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FEELING UPSIDE DOWN

Witchcraft and exclusion in the twilight of early modern Spain*

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During those days ... the people were so moved that three more possessed souls emerged.¹

Individuals die; but collective bodies do not. The same passions are perpetuated, and their vehement malice, immortal as the fiend which inspires it, has always the same activity.²

A people is 'moved' to the point of 'not being responsible for preventing that which cannot be prevented', a 'frenetic' and 'ferocious' people is struck down by all manner of suffering, as if it were an individual. Such striking ideas and images compel us to reflect on the inter-related nature of personal and collective emotions.³ According to a report issued in 1814 by its legal representatives, the village of Tosos (Zaragoza) during the previous two years had descended into 'a hell where no order reigned, but instead everlasting disorder'. In the words of Mateo de León, the local parish priest, that 'time of confusion' and 'revolution' had posed a grave risk to his life and the lives of all those who had dared confront the will of the majority, since 'the ferocity of a people tramples on all laws'.⁴

At this time Spain was in the throes of the Peninsular War against the armies of Napoleon (1808–1813). Moreover, these were 'revolutionary' years, marking the beginning of the end of the country's *Ancien Régime*⁵;

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for while the ceding of sovereignty by Charles IV and Ferdinand VII to Napoleon had been legally irreproachable, the Spanish saw it as an imposition. After the uprising of May 1808, therefore, they adopted the principle of national sovereignty for the first time in their history, establishing their own governmental bodies quite separate from the official authority embodied in the figure of Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's brother. The local ruling body, or assembly, set up in Tosos was named the *Junta de Probidad* (Assembly of Probitity), since its members were all supposedly honest and morally upright individuals.⁶ According to General Palafox,⁷ these kinds of assemblies constituted 'a sort of urban militia made up of leading local citizens and other honest folk', whose role was to keep in check those who threatened to disturb the peace of the community and who had become accustomed to saying: 'today there's no justice, there's no mayor to order us around'.⁸

The broader context of the war years, therefore, created a kind of emotional breeding-ground for rebellion, as is revealed in some of the seditious attitudes displayed by the lower classes at the time. For example, this is the response given in 1808 by a patroller in another Aragonese village to the bailiff who had threatened him on account of his scandalous behaviour: 'To hell with it, there's no king here, we're all one. I'll never go to jail unless they drag me or drug me'.⁹ The events that took place in Tosos have to be seen in the context of this new politically aware and emotionally charged atmosphere. However, these trends were present throughout Spain and are not enough in themselves to explain the emotional specificity of the model under examination. This is where the dialectic between the general and the specific (or, to narrow down our focus, between a given community and some of its individual members) plays a key role.¹⁰

The report issued by the *Assembly of Probitity* stated: 'that which took place in this village of Tosos in the recent past is undoubtedly the most extraordinary case ever seen'.¹¹ While the individual roots of the collective emotion that swept through the population of Tosos between 1812 and 1814 extended some way back, the scandal began at a specific time on a specific day, and it was no coincidence that the date in question was that of one of the most important festivals in the Catholic calendar, *Corpus Christi*. To quote the Assembly's report again:

In the year 1812, on the evening of the feast of *Corpus Christi* ... there appeared in the procession eight possessed women ... making the same grimaces and violent gestures as are usually made by those who have been placed under an evil spell. All the people at once believed this to be real, and this with the approval of the physicians, who confirmed it to be so. The priest did at first think it the effect of extreme exaltation and overheated blood ... and made efforts to treat them at the time. But all was in vain, since this disease spread such that, eight days having passed, there

were thirty-two who said they had been cursed, and thus this village became a hell where no order reigned, but instead everlasting disorder.¹²

From the start, there were obviously two radically opposed versions of events. Much of the population steadfastly believed that the Devil had taken possession of several of the villagers (most of them women), and that the person responsible was one of their neighbours, Joaquina Martínez, whom they dubbed a witch and sorceress, which would mean her exclusion from the village. On the other hand, the representatives of the new assembly felt that the majority of those involved were faking their possession and that some were either ill or insane. Using the medical terminology of the day, some of the women were labelled 'excitable hysterics', carried away by a 'damaged and overwrought' imagination.¹³

While the possessed women's bodies were wracked by violent movements—described as 'uncontrolled gestures and contortions', 'furious displays'¹⁴—some of the few men who claimed to have fallen victim directed their violence against the alleged witch herself. One of these men went twice to Joaquina's house armed with a knife and an axe and fully intending to kill her. However, he confined himself to breaking down the door and throwing much of her furniture and personal belongings out into the street. This and other such episodes of aggression meant the definitive exclusion of the accused as a witch, since eventually Joaquina and her family had to leave the village without any possibility of return.

As the situation worsened, and it became impossible for the parish priest, Mateo de León, to meet the constant demands for exorcism from the possessed women and their families, Mateo wrote to the bishop of Huesca for advice.¹⁵ The bishop's implacable response did nothing, however, to calm the situation. The symptoms of 'those involved in the incident', he wrote, were very ambiguous and might simply have been due to natural causes. Therefore it was necessary

not to continue with the exorcisms, but to tell the parents of the young girls and the husbands of the married women to set them to work, in such a way as not to allow them one minute of idleness. That they should take them to the nearest river or stream and bathe them more frequently than usual, giving them food only in moderation. In case of disobedience or any trouble at home, they should lock them up or punish them. If they caused a commotion in the church or the street, those persons responsible for law and order should seize them and escort them to the public jail, where they should be given nothing but bread and water for three or four days. They should not be released until they agree to mend their ways, and they should never be allowed to agitate the people again on this or any other pretext.¹⁶

In an attempt to comply with this order, the parish priest of Tosos decided to convene a meeting with the relevant husbands and fathers at his home. He read the bishop's letter to them and tried to convince them to behave as the bishop suggested. But the men

started to rise up and shout: Our daughters are already suffering the evil imposed on them by God or the Devil, and we are to add to their torment by locking them up or putting them to work ...! This we shall not do, whoever may order it! They will leave the house whenever they want, they will go to the church, which is the house of us all ... If they should shout and cause uproar, let them shout and cause uproar! And if the forces of justice or the church should lay a hand on them, we will break their necks.¹⁷

That same day, the women claiming to be possessed gathered in front of the priest's house armed with sticks and stones, shouting:

Kill him, kill him! He is to blame for the evil afflicting us, he has the remedy in the sacristy and he doesn't want to use it because he is convinced we are mad and not under a spell!¹⁸

So violent were their threats that the priest, in an act similar to self-exile, or rather self-exclusion, fled in fear of his life to the neighbouring village of Villanueva de Huerva and stayed there for the next three months. According to the report produced a year later by the secular authorities at the request of the archbishop of Zaragoza, anarchy ruled during those months, with everyone living 'just as they pleased':

there was no human force to restrain these madwomen, far less their friends and relatives, who clung with such obstinacy to the belief that their wives and daughters were possessed that they would have killed anyone who said otherwise.¹⁹

Conflicting emotional styles

According to an explanatory model embedded in a language of demonic possession, which would ultimately be upheld by most of the villagers, the emotional disturbances experienced by many of the neighbours at this time were caused by evil spells and demons invoked by the woman accused of witchcraft, Joaquina Martínez. The solution, therefore, was to expel her from the village and to look to the clergy to carry out exorcisms as necessary. The agreement by the villagers that the violent threats of these women towards the parish priest was the result of bewitchment, for which the women themselves had no responsibility, as well as their approval of the violent action taken against Joaquina, present a marked contrast to the stance adopted by the ecclesiastical authorities in general, and the episcopal court in particular.

The explanatory model of the ecclesiastical authorities, with its appeal to the language of reason and enlightenment, dictated that most of the afflicted were faking their possession; in fact, the real superstition lay in believing in their trickery, specifically the accusation of witchcraft levelled at Joaquina. Only thus

can we explain the fact that, two centuries on from the end of the 'witch-hunt' in Tosos and most of Spain, and as if in a 'looking-glass world', we find ourselves dealing not with a witch trial, that is, a case brought against an alleged witch, but with a trial of those supposedly possessed and bent on blaming Joaquina for their ill fortune. The episcopal court decided to treat them rather than Joaquina as criminals for threatening the life of a woman whose supposed magical powers had in no way been proven and for justifying their behaviour on the grounds that they were not responsible for their own actions.

Clearly, the highest authorities of the Church no longer believed in witchcraft.²⁰ In an earlier period, they had gone so far as to encourage the idea that certain women, aided by the Devil, had the power to harm others, but such ideas were now regarded as merely remnants of superstitions believed only by the ignorant—irrational, fraudulent beliefs. The concept of "superstition" had done an about-turn: instead of designating false religion, that dangerous enemy against which Catholicism had fought on equal terms two centuries earlier, it now implied an absurd way of thinking that could only be explained (according to the ecclesiastical authorities) by the lower classes' extreme poverty and lack of education. According to the Church's new perspective, far removed from the views it had once shared with its parishioners,²¹ the only thing the possessed and their supporters needed was the right religious education.

The episcopal judges, far from considering Joaquina to be a witch, described her as a 'God-fearing woman who frequents the sacraments'.²² Hence their principal objective was to 'convince the villagers' that they should 'banish any idea of witchcraft'.²³ As the archbishop's prosecutor stated, having heard the witnesses' testimony:

This Martínez is a good woman ... and there is nothing to be held against her on the basis of the indiscreet conversations and suspicions of ignorant people. The prosecutor believes she should be freed and cleared of any suspicion of enchantment or fraud. But because this matter, if it is to be remedied sensibly and soundly, needs the learning of a good pastor who can correct the opinion of these simple people ... the prosecutor considers it essential to assign this job to the priest of Tosos.²⁴

The conflict that broke out in Tosos demonstrates that two opposing explanatory models concerning the reality of witchcraft coexisted well into the nineteenth century: one followed by those who believed in it, the other by those who did not. These two explanatory models were closely linked to two types of emotionality, one old and one new, as expressed in the words used by Pedro Valero, Auxiliary Bishop of Zaragoza, in summing up the attitude of the villagers:

A village of people most of whom are inconsiderate and unprincipled, taken up by a somewhat outdated preoccupation and enthusiasm.²⁵

Valero was referring to antiquated emotions, not ideas, and yet the close connection between the two brings us to the most recent studies in the field of cognitive psychology, according to which emotions cannot be separated from the mental world of thoughts, beliefs, and hopes.²⁶ The intimate relationship between thought and emotion (emotions as ‘upheavals of thought’, ‘emotionally held thoughts’, ‘embodied thoughts’²⁷) also tells us something about the cultural construction of emotions, as ‘overlearned cognitive habits’ (which explains the fact that they may be involuntary in the short term).²⁸ Hence the importance of the most recent studies on emotions in history, a new field of historical study that has obvious points of contact with other, more familiar disciplines, such as psychology or sociology. Taken to its ultimate conclusion, the idea of emotional styles would leave no room for any ‘natural’ or instinctive emotion,²⁹ in other words any emotion that might run counter to reason/civilization.

In Tosos, it was the minority educated class, in particular the members of the high clergy, who worked with the episcopal court and by this time no longer believed in witchcraft. They, along with a few other individuals (such as the doctor), manifested a rational, distant stance—one that would be characterized as cold, emotionally speaking. The rest of the villagers, meanwhile, were clearly very much inclined, if not to believe implicitly in witchcraft, at least to drive away the woman they believed to be the cause of the demonic possession. Significantly, the attitude of ecclesiastical representatives varied according to their relative proximity to the scene.

For Pedro Valero, Auxiliary Bishop of Zaragoza, who never visited the village but confined himself to passing judgement from his office, the explanation was simple: fraud or simulation. In the letter Valero wrote on hearing of the events in Tosos, he stated that those affected were merely ‘people who, pretending to be possessed, are causing a disturbance and destroying the peace of mind of others’.³⁰ A year later, after receiving witness statements and other information from the envoy he sent out to investigate the matter, his opinion had not altered in the slightest, as is clear from this letter the archbishop’s representative addressed to Mateo de León, the parish priest:

Reverend Father: I have received the documents regarding the affair of the possessed in this village. Some may be driven by malice, some by madness, others by stupidity; but in all cases I am sure that the possession is false, and I am equally certain that the Martínez woman is not guilty of witchcraft. For it is not to be believed that God has put at her disposal a host of devils, to be passed on to anyone she wishes.³¹

The letter to the parish priest continued in an arrogant and ironic tone. Expeditious rather than instructive, his words displayed his complete ignorance of the situation, of the disorder caused by the demoniacs:

I understand that a young man of this village, being in the army, attempted to behave as if possessed; the corporal, knowing his trick, exorcized him with a good thrashing. When he did it again, the corporal increased the treatment and, with no further ado, the devils vanished. The same will happen with those others; they pay no heed to my ben-evolent decree ... Therefore it will be necessary to call on the secular authorities, who will be informed about the people causing these disturb-ances. Then the devils will leave them, with punishment, just as they did the soldier.³²

The local parish priest, however, had a quite different perspective on the matter. He had heard with his own ears the yells and shrieks uttered by eight of his parishioners during the *Corpus Christi* procession; he had seen with his own eyes their 'unmeasured contorsions and gestures', and had seen the ceremony designed to praise the Blessed Sacrament profaned by the 'indecorous and insult-ing ... [and] furious demonstrations' of the women supposedly possessed.³³ From the parish priest's viewpoint, the entire population had been caught up by the emotion of such excesses, and more seriously still, in a process of gradual empathy or emotional identification with those appearing to be possessed,³⁴ the evil had spread like wildfire—within the space of a week as many as thirty-two villagers (mostly women) had declared themselves possessed by the Devil. The priest felt it was his responsibility, at least in the spiritual domain, to find a cure for these ills.

Given the circumstances, and because he was the one charged with the 'care of souls' in the village, the parish priest devoted himself for several days to exorcising those who sought his help, aided by Fray José de la Huerta, the friar who worked as his assistant. Meanwhile, the parish priest had written to the bishop of Huesca for advice, as I indicate above.³⁵ But in spite of the prelate's consequent orders to stop the exorcisms immediately, on the assumption that this was all nonsense and that what those involved needed was to be disciplined (bathed, locked up, punished and, above all, set to work and not allowed 'one minute of idleness'³⁶), the parish priest had no choice but to continue with the exorcisms. After the priest's initial attempt to do as the bishop said, by trying to convince the families of those affected to put his advice into practice, many of the villa-gers turned against him and threatened to murder him. The situation then escal-ated when the women concerned, along with their relatives, 'rose up and surrounded his house, armed with sticks and stones, shrieking like madwomen'³⁷ that, if he did not continue to carry out the exorcisms, they would kill him. To that end, 'they began throwing stones at the doors and windows'.³⁸ In the face of such violence, the priest, who was inside the house at the time and 'who certainly believed that day to be the last of his life', had no option but to 'flee through a dug-out door' to the nearby village of Villa-nueva de Huerva, 5.6 kilometres away, where he took refuge for the next three months, with the bishop's approval.

On the same day as the attack on the priest's house, Julián de Gracia, a fanatical young man, tried to kill Joaquina with a knife and an axe, prompting Pedro Valero, Zaragoza's auxiliary bishop, to order the mayor of Tosos to take all those supposedly possessed into custody. They were not arrested, however, and Joaquina and her husband, Miguel Pascual, therefore decided that they too had to leave Tosos and move to Villanueva de la Huerva. Despite their pleas to the bishop to help them return home, the situation remained unresolved. Indeed, it gradually worsened, since all parties became more and more entrenched in their attitudes. In January 1814, once all the inquiries he had ordered had been carried out (gathering information, questioning witnesses), the archbishop reached the conclusion that Joaquina was not a witch (and was free of all 'suspicion of enchantment or fraud'³⁹) and that, therefore, she had every right to return to the village, as soon as peace had been restored there.

The following month, however, the mayor of Tosos, the Assembly of Probity, and the parish priest together presented a report to the archbishop, asking him to leave things as they stood. Their main objective was to ensure that Joaquina did not return under any circumstances. As the report stated, although the village had gone through some very serious times, the storm had abated, and it would simply be tempting fate to allow her back:

The village continued in the midst of that disorder and confusion for three or four months ... Yet in the end this frenzy began to calm down a little ... and since that time ... the village has become as calm as a mill-pond ... when before it was an inferno, especially on feast days.⁴⁰

The different perspectives of the Tosos parish priest and the representative of the archbishop of Zaragoza, Pedro Valero, tell us something about the key importance of emotional spaces, in this case, the rural space as opposed to the urban. The fact is that different members of the clergy defined themselves not so much by their ideological identification with the directives of the Catholic Church as by the geographical area in which they worked. The central feature of the stance adopted by the city-dwelling bishops was scepticism. As Pedro Valero wrote, 'our Holy Religion ... abominates and detests all kinds of superstition'⁴¹. In most rural communities, it was parish priests who lived side by side with their parishioners and acted as intermediaries between the emerging educated class and the working classes.

There was a third group within the clergy, however, also based in the countryside, whose members encouraged and indeed perpetuated the old ways of thinking. These were the friars, who specialized in carrying out exorcisms at Spain's many rural shrines.⁴² One that attracted a particularly large number of pilgrims seeking a cure for possession—a tradition documented since at least as far back as the sixteenth century—was the Santo Cristo shrine in Calatorao, a village some thirty kilometres north of Tosos. There, it was believed that the miraculous power of the crucifix, together with the

exorcisms performed by those in charge of the shrine, could cure the possessed who had made pilgrimages not only from neighbouring regions, but from all over Europe.

According to the 1814 report issued by the mayor, the priest, and the Assembly of Probity, the prevailing attitude towards those claiming to be possessed had at first been one of incredulity. However, after one of the women had travelled to Calatorao, most of the villagers underwent a radical change of mind. The young woman in question experienced a miraculous cure, in full view of many witnesses, sweeping away any lingering doubts as to the veracity of the women's claims. The people of Tosos, educated or not, became increasingly convinced that 'their' possessed were genuine:

There is no doubt that in this village there are some women who are truly possessed and bewitched. At first this was thought to be but a fantasy, yet now it has been proved by that which happened to one of them in the village of Calatorao. Joaquina García, unmarried, a native of Tosos, alleged to be possessed, went to that Holy Chapel with her parents and others. The priest began his exorcism, and she to make her usual violent movements. But finally, thanks to the power of the spell ... she stripped off her shirt from her body as quickly and forcefully as a ray of light shines down through a cloud. Her outer garments remained intact. This made a powerful impression on all present. The shirt was taken and folded and hung in the chapel as a memorial of the miracle wrought by the divine Jesus Christ.⁴³

Each of the two conflicting explanations of the events in Tosos had in its own way, therefore, been ratified, and there seemed no prospect of them ever being reconciled. While the episcopal court's investigations constituted palpable 'proof' of fraud for those arguing that the possessed were faking their affliction, the miracle at Calatorao was equally convincing for those who believed the claims of possession to be genuine.⁴⁴ Well into the nineteenth century, in a situation of widespread disorder, however rational and enlightened the language used by the bishops, what ultimately prevailed in this case was the language of witchcraft, which had claimed so many victims in previous centuries.⁴⁵ This language implied regulating human relationships in accordance with certain assumptions, but it was also a way of justifying certain unacknowledged emotions.⁴⁶

Veiling emotions

To understand the origins of the outbreak of collective emotion in Tosos, it is necessary to narrow our focus somewhat. At the root of the entire conflict lay a relationship between two women: Joaquina and Antonia. In line with the classic witch's profile, Joaquina was poor and not native to the village. Originally

from Villanueva de Huerva, she had come to Tosos some years earlier with her family in search of a new life. According to the Assembly of Probity's 1814 report rejecting Joaquina's request to move back to Tosos:

This Joaquina Martínez is a native of Villanueva. She grew up in extreme poverty and distress, and came to Tosos with a large family. There she was given the job of taking care of the village stables. She remained in this job for some years and she recently rented the shop. This certainly ensured that she had enough to eat. But all her properties do not exceed 200 dineros, and she can work this property and these lands, due to their closeness to Tosos, while remaining in Villanueva.⁴⁷

When her situation was financially precarious, Joaquina was accepted into the community and, as several witnesses stated, she became very friendly with Antonia Ramo, among others. However, at some point, these women all turned against her. In 1817, the priest Francisco Marcos put together a report on life in the village over the five years since the first outbreak of demonic possession:

During the French rule some disagreements arose in the village, the most well known being that between [Antonia] Ramo and [Joaquina] Martínez ... both shopkeepers and involved in the sale of goods. Each became envious about the other's abilities to sell her merchandise, and Ramo said that Martínez had sold a bewitched cheese and that all those eating it would become possessed. It happened that, at that time, either through fear of the French or for reasons known only to the doctors, many women and some men suffered some kind of affliction causing them to make extraordinary gestures which, because people were anxious and because it was in Ramo's interest to encourage the idea of possession, were seen as proof of such. Martínez's life was threatened, and she had to move to Villanueva de Huerva, where she currently resides.⁴⁸

It is clear, therefore, that the accusation of evil-doing levelled at Joaquina had been dreamt up by Antonia. Both women sold foodstuffs in the village and a claim that Joaquina had sold 'a bewitched cheese' was the perfect way for Antonia to put an end to her competition. According to Joaquina, Antonia also owed her money and did not want to repay it, which would be reason enough for her to oppose Joaquina's return to Tosos. This was mentioned in the letter sent by Joaquina and her husband Miguel Pascual to the archbishop of Zaragoza's representative:

The said [Antonia] Ramo has for years owed Miguel Pascual and his wife twenty-four duros, and it is in her interest to appear to be suffering so that they do not return to the village and ask for this debt to be repaid.⁴⁹

We have no other evidence to confirm whether Antonia really owed Joaquina money. What is beyond doubt is the fact that once Antonia's tale began to spread, so too did the animosity towards Joaquina, soon taking the form of threats against her life. In September 1813, Manuel Pascual Bernard, a priest in the neighbouring village of Cariñena, was commissioned by the archbishop of Zaragoza to investigate the case. Like a real detective, he travelled undercover to Tosos and Villanueva de Huerva to carry out his enquiries, before questioning the key individuals. One of his earliest conclusions was that 'the expression "we're going to kill the witch" ... has gradually spread with the affliction, passing from one person to another'.⁵⁰

Joaquina had been threatened repeatedly, but she always managed to escape at the last moment. In his report of December 1813, Monsignor Bernard highlighted two particularly significant episodes, which, in his view, provided sufficient grounds to recommend that Joaquina never return to Tosos. Both events were proof positive of the tremendous hostility harboured by the villages against Joaquina ever since the rumour that she was a witch had begun to spread. The ill-feeling even went beyond the village bounds: 'A young soldier ... because his sister had bled to death, became so obsessed and worked up that he rode to Villanueva brandishing a sword in order to kill Joaquina. Miraculously, she somehow managed to escape'.⁵¹ In another incident 'three men went to the same village with deadly intent to ensnare her, but fortunately when they tried to make off with her to kill her, their plan was thwarted'.⁵²

Although these violent events called out for 'just and exemplary punishment', Bernard took them more as a warning, and as sound reason for advising in no uncertain terms that Joaquina never return, not only for her own protection, but also and more importantly, for the sake of maintaining 'public peace and quiet'.⁵³ From the priestly detective's point of view, regardless of her magical powers or lack of them, Joaquina was largely responsible for the situation in which she found herself, partly because of her difficult nature and partly because of her conduct when the outbreak of possession first occurred:

Joaquina has brought her shunning and disgrace upon herself ... due to her readiness at the beginning ... to take those concerned to her home, even lying in the same bed with them, applying relics to them and offering to cure their affliction.⁵⁴

In other words, like many other popular exorcists who operated without licence from the bishop (as in the Cristo de Calatorao sanctuary), Joaquina had tried to expel the demons from the possessed herself, employing her own personal methods. As well as the spiritual remedies commonly used by Church-approved exorcists, such as words (conversations with the devil lodged in the body of the possessed women) or holy objects (applying relics), Joaquina had used other definitely corporeal remedies (caressing or touching the intimate parts of the afflicted). This was not in itself exceptional: orgasm as a cure for

possession remained part of certain popular exorcism rituals in Spain until relatively recently.⁵⁵

It may be that Joaquina's forceful character and demonstrations of power played a part in the fact that her patients ultimately turned on her.⁵⁶ Francisco Marcos's 1817 report described Joaquina as a 'religious woman of good conduct'; but it also acknowledged her combative disposition and added that 'her nickname was "Bate Cargas"' (old Battle-Axe).⁵⁷ Whatever the truth of the matter, the collective hatred displayed towards Joaquina undoubtedly stemmed from the unacknowledged personal enmity of Antonia Ramo, the principal instigator of the events that unfolded in Tosos. She and Joaquina had of course once been close friends. Antonia's unwillingness to admit that this friendship had turned to undeclared loathing, her denial of the grudge she bore against Joaquina, is tellingly revealed in her choice of words when she was questioned by the archbishop's envoy. It is disturbing that, after accusing Joaquina of being wholly responsible for the evil spells that had caused such unhappiness, Antonia concluded her testimony by stating that none of her declarations stemmed from 'enmity or hatred, that she certainly harbours neither in her heart, since they were friends, and she is always disposed to support her in as much as she could'.⁵⁸

Similarly, Julián Gracia, the young man who had tried more than once to murder Joaquina, would claim when he was questioned:

he says nothing against the said Joaquina, nor does he have reason to do so, believing her as he does to be a good woman. And that he, not wishing her any ill, would have no problem speaking to ... and even eating with her. And not feeling any hatred or rancour against her, he would be happy were she able to return to the village, because he believes his affliction was sent to him by God and the Lord himself will remove it according to his will.⁵⁹

According to testimony given by a Tosos doctor, Don Ignacio Burillo, each time Antonia had been 'reprimanded for her irregular behaviour and ravings', she always replied that she had been 'a very good friend of said Joaquina', that she still was her friend, that she wished her well in every way, and 'that what she says and does against Joaquina she cannot help, for God is telling her to do it'.⁶⁰ Her systematic denial of any envy or dislike of her former friend was couched, therefore, in this kind of providentialist language, enabling her to justify any aggression as being involuntary on her part.

The intense emotions experienced by Antonia and her consequent violent, uncontrolled conduct clearly came from an inner, unresolved conflict between love and hate. There are many references in the trial documents to the extreme states of mind that overwhelmed her whenever she saw or spoke to Joaquina, or even just thought about her. Some of the most notable of these are 'drowsiness', 'anguish' or 'affliction', 'suffocation' and 'oppression', 'heat', or more ambiguously

and generally, what one of her neighbours classed in his testimony as 'vehement passion'. According to Antonio Mainar, an inhabitant of Tosos, he had always considered Antonia to be a woman

of known Christianity, God-fearing and on good terms with all ... And that, being such a friend of Joaquina, he cannot persuade himself that [that which she has done against her] can be due to enmity or hatred towards her, nor to malicious pretence, [but] to a vehement passion and the heat of her imagination.⁶¹

There is no more interesting insight into Antonia's inner world and the way in which she herself experienced her heightened feelings, emotions, or passions than the report written by Bernard after he had met and questioned her. A few days after travelling undercover to Tosos and Villanueva, in mid-September 1813, he decided to summon Antonia and her husband to his church in Carriñena in order to speak to them in the presence of the parish priest and another cleric. According to Bernard, this meeting was arranged 'with the greatest caution and discretion' since it was thought that what emerged would prove to be 'the origins of the affair'.⁶²

Antonia's testimony, which included references to both visual and auditory hallucinations, as well as to 'higher impulses', would today lead us to deduce that she was suffering from a condition of disordered consciousness labelled by some psychiatrists as a 'twilight state'.⁶³ According to recent research, the most characteristic aspect of this condition is a narrowing of the consciousness owing to

a heightened emotional state that colours the individual's personal experiences in such a way that it gives the impression that the subject's entire psychic activity is centred only on that which is related to his or her anger, anxiety, hatred, etc.⁶⁴

Antonia's intense and conflicting emotions initially manifested themselves, in fact, in the form of visual and auditory hallucinations directly related to the matter with which she was obsessed. As Bernard's report states:

[Antonia] felt an inner agitation and melancholy that she could not kneel and give the Lord due adoration ... And then she heard a voice that said: 'Antonia, now will appear before you the three people who trouble and frighten you, between these walls, without your seeing them!' And at the same time, she felt impelled to cry aloud: 'Antonia, you will now be cured, but the other women will not if the sorceress does not pay the penalty: the evil is behind you. One of the three is behind you (this meaning Joaquina Martínez). The other is outside the village (this meaning Joaquina's husband). And the deceived girl is at home (this meaning María Manuela Zaragoza, spinster and niece of the aforementioned husband and wife)!'⁶⁵

This auditory illusion, according to Antonia, was then confirmed by a vision, since 'in the very act of lifting the host there appeared before her clearly and distinctly another three people within the circumference of the host itself.'⁶⁶

The two hallucinations gave Antonia courage to stand and go towards the altar, 'letting out shrieks and great yells', and then 'such violent blows with both hands' that the celebrant, afraid that the holy wine might be spilled, 'asked that they remove her from that place'.⁶⁷ According to Antonia's account, she had only gone to the altar to touch the stone, returning immediately to her seat 'tranquil and serene, although tired and weary'. And then she had heard another voice that said to her: 'Now you have to tell her you forgive her for the trespasses, but not for the damages, and that she must forgive you in return'.⁶⁸ Antonia told how, guided by this latest 'voice', she had left the church and, on meeting Joaquina in the street, had asked her forgiveness. That made her think that 'her spirit had been made quiet and that in future she would be able to visit and speak with Joaquina'.⁶⁹ Nonetheless,

with much feeling, she has never been able to endure her presence and still cannot bear it. And thus, the very fact that Joaquina might be in the village or within its boundaries ... or if she has to pass through the village of Villanueva, where Joaquina now lives, she feels the same discomfort and disturbances as when she actually sees her.⁷⁰

Once Bernard had finished questioning Antonia at the Cariñena church, he took her home. As he would relate afterwards, Antonia there suffered a recurrence of her 'condition', a clouding of the vision that the language of psychiatry would probably associate with a state of 'morbid somnolence' or an episode of 'partial amnesia', both characteristic of a 'twilight state':

That very day Antonia Ramo ... suddenly appeared to be overcome by a kind of lethargy, suggesting some kind of anguish or affliction that seemed to have robbed her of her senses. It did not last very long and once she had come back to her senses, she said she heard when they were calling her but could not reply, adding that the same thing had happened to her many times, notably on naming her enemy or if they were praying for Joaquina and her husband. And that therefore, on saying a paternoster at Mass for those in a state of mortal sin she felt obliged to shout aloud: 'Except for two, they being Joaquina and her husband!' "And that if she sometimes wanted to restrain herself, she suffered such stifling oppression that in the end she had to utter the words."⁷¹

According to Fray José de la Huerta, the assistant to the parish priest of Tosos, the 'nonsense and ravings' uttered by Antonia, a Christian woman of unblemished character, who only appeared to be 'beyond herself' when the

subject of Joaquina arose, were not those of a 'sane woman', nor could they be the 'effect of whim, nor a malicious pretence', but could only be the product of a 'disturbed imagination'.⁷² It is hardly surprising that having completed his investigation, during the course of which he had questioned various neighbours, including several priests and the doctor, Bernard judged Antonia's behaviour to be irrefutable proof of insanity. That led him to discount any attempt to commit deliberate fraud: 'She is afflicted by a partial insanity, at least with respect to the matters and issues dealt with here'.⁷³

Antonia's contradictory and tormented emotional state combined two defence mechanisms that have been the subject of a great deal of research in Freudian psychology: negation and projection.⁷⁴ During the 'witch-hunts' of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, the great majority of accusations of witchcraft did no more than attribute to the supposedly guilty women—genuine scapegoats—feelings that the accusers refused to acknowledge within themselves. In contrast to the complexity of Antonia's emotional conflicts, the case of Julián de Gracia is a transparent example of how the mechanism of projection worked when it came to accusing someone of witchcraft. Young Julián, who in the words of a worker who gave evidence at the trial, was 'a young lad of very little spirit', had tried to kill Joaquina more than once. So afraid was he of being hurt by the woman said in the village to be a witch, that instead of waiting to see whether she was truly dangerous, he decided to attack her first. According to his own testimony, 'taking up a hatchet, he went to the house of the said Joaquina'.⁷⁵

It may be that the aggression directed at Joaquina was, to some extent, attributable to her character and conduct. Nonetheless, the surviving testimony as to the unrelenting persecution to which she was subjected would suggest that this violence arose more from a need to find a way of relieving psychologically based conflicts at a time of particular social and political tension. Whatever the level of responsibility of the parties involved, the fact is that, in spite of the archbishop of Zaragoza's enlightened efforts 'to banish ideas of witchcraft from the village' and defend Joaquina from the harassment of her persecutors, the trial did nothing to solve the problem. Over and above *personal emotions* and interpersonal conflicts, the 1812 outbreak of demonic possession, with all it entailed, has something to say to us about the critical importance of *collective emotions*, a field of study ripe for exploration and one that invites us to reflect on the undeniable reciprocity between passion and civilisation.

Notes

- 1 Autos de Oficio sobre los Energúmenos de Tosos, Procesos civiles modernos, caja 7, n° 10, fol. 21v, Archivo Diocesano de Zaragoza. For a complete translation of the trial proceedings, see María Tausiet, *Los posesos de Tosos (1812–1814). Brujería y justicia popular en tiempos de revolución* (Zaragoza: Instituto Aragonés de Antropología, 2002), 91–163.
- 2 *The Confessions of J.J. Rousseau: with The Reveries of a Solitary Walker*. Translated from the French (London, 1783), 2:150. The translation is from the original French work of

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (Première promenade), written between 1776 and 1778 and posthumously published in 1782 in incomplete form.
- 3 See Daniel Bar-Tal, Eran Halperin, and Joseph de Rivera, "Collective Emotions in Conflict Situations: Societal Implications," *Journal of Social Issues* 63, no.2 (2007): 441–60.
 - 4 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 129–39.
 - 5 During the See Jean-René Aymes, *La guerre d'indépendance espagnole (1808–1814)* (Paris: Bordas, 1973); Gabriel H. Lovett, *Napoleon and the Birth of Modern Spain* (New York: New York University Press, 1965); David Gates, *The Spanish Ulcer: A History of the Peninsular War* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), and Ronald Fraser, *Napoleon's Cursed War: Spanish Popular Resistance in the Peninsular War, 1808–1814* (London: Verso, 2008).
 - 6 *Junta* was the name chosen by several local administrations formed in Spain during the Peninsular War as patriotic alternatives to the official administration toppled by the French invaders. They were usually formed by adding prominent members of society, such as prelates, to the already-existing *ayuntamientos* (town councils). They were neither revolutionary nor democratically elected.
 - 7 José de Palafox (1776–1847) was proclaimed by the people governor of Zaragoza and captain-general of Aragon at the beginning of the Peninsular War in 1808. Despite his lack of money and regular troops, he declared war against the French and sustained two memorable sieges in Zaragoza, an antiquated fortress short on munitions and supplies, but extraordinarily resistant thanks to its inhabitants, who resolved to contest possession of the remaining quarters of the city inch by inch.
 - 8 Draft of a letter by José de Palafox to Salvador de Campos, 8 June 1808, Archivo de General Palafox (hereafter AGP), C. 14, 2–128, Archivo Municipal de Zaragoza (hereafter AMZ), quoted in Herminio Lafoz Rabaza, *La Guerra de la Independencia en Aragón. Del motín de Aranjuez a la capitulación de Zaragoza* (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1996), 88.
 - 9 Mayor of Tosos to Palafox, 28 June 1808, AGP, C. 46, 5–89, AMZ, quoted in Lafoz Rabaza, *La guerra de la independencia*, 88.
 - 10 See Shinobu Kitayama and Hazel Rose Markus, eds, *Emotion and Culture: Empirical Studies of Mutual Influence* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1994); Diane M. Mackie, Thierry Devos and Eliot R. Smith, "Intergroup Emotions: Explaining Offensive Actions in an Intergroup Context," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79 (2000): 602–16, and Diane M. Mackie and Eliot R. Smith, *From Prejudice to Intergroup Emotions* (New York: Psychology Press, 2002).
 - 11 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 128.
 - 12 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 128–29.
 - 13 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 93 and 102.
 - 14 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 150.
 - 15 See Antonio Durán Gudiol, "Las diócesis de Huesca y Jaca," *Argensola: Revista de Ciencias Sociales del Instituto de Estudios Altoaragoneses* 109 (1995): 25–38.
 - 16 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 129. Similar advice had been given at the time of the notorious epidemic of possession in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692 and would appear again in nineteenth-century Europe with regard to other cases of collective possession, such as that declared in 1857 in the French village of Morzine, Haute-Savoie. See John Demos, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); William H. Cooke, *Justice at Salem: Reexamining the Witch Trials* (Annapolis: Undertaker Press, 2009); Ruth Harris, "Possession on the Borders: The 'Mal de Morzine' in Nineteenth-Century France," *The Journal of Modern History* 69 (1997): 451–78; Jacqueline Carroy, *Le Mal de Morzine: De la Possession à l'Hystérie* (Paris: Solin, 1981).
 - 17 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 130.
 - 18 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 131.

- 19 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 132.
- 20 Various testimonies survive showing that scepticism towards the existence of witchcraft began to appear among the high clergy in Spain as early as the sixteenth century. See María Tausiet, *Ponzoña en los ojos. Brujería y superstición en Aragón en el siglo XVI* (Madrid: Turner, 2004), 166.
- 21 While in early modern Europe it was still possible to talk of a popular culture more or less common to all social classes, by the nineteenth century a gap had clearly emerged between the educated classes and the rest of the population. This division was particularly obvious when it came to beliefs concerning witchcraft and the wider concept of superstition. See Bernard Traimond, *Le pouvoir de la maladie. Magie et politique dans les landes de Gascogne (1750–1826)* (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires, 1988), 17–33.
- 22 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 115.
- 23 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 152.
- 24 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 115–16.
- 25 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 99.
- 26 See Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3–30.
- 27 The concepts cited come from Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Michael Stocker and Elizabeth Hegeman, *Valuing Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 177; Michael Stocker, “Emotional Thoughts,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1987): 59; Catherine Lutz and Geoffrey M. White, “The Anthropology of Emotions,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15 (1986): 430.
- 28 See William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 16.
- 29 In the words of the medievalist Barbara Rosenwein, emotions are not ‘great liquids within each person, heaving and frothing, eager to be let out’. See Barbara Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” *American Historical Review* 107, no.3 (2002): 834.
- 30 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 98.
- 31 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 136.
- 32 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 136.
- 33 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 150.
- 34 See Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1970), and Emanuele Castano, Bernhard Leidner and Patrycja Slawuta, “Social Identification Processes, Group Dynamics, and the Behaviour of Combatants,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 870 (2008): 259–71.
- 35 See above at note 3.
- 36 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 129.
- 37 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 131.
- 38 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 131.
- 39 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 123.
- 40 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 132.
- 41 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 123.
- 42 Among the most important such places are the medieval hermitage of Mare de Deu de la Balma in Zorita (Castellón), Nuestra Señora de la Fuente de la Salud in Traiguera (Castellón), the Gothic collegiate church of Santa María in Cervera (Lérida), the chapel of Santa Orosia in Jaca Cathedral (Huesca), the monastery of Cillas (Huesca), and the shrine of Santo Cristo de Calatorao (Zaragoza), which attracted people from far and wide. Carmelo Lisón Tolosana, *La España mental. Demonios y exorcismos en los Siglos de Oro* (Madrid: Ed. Akal, 1990), 9.
- 43 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 133.

- 44 On the Enlightenment polemic in eighteenth-century Spain about true and false possession, see María Tausiet, "From Illusion to Disenchantment: Feijoo Versus the 'Falsely' Possessed in Eighteenth-Century Spain," in *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe*, ed. Willem de Blécourt and Owen Davies (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 45–60.
- 45 On this subject, see Stuart Clark, ed., *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (London and New York: Macmillan and St Martin's Press, 2001), and María Tausiet, "'Por el sieso y la natura.' Una lectura literaria de los procesos por brujería," *Edad de Oro* 27 (2008): 339–64.
- 46 On unacknowledged emotions and witchcraft, see the chapters by Lyndal Roper ("Envidia") and María Tausiet ("Ira humana e ira divina: la brujería vista por Carl Theodor Dreyer"), in *Accidentes del alma. Las emociones en la Edad moderna*, ed. María Tausiet and James S. Amelang (Madrid: Abada, 2009).
- 47 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 134.
- 48 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 157–58.
- 49 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 140.
- 50 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 95.
- 51 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 95–96.
- 52 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 96.
- 53 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 96.
- 54 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 96.
- 55 At the shrine of Mare de Deu de la Balma, in Zorita (Castellón), exorcisms were performed by women reputed to be former witches, known as 'auxiliadores', whose method of curing consisted of bringing about spectacular, purely physiological orgasms. Alvar Monferrer, *Els endemoniats de la Balma* (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 1997), 120–23.
- 56 This was not the first time that a particular individual's sexual power had played a crucial role in a case of female possession. See María Tausiet, "Patronage of Angels & Combat of Demons: Good Versus Evil in Seventeenth-Century Spain," in *Angels in the Early Modern World*, ed. Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 233–55.
- 57 One of the most remarkable features of the Spanish War of Independence was the active and influential role played by women. Heroines became famous thanks to their exploits and an iconography depicting them 'batiendo cargas', that is, 'firing artillery' against the French enemy. Tausiet, *Posesos*, 65–66 and 160.
- 58 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 102.
- 59 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 112–13.
- 60 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 111.
- 61 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 109.
- 62 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 100.
- 63 Louise Berubé, *Terminologie de neuropsychologie et de neurologie du comportement* (Montréal: Les Éditions de la Chenelière, 1991), 145.
- 64 Loreto Plaza, "Psicosis exógenas agudas," *Cuadernos de neurología* 20 (1992): 7–8.
- 65 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 100–101.
- 66 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 101.
- 67 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 104–5.
- 68 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 101.
- 69 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 101.
- 70 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 101–2.
- 71 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 103.
- 72 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 105.
- 73 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 102.
- 74 In contrast to the abundance of studies on cases of denial exhibited by individuals, there are as yet few dealing with collective denial. Of those published so far, see

Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001); Kari Marie Norgaard, "'People Want to Protect Themselves a Little Bit': Emotions, Denial, and Social Movement," *Sociological Inquiry* 76, no.3 (2006): 372–96; and Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

75 Tausiet, *Posesos*, 112.

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