full and quarters, with the dayly disposition of the weather. : Together with notes of husbandry & gardening, and physical observations: the dismal dayes, with the whole fairs of Scotland. : Calculated for the meridian of the honorable city of Glasgow, where the pole is elevated 55 deg. 55 min. | Set forth in Aberdene by M.D.L. professor of mathematicks* (Glasgow: Robert Sanders, 1671), A8r.

This last example refers to the legend of a black dog understood to be an evil spirit residing at Newgate Prison.⁴² Consequently, Cuddy locates Dog somewhere between the canines found in the London landscape and the ghostly apparitions that haunt its prisons. For Cuddy, Dog is neither of these beings, but he nonetheless fails to say what Dog *is*. His classification of other beings and his silence on delineating the demonic familiar show Cuddy's cognizance of the interpretative difficulties that the preternatural Dog can present, a type of knowledge that he withholds from his father but, it would appear, he himself understands.

The location of evil and its specific powers in the play are troubling beyond the abilities and desires Cuddy ascribes to Dog. Amid the seemingly inexplicable layering of malicious agents and motives in *The Witch of Edmonton*, the playwrights nonetheless place limitations on how much power demonic agents can hold. When Sawyer asks Dog to kill her enemy and Cuddy's father, Old Banks, the demonic familiar refuses, for

Though we have power, know, it is circumscribed,
And tied in limits. Though he be cursed to thee,
Yet of himself he is loving to the world,
And charitable to the poor. Now men
That, as he, love goodness, though in smallest measure,
Live without compass of our reach. His cattle
And corn I'll kill and mildew. But his life,
(Until I take him as I late found thee,
Cursing and swearing) I have no power to touch. (2.1.158-166)

Interestingly, Dog claims that he cannot *touch* the body of Old Banks, while he can and does touch or rub other characters in the play to enable their deepest harboured sins to come to fruition. Moreover, although Dog lacks the ability to kill Old Banks because he is kind to the poor (excepting Sawyer), he enacts similar damages to his livelihood as those forecasted in almanacs. William Woodhouse cites the poor harvest and death of cattle following the eclipse in 1606: 'This Exlipse sheweth great dearth and scarcity of corne, and other fruits of the earth necessary for foode, also the death of Cattle, and great Beastes that serue for vse'.⁴³ If Old Banks has recourse to the same almanacs as his son, he might locate the disastrous effects upon his property as due to the lunar eclipses of the year. However he may also accurately cite the demonic powers of the witch in

⁴² Editor Kinney explains the significance of this line in note 251, page 87. There was also a pamphlet titled *The Black Dog of Newgate* in 1596.

⁴³ Woodhouse, B4r.

occasioning this dearth and death. As the play demonstrates, the causal link is more nuanced than Old Banks realises, for the planetary bodies act in conjunction with the evil that they produce, enable, and work alongside. Assigning blame to a single figure, as Old Banks does, is, as the play demonstrates, too simplistic a mode of reading to account for the influences of the stars, planets, and demonic beings that all act upon bodies and social ties in the play.

The evil in the play moves beyond Frank, Sawyer, and Dog, for misreading signs affects innocent characters as well. Unfortunately for Susan, she attempts a type of almanac-reading upon Frank's body and passions instead of on the skies above. Noticing her spouse's change in mood, Susan tells Frank, 'I have observed strange variations in you' (2.2.68). Nonetheless, Susan focuses on her body's responses to these 'strange variations' in her husband, for he is 'the powerful moon of my blood's sea' (2.2.96), causing change in Susan's own humoural and physical responses. In return, Frank promises that there is nothing wrong with her, but rather that the fault, like a poison, lies within him. And yet Susan admits that Frank speaks in 'riddles' (2.2.118), evincing a mystery that is unreadable through natural observation. Despite her attempts at understanding Frank's alterations and aspects, Susan is unable to move from what she apprehends to read what lies underneath. In fact, Susan dismisses Frank's strange forecasts that he shall possess two wives: 'Such presages / Prove often false' (2.2.132-3). Susan lacks the ability to read seriously into the warnings that Frank provides, regardless of his admonition that 'we, as all things else, / Are mutable and changing' (2.2.143-4), referring to the body and the environment that the body inhabits. The environment and the seasons are fickle as well, but Susan again turns these climatic alterations back to her own domestic comfort: 'Yet you still move / In your first sphere of discontent. Sweet, chase / Those clouds of sorrow, and shine clearly on me' (2.2.145-147). Her paean to her husband, however, is misdirected on an object that is not the sun, but is rather a figuration or sign of the evil that poisons her marriage.

Susan and others also fail to understand the ways in which seasonal time determines their bodies' susceptibility to the influences foretold within Cuddy's almanacs. Almanacs in the period continually stressed the experiences of time upon the self. Indeed, as Alison Chapman notes, early modern almanacs came to articulate a moveable, malleable temporality: 'As the rise of the printing press and the decreasing cost of printed books in the sixteenth century made textual calendars more disposable, time itself came to seem more temporary. Calendars, and especially the calendars proliferating in almanacs, were more likely to be accurate only for a certain year'.⁴⁴ Given this relatively new specificity

⁴⁴ Chapman, 1270.

and changeability of the seasons, Cuddy's understanding of time, which he gains from an almanac, bears upon his reading of the preternatural environment:

Prithee, look but in the lover's almanac; when he has been but three days absent, "Oh," says he, "I have not seen my love these seven years. There's a long cut." When he comes to her again, and embraces her, "O" says he, "now methinks I am in heaven"; and that's a pretty step. (3.1.45-50)

The specified lover's almanac speaks to the progression of time and the signs therein; the experience of time is subjective and malleable because one can achieve a 'pretty step' in time by embracing a lover. Although there were no almanacs in the period devoted specifically to lovers, many almanacs do devote attention to lovers' bodies. Oronce Fine, for example, notes that when the moon is in conjunction with certain signs such as Libra it is 'not good to haue copulation with women'.⁴⁵ Cuddy, ironically, explicates a sophisticated understanding of differing experiences of time through his mocking reference to the lover's almanac, in which the emotions and desires of an individual can speed up or slow down temporal movement. Sawyer, however, is baffled by the movement of time towards her death, misunderstanding that the alteration of Dog from black to white presages the way in which time will now hurry her to the hangman's noose. As Dog gleefully announces, 'Thy time is come to curse, and rave, and die. / The glass of thy sins is full, and it must run out at gallows' (5.1.63-4).⁴⁶ The hourglass for Frank, as well, signals his end. As he prognosticates near the beginning of the play, 'No man can hide his shame from heaven that views him. / In vain he flees, whose destiny pursues him' (1.2.231-2). For Sawyer and Frank, the heavens look down upon their poor decisions of making sinful covenants in various forms. However one might fly from the running of the hourglass, both the sub- and main-plots prove that temporal alteration depends upon both the skies or 'heaven that views' one, rendering a type of cosmological judgment on the actions of humans, and the ways in which evil aspects or influences might propel one quickly to the grave.

Misreading of the skies, bodies, and the passions also affects secondary characters in the play, notably Warbeck and Somerton. Before they are arrested for the murder of Susan, Warbeck and Somerton are inexplicably moved by their bodily humours. Somerton tells

⁴⁵ Fine, F8r.

⁴⁶ Sawyer's realisation that her time to die is swiftly approaching mirrors Faustus's own growing sense of time's limitations and his coming doom: 'Hell calls for right and with a roaring voice / Says: "Faustus, come; thine hour is come"'; see Christopher Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus* (5.1.49-50), ed by David Scott Kastan (New York: Norton, 2005). Both characters, intimate with their demonic familiars, attempt to manipulate time to prevent what they realise is an unavoidable fate.

Sir Arthur Clarington that he is experiencing an unusual amount of melancholy, 'not ever thus leaden; yet I know / No cause for't' (3.4.9-10). Warbeck, too, cannot read into his humoural alteration: 'Now am I beyond / Mine own condition highly disposed to mirth' (3.4.11-12). Warbeck and Somerton realise that something odd is happening to their bodily passions, both humoural changes are described as unusual, supplanting their characteristic physical 'condition'. And yet, moments later both are charged falsely with murder and thus the inexplicable humoural change is a presaging sign of potential tragedy for these two characters. The audience understands these changes in Warbeck and Somerton's bodies as further signs of the permeating evil within the environment and bodies of Edmonton. With this interruption of the morris-dance, Sawgut's conclusion that 'the Devil has been abroad amongst us today' (3.4.70-71) is representative of more than one evil influence beyond that of Dog. The enigmatic atmosphere of evil within Edmonton also impinges on the bodies of Warbeck, Somerton, and even those at the morris-dance.

At the morris-dance Dog bewitches Sawgut's fiddle into not producing any sound for the fiddler, thus proving that Cuddy's earlier readings of almanacs have proven true, for an eclipse or darkening of the festivities has entered into the communal circle at Edmonton. Cuddy, like Bottom, comes to accept his partnership with a preternatural entity, for he relishes the mischief that Dog creates. Cuddy, in an aside, informs the audience that Sawgut's lack of playing is 'my ningle's knavery. Black Tom's doing' (3.4.40). Cuddy has developed a close, but nonetheless spiritually distant relationship with Dog, which in part enables his excising of Dog from Edmonton at the end of the play. By treating Dog as an animal instead of as a demonic familiar, Cuddy reframes the relationship between human self and external agents, in which the human body and soul are no longer the victims but rather masters of a subordinate creature. Tellingly, the clown is the one to excise the demonic from the re-harmonised community. In response to Dog's offer to serve Cuddy, he scornfully responds, 'No, I'll see thee hanged, thou shalt be damned first; I know thy qualities too well, I'll give no suck to such whelps; therefore henceforth I defy thee; out and avaunt' (5.1.183-5). Cuddy recognises the danger of allowing Dog to feed or suck of his own lifeblood, perhaps recalling the dangers of purging the body at certain times, as the almanac warns against. In his final interaction with Dog, Cuddy recognises the ways in which Dog has moved bodies and souls. Dog tells him that Sawyer is headed to her death, to which Cuddy astutely responds, 'Is she? In my conscience if she be, 'tis thou hast brought her to the gallows, Tom' (5.1.104-5). Cuddy now knows the consequences of communing with the devil and his agents, which in turn allows him to distance his body from the alterations caused by the preternatural environment and astrological evil throughout the play, foretold as they are in the almanacs and other forms of prognostication. In disavowing any future contact with Dog, Cuddy engages in a

preventative mode of interacting with the demonic, in which the body and self are closed off from its pernicious influence. Cuddy, understanding correctly the preternatural environment, works to re-establish a type of social order. Through reading the preternatural as part of the tragedies that can penetrate the village's bounds and social structures, Cuddy acquires a type of control over the demonic that Sawyer never has.

Cuddy reminds Dog, 'I entertained you ever as a dog, not as a Devil' (5.1.108-9), arguing that his treatment of Dog as an animal enables his detachment from the multifaceted ways in which the demonic inhabits the body and moves the passions in the play. In fact, Cuddy's own position as reader also allows for a type of moral aloofness from the power and desires of Dog. Cuddy, after learning how demonic spirits can inhabit corporeal bodies, thanks Dog for this additional knowledge: 'I thank thee for that, Tom; well, again I thank thee, Tom, for all this counsel; without a fee too. There's few lawyers of thy mind now. Certainly Tom, I begin to pity thee' (153-5). Cuddy's pity of Dog (whom he calls Tom) arises from his physical and spiritual distance from the harm that has appeared in the form of the demonic familiar, in the inexplicable changes to bodies, and in the failure of others to read the signs of the body and the skies for the impinging doom affecting nearly all bodies in *The Witch of Edmonton*.

Cuddy now knows the 'qualities' (5.1.184) of the demonic and environmental too well to allow them further scope in the town of Edmonton. Despite the uneasy conclusion of partnerships and retribution at the end of the play, Cuddy is the one who finally excises the demonic from the village, suggesting that his reading of almanacs and preternature—as an existing condition of the early modern cosmos—can provide the proper means for withstanding these forces. The heavens above and the planetary bodies do contain truth for those in Edmonton regarding the spectral and demonic influences upon their bodies. The problem, of course, is that many in the play ascribe these influences strictly to the social mechanisms of the town, reading communal structures and motives above and beyond the role that the heavens play in determining human susceptibility to evil. In discussing the play only in reference to social motivations for victimisation of outsiders or spurs to domestic crimes, scholars have overlooked an important component of the play's commentary on the multifaceted and intertwined influences upon individual *and* social bodies. By turning to early modern almanacs, we discover a more nuanced understanding of how the preternatural environment affects everyone despite the other social and cultural mechanisms at play. Early modern almanacs do not eschew the magical and demonic possibilities inherent in a preternatural world, but rather include the astral and the magical in an environment of mutually constitutive forces acting upon individual actors and larger social bodies. In taking seriously the prognosticative warnings in these texts, Cuddy acquires a type of percipience that allows him to withstand

the invasive influence of evil present in the stars, in Dog, and in the spirits that all possess the power to harm the villagers of Edmonton.