The Museum of Melancholy



The Divine Case of Joan Drake 1585-1625

C.L. Dawson

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The Museum of Melancholy:

The Divine Case of Joan Drake 1585-1625

A True Account of the Suffering and Redemption of Mrs Joan Drake (née Tothill) of Esher, Walton-on-Thames and Shardeloes, near Amersham

C. L. Dawson

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Brief Lives[1]



Mrs Joan Drake 1585-1625
Daughter and co-heiress of William Tothill of Shardeloes, near Amersham. In 1603, aged 18, she married Francis Drake of Esher with whom she had four children: William, Francis, Joan and John. From 1615, Joan suffered from melancholy and spiritual anxiety, and her 'case' became widely publicised in the Puritan community.



Francis Drake, Esquire, of Esher 1580-1634
Lord of the Manor of Walton-on-Thames, who lived at Esher Place[2] in Surrey. He was the godson of Sir Francis Drake, and a Puritan who supported nonconformist ministers.



Dr John Hart (dates unknown)
A Doctor of Divinity and Puritan, who heard about Joan Drake's struggles in 1616 and orchestrated her cure over a decade, introducing a succession of Puritan divines. He later wrote a spiritual guide, published in 1647, in which he included a memoir of Joan Drake's final years based on his role as her adviser and confidant. Three letters of his, mentioning Joan, also survive.



John Dod 1549-1645
A celebrated Puritan divine, preacher and writer, noted for his patient and meek manner. He was 'silenced' by church authorities as a nonconformist, and in his late sixties spent several years attempting to cure Joan Drake and others.



William Drake 1606-1669
Eldest son of Francis and Joan Drake, who attended Christ Church, Oxford, in 1623-26. In later life, he became Sir William Drake, 1st Baronet of Shardeloes. A large collection of his diaries and 'commonplace books' (notebooks) was discovered at Shardeloes in the 1940s.

[1] No portraits have survived; the images above and throughout are self-created using a range of software tools, including: ChatGPT, Leonardo.ai, and Affinity Photo Editing.
[2] This house was probably known simply as Esher Manor House in Francis's time (Aubrey referred to it as 'Esher House' in the 1670s). The earliest surviving record of the name Esher Place, following modification of the buildings by later owners, is on a 1709 engraving by Johannes Kip. Today's house on the hill is a later building.

Preface: Mr Pilkington's Bookshop



Entering Mr Pilkington's bookshop next to the Red Lion Inn in Fleet Street in 1647, a reader in search of an uplifting spiritual story could have bought a copy of Dr John Hart's newly published work "Trodden Down Strength, or Mrs Drake Revived". The author, a Doctor of Divinity, had delayed for twenty-two years after the incidents that he relates in this book, before taking the manuscript to the printers. This may have been because that same year the last of those closest to Mrs Joan Drake, who might have questioned his version of events, had died.

Editions of Dr Hart's book, reprinted at least into the late eighteenth century, now gather dust in a few libraries and antiquarian bookshops, and remain devoid of 'views' and 'ratings' in digital archives. John Hart's archaic

language and lengthy scriptural commentaries put up an insurmountable barrier to most casual, non-religious readers, and the focus on an unknown noblewoman, Mrs Joan Drake, living in Cardinal Wolsey's former home in the Surrey countryside over four hundred years ago, is not obviously captivating. Given these characteristics, one might not expect the book to contain much of appeal or interest to a modern reader, but in fact its musty pages repay patient study: they reveal the fascinating story of a troubled life, relayed via Hart's wonderful phrasing and forgotten – but evocative and still comprehensible – vocabulary. As such, the work is very relatable: amid the suffering and pathos there are numerous colourful characters, misunderstandings, dramatic moments and possibly even an unfulfilled love story.

Part 1: Life and Death

Blackfriars Theatre

'...in her thoughts likening him [Mr Dod] unto Ananias, one whom at a play in the Black-Friars she saw scoffed at...'



Before her illness took hold, and its attempted cure became a topic of international interest, Mrs Joan Drake enjoyed many of the pleasures of life available to a well-to-do Englishwoman of her time. For example, in the autumn of 1610, she and her husband, Francis Drake of Esher, attended the opening night of 'The Alchemist' by Ben Jonson at the Blackfriars Theatre in London, which was the winter home of the highly reputed acting company, the King's Men. Although somewhat smaller than the company's other theatre, the Globe, the Blackfriars venue had a roof that allowed plays to be performed in all weathers, and its location on the north bank of the Thames, just inside the City walls, meant that it could attract a more sophisticated audience, with higher

ticket prices balancing out the lower capacity. The best seats in the house were in the boxes that looked down directly onto the stage, providing an uninterrupted view of the play from the wings, and Joan would have felt almost part of the performance as she watched the action unfold a few feet away. Unlike what she had heard said of the Globe, where there was a constant cacophony and milling of the crowds, here she could hear each word enounced and see every nuance of the players' expressions; and these were the most celebrated actors of the era, among them Richard Burbage[3] playing the lead role of the alchemist, and Henry Condell[4] as a gambler named Surly. Somewhere behind the scenes may have been William Shakespeare[5], as the same troupe was putting on Othello the next day.

Jonson's play would have been particularly engaging because the action took place in a contemporary and local setting: in fact, in the area of wealthy Blackfriars itself during an outbreak of plague, and as it happens the theatre had only just re-opened after being closed for several months due to plague in London. Despite this bleak background, The Alchemist was an action-packed farce, with constant movement of characters on and off the small candle-lit stage, which would have required all of the audience's attention as the plot unfolded. The story begins with a trio of con-artists: a manservant called Face, left in charge of a grand house in the absence of his master who has fled because of the epidemic; a fraudulent alchemist named Subtle; and Doll Common, a

[3] Richard Burbage was the most famous actor of the Shakespearean stage, as well as being part owner of the Globe and Blackfriars theatres.
[4]Henry Condell along with John Heminges, another actor from the King's Men, edited the First Folio of Shakespeare's works in 1623.
[5] Shakespeare part-owned the Blackfriars Theatre. He stopped writing plays around 1612 and is believed to have returned to Stratford by 1613, where he died in 1616.

woman of dubious repute. These three have devised a scheme to deprive gullible citizens of their wealth, using the age-old lure of the Philosopher's Stone that can turn base metals into gold. Among those seeking riches are a pair of Anabaptists – extreme 'separatist' Puritans[6] – who are interested in purchasing some suitable metallic items to turn into gold, which they plan to use to convert more people to their religious views. The junior Puritan, Ananias[7], is a deacon from Amsterdam whose over-zealous views and behaviour are much mocked. He is dressed in a plain hat and small ruff, and derides the stylish gambler Surly, who is disguised as a Spanish Don and dressed in the fashionable Spanish (and therefore suspiciously Catholic) style, calling his breeches *'superstitious and idolatrous'*, criticising his headwear in which *'thou looks like the anti-Christ in that lewd hat'*, and pointing to his '*huge ruff of pride'*. Ananias also insists on interrupting and correcting Subtle's language, suggesting he use *'Christ-tide'* instead of *'Christmas'* because 'mass' sounds Popish. The actor playing Ananias[8] would probably have exaggerated the supposed verbal tics and holier-than-thou visage of the Puritans, and now and again burst forth with rantings in the style of an Old Testament prophet. Satire abounds throughout, a great deal of it heaped on the hypocrisy of the rigid and self-righteous Anabaptists as they convince themselves that stealing from orphans and counterfeiting money is entirely within their religious laws, as long as it is done in a spirit of *'godliness'*. This is confirmed by a supposed *'revelation of the truth'* by the Holy Spirit, which is clearly no more than a spurious justification of self-interest. Subtle

[6] Puritans were generally divided into those who sought change from within the Church of England, and those 'separatists' who formed their own independent local churches.
[7] The name Ananias references a character from the New Testament who lied to the Apostles about profits he had made from selling land, keeping a portion for himself, and was struck dead by God for his greed.
[8] Nicholas Tooley.

adds fuel to the fire by suggesting that the Anabaptists could use their ill-gotten gains to address some of the downsides of Puritanism, such as the long-winded church services, and the sense of superiority through being chosen specifically by God as the elect or *'those of us who have the seal'*[9]. He then piles on the irony by hinting that the Puritans might even cease their opposition to the enjoyment of life's pleasures, notably including the theatre.

There were several other caricatures on stage, with their vices or trades indicated by their names (such as Sir Epicure Mammon, obsessed with money, gluttony and ways to improve his sexual prowess). However, Jonson's main message was clearly directed at the Anabaptists (Ananias and his elder pastor, Tribulation Wholesome), arguing that fanaticism and excess of zeal, if not bounded by reason, lead to extremism, corruption, greed, hypocrisy and ultimately self-destruction. Of course, everyone's get-rich-quick plans come to nothing, and towards the end of the play Subtle's alchemist equipment overheats and explodes off stage with a loud blast, probably giving those seated in the nearby boxes quite a shock.

Francis Drake was a convinced Puritan, and must have been squirming in his seat with barely suppressed anger at this quite sulphurous satire. He would not have been the only one upset by the attack on his religious beliefs, if the reaction of Henry Jackson[10], who had seen the play performed in Oxford a few weeks previously, is anything to go by. Writing to a friend afterwards, Jackson

[9] From the 'seven seals' in Revelation that reveal divine judgment intertwined with redemption
[10] Henry Jackson was a 24-year-old scholar from Corpus Christi College, Oxford; he also mentions seeing Desdemona in Shakespeare's Othello the next night as 'they also had tragedies, which they acted with decorum and fitness. In these they elicited tears not only with their speaking but also with their physical action'.

noted that the play was a success *'with the greatest applause and the theatre full',* but that the *'King's stage players'* had made the more strait-laced audience members uncomfortable as they had *'justly struck pious and learned men as impious, because not content to hit at the alchemists, they most foully besmirched Holy Writ itself. That is, they taunted the Anabaptists, as if improbity*[11] *hid behind this mask'*. Jackson observed that of all the characters ribbed mercilessly it was the Anabaptists who attracted the most laughter and *'our theatre never rang with greater applause than when that hypocritical buffoon made his entrance, who, to hold up the false sanctity of the Anabaptists before the spectators as an object of derision, impiously and monstrously sullied Scripture'*. Despite this, *'our clergymen (I am ashamed to say) most eagerly were gathered together'*.

In Blackfriars, the play drew to a close. Joan Drake was twenty-five years old, and those catching a glimpse of her from the wooden benches in the auditorium might have remembered a petite and pretty woman in her finest clothes, probably laughing merrily at the satirical escapades and leaning towards her stern-looking husband to encourage him to join in the fun. She was in her prime, and no one could have foreseen how five years later her life would begin a decade-long downward spiral.

[11] Improbity: lack of honesty and moral integrity.

The Unpardonable Sin

'...but not long after [she] fell out into terrible shrieks & cried out to this purpose, that she was undone, she was damned, and a cast away, and so of necessity must needs go to Hell.'

Being introduced to Mrs Joan Drake in 1615, you would encounter a woman of around thirty *'of a low well-compacted stature, of a lovely brown complexion, having a full nimble quick sparrow-hawk eye'*[12], who was by nature jovial, courteous and affable in conversation, with a quick wit. She was inquisitive and had a good memory, and was noted for plain speaking, but if crossed she could be stubborn, stern and resolute, yet in a modest and inoffensive way. She valued goodness in people, whether or not nobly born, and detested hypocrisy, making fun of some of those she considered all show and no substance.

If you got to know her better and became her confidant, Joan might tell you that she was over-indulged as a child, and that she did not agree with the match arranged by her father William Tothill of Shardeloes, one of the Six Clerks of the Court of Chancery, with the son of Richard Drake of Esher Place, a Groom of the Privy Chamber to Elizabeth 1. The courtly connection between the two men may well have led to the marriage contract[13]. One of the reasons for Joan's reluctance may have been simply a lack of attraction, as she admitted

[12] Note: Quotes in italics are taken from John Hart's book, or other primary sources, updated into modern spelling but retaining the original words.
[13] William Tothill and Richard Drake may have become acquainted at court: in his will of July 1603 Richard called William, who signed as a witness, 'a friend' and appointed him an overseer.

that Richard's son Francis was a man *'whom at first she could not affect'*; another may have been Francis's religious fervour, since at that time *'she was not acquainted with the power of godliness'*. Despite this, the wedding to Francis Drake took place on 3rd March 1603 at St. Dunstan-in-the-West on Fleet Street, which was conveniently situated between Chancery Lane, where William had his offices, and Fetter Lane, where Richard maintained a London residence. Further, soon after the wedding, Joan's new husband entered into a lengthy legal battle with the heirs of his godfather, the great explorer Sir Francis Drake[14], which threatened the financial security of the household. This is unlikely to have helped to reconcile Joan with her new circumstances. The sudden transition from spoilt child to marriage against her will, along with the pressure of remaining outwardly the obedient and dutiful daughter, probably contributed much to her beginning to feel *'storms and tempests'* in her mind, so that below the façade of mirth she maintained with friends, and the leisure pursuits she sought to take her mind off her marriage woes, she developed a deep sadness. If you were close enough to Joan to perceive her true nature at the time, you might have observed a degree of melancholic charisma.

It was the birth of her third child, a daughter also named Joan, around 1615[15] that seemed to trigger more sinister symptoms. During the delivery she was *'much wronged by the midwife, and she was ever after troubled with fumes*

[14] Legal arguments relating to Sir Francis Drake's will had been going on for some years, but the most significant case unfolded over the years 1604-6 at the Court of the Exchequer. The original documents are in the National Archive: Drake vs Drake 1605 (E133/47/3; E133/47/4; E133/47/5); these documents and their underlying stories form the basis for a companion volume to this one: 'Drake vs Drake: The Contested Legacy of a National Hero 1593-1606'. See https://casacolori.co.uk/.

[15] The date is based on Dr Hart's statement that Joan's problems began in earnest after her daughter's birth, and that her troubles lasted ten years (she died in 1625). Joan Drake was the only daughter, so this birth presumably was hers, although the date is not recorded. However, this does not fully align with another of Hart's statements where he refers to the birth being 'not long after her marriage'.

and scurvy[16] *vapours mounting up unto her head'* which gave her a continual headache, like a migraine, and a fire burning in her stomach, for which no doctor could find a remedy.



During Joan's lying-in, as her discontent increased, her mother came to stay at Esher Place, where one night Joan woke up shrieking and screaming that she had committed the Unpardonable Sin[17] and that she was *'damned, and a cast away, and so of necessity must needs go to Hell'*, after which she shook with fear, and began to weep uncontrollably. However, having fallen back to sleep, she then reawakened later in an ecstatic mood, saying that an angel had come to her in a dream and assured her of salvation.

This pattern of religious terror and joy continued, combined with strange utterings and occasional manic laughter, and her movements became so

[16] Scurvy in its archaic and figurative meaning of unhealthy or vile.
[17] The Unpardonable Sin is the rejection of God, and is also called blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

violent that it was agreed she should not be left alone, by night or day, in case she harmed herself. The bolts were taken off the doors so that she could not lock herself in, and two gentlewomen were hired to take turns to look after her. Confinement and being constantly watched over did little to alleviate Joan's situation. No longer permitted to spend much time with her children, or to ride in the fresh air, she began to lose interest in life and its pleasures. She slept poorly, often waking from nightmares, and had little energy or appetite when she was awake.

Melancholy – 'the black bile' – had been a recognised condition since Hippocrates in the fifth century BCE, but medicine had made insufficient progress to be of much use to Joan. The only other route available to her anguished husband and parents, in attempting to counteract the physical symptoms of her anxiety about her eternal soul, was the spiritual one.

Francis Drake's Puritan views probably stemmed originally from his mother's family, the Staffords[18], who had been refugees – Marian exiles – in Geneva with John Calvin[19]. As fate would have it, John Hart, a Doctor of Divinity, had been at a dinner in Isleworth at the home of a Mrs Scudamore[20] when he first heard of Mrs Drake's ill health from a fellow guest, Dr John Burges, a Puritan and physician who had met her (and had been rejected). In

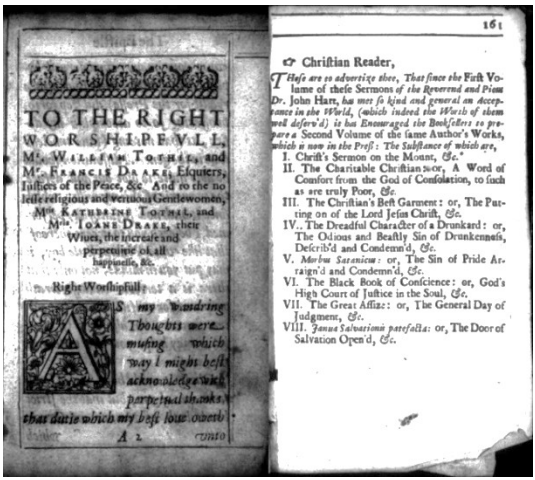
[18] Sir William Stafford (whose first wife was Mary Boleyn) and Dorothy Stafford. They had the same surname because they were cousins.
[19] Francis Drake of Esher's mother was born Ursula Stafford. The Stafford family – Sir William and Dorothy, their children Edward (aged 3), Ursula (2), William (1), their servants, and a cousin, Elizabeth Sandys – were listed in 1555 in Geneva in the 'Livre des Anglais' (the English Book). This volume recorded the names of the English community of around 140 households, most of whom had fled to Calvin's Protestant stronghold following the coronation of the Catholic 'Bloody Mary'. The Staffords' son, John, was born in Geneva in January 1556, with Calvin as godfather. The British version of Calvinism known as the Reformed tradition, was referred to as Puritanism from the early 1560s.
[20] Lady Scudamore – Mary Throckmorton (c. 1570-1632) – aged about 46 in 1616

discussion, the name of John Dod[21] came up as the preacher most suitable *'with his mild, meek and merciful spirit'* to help the afflicted woman. During the next fortnight this conversation played upon Hart's mind, and perhaps he also saw an opportunity to boost his own reputation and career. The upshot was that when he then discovered that John Dod was in London, he put the proposition to Dod that he should attempt an intervention with Joan Drake. Dod modestly claimed that it was beyond his powers, but nevertheless agreed to an introduction. Hart next wrote an unsolicited letter from his home in London's Whitefriars to Francis Drake, in which he informed Francis that, hearing of the danger his wife was in, and out of mercy to her, he had procured *'the fittest man known to come to see her, and do his best to help her according to his ability'*. Asking his acquaintances for confirmation, the profile of Mr Dod presented to Francis was of a well-regarded Puritan divine noted for his patience, who although in his mid-sixties and having just recovered from a serious illness, was currently free of responsibilities, and also of income, as he had been 'silenced' (i.e. barred from public preaching) for non-conformity to the Church of England's practices.

John Hart's first literary output dates from this period. "The Burning Bush Not Consumed" was published in 1616, with a dedication to his new patrons: 'To the Right Worshipful Mr William Tothill and Mr Francis Drake, Esquires… and to the no less religious and virtuous Gentlewomen, Mrs Katherine Tothill and Mrs Joan Drake, their wives, the increase and perpetuity of all happiness etc.', which he signed 'Yours in duty, much and ever bound, J

[21] John Dod (1549-1645) was a celebrated Puritan divine, known as 'Decalogue Dod'.

Hart'. Whether this was published in anticipation of patronage, or in gratitude for patronage already received, is not known.



TO THE RIGHT
WORSHIPFVLL
Mr. WILLIAM TOTHILL, and
Mr. FRANCIS DRAKE, Esquiers,
Iustices of the Peace, &c. And to the no
lesse religious and vertuous Gentlewomen,
Mrs. KATHARINE TOTHILL, and
Mrs. IOANE DRAKE, their
Wiues, the increase and
perpetuitie of all
happinesse, &c.
Right Worshipfull,
S my wandring
Thoughts were
musing which
way I might best
acknowledge with
perpetual thanks
that dutie which my best loue oweth
A 2 vnto

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☞ Christian Reader,

These are to advertize thee, That since the Fifth Volume of these Sermons *of the Reverend and Pious* Dr. John Hart, *has met so kind and general an acceptance in the World, (which indeed the Worth of them well deserv'd) it has Encouraged the Booksellers to prepare a* Second Volume of the same Author's Works, *which is now in the Press: The Substance of which are,*

I. Christ's Sermon on the Mount, &c.
II. The Charitable Christian: or, A Word of Comfort from the God of Consolation, to such as are truly Poor, &c.
III. The Christian's Best Garment: or, The Putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ, &c.
IV. The Dreadful Character of a Drunkard: or, The Odious and Beastly Sin of Drunkenness, Describ'd and Condemn'd, &c.
V. *Morbus Satanicus:* or, The Sin of Pride Arraign'd and Condemn'd, &c.
VI. The Black Book of Conscience: or, God's High Court of Justice in the Soul, &c.
VII. The Great Assize: or, The General Day of Judgment, &c.
VIII. *Fanua Salvationis patefacta:* or, The Door of Salvation Open'd, &c.

Dr John Hart's first publication in 1616, dedicated to the Tothills and Drakes

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One day in early 1616, John Hart and John Dod, as invited guests, left their horses in the stable yard and stood before the towering red brick gatehouse of Esher Place[22]. The cluster of buildings close to the bank of the River Mole, once the residence of Cardinal Wolsey, had been visible from the top of the hill as they approached, and as befitted Wolsey's status gave the impression of a compact Tudor palace. There was a four-storey 'castle-like'[23] main building complete with turrets at its core, plus a bishop's chapel[24] surrounded by formal

[22] Known as Wayneflete Tower, this gatehouse is the only part of the old Esher Place that still remains.
[23] This description comes from John Aubrey, the antiquary, who recorded visiting Esher Place in 1673 as part of his 'Perambulation of Surrey', which is in the Bodleian Library.
[24] Treswell's Esher map of 1606 does show a 'chapel', and according to 'The Accounts for the Manor of Esher in the Winchester Pipe Rolls 1235-1376' Ed. David Stones; Surrey Record Society Vol XLVI,

gardens and orchards set in acres of parkland and woods ideal for riding and hunting. The two visitors were led across the courtyard to the entrance porch then through the Great Hall, marvelling at the stained-glass windows and hammerbeam ceiling where intricate angels had been carved into the wooden beams, and up into the main lodgings. As they were ushered in, there was a sudden commotion, and they could see Joan Drake hurrying up the stairs, '*whereupon her husband took the great iron fork [from the fireplace] in his hand, and run up after her, threatening to beat down the door, if she would not open it'*.



It would later become apparent that Joan had spotted the two sober-looking gentlemen approaching from the windows of the dining room, then run up to her bedroom and tried to barricade herself in. At some point, however, John Dod was able to enter and, as was his custom, he knelt in Joan's presence

published in 2017: '…it is intriguing that it shows a building similar to the purported appearance of the thirteenth-century chapel and set in its own enclosure to the south of the manorial centre.'

and began to pray. Hart and Francis Drake did likewise, but Joan remained standing. She stayed silent throughout dinner, as Mr Dod spoke about his experiences of dealing with similar cases. Persuaded to stay the night, while being shown to his room Dod was asked by Francis what he thought so far, to which he replied that all had gone to plan *'because the Devil was afraid, run away, and durst not stand to it'*.

Over the next few days, the opening positions became clear. Joan Drake's conviction was that she had rejected God, and in doing so was *'a damned Reprobate*[25] *who would go to hell forever'*. It was therefore needless, fruitless, and in vain for anyone to lose time or effort trying to help her. Instead, she was *'quite destitute of all natural affection unto Husband, Father, Mother, Children, and everybody else, having in brief no love either to God or man'* and just wanted to be left alone. Pitifully, since there was never a chance that this was going to happen, she *'resolved to spend the remainder of her time in jollying and merriment, denying herself no worldly comforts'*, because she believed herself already damned.

For his part, Mr Dod was convinced that he was not conversing with the woman before him, but with a far trickier opponent – the Devil himself. Had he been of a different nature, he might have suspected witchcraft and gone in search of the source in the village, but instead he listened to Joan confronting his arguments with responses that could only be *'the Devil's rhetoric being used nimbly and strongly against him'*. The more he spoke, the more astute her

[25] In Calvinism, a sinner who is not of the elect and is predestined to damnation.

objections became. This was not the ordinary Devil he had happened upon, but a clever and *'sophisticated logician'* that would test his skills to the limit.



The relationship between Joan and Mr Dod, observed at all times by John Hart (or so it would appear from the level of detail relayed in his 1647 book), settled into a pattern. Mr Dod would make speeches, and Joan would laugh and jest in derision at all his fine words. She seemed to gain great enjoyment from disturbing him at private prayer, throwing open the door to his room and threatening to strike him with a staff or to fling herself down the stairs if he did not stop. In private, she revealed to Dr Hart that she could not take Mr Dod seriously, as he reminded her of the character of Ananias that she remembered from a play she had seen at Blackfriars a few years previously. But throughout her antics, which Mr Dod took to be *'the Devil changing his posture and weapons'*, he would look pitifully upon her and would never raise his voice.

Alongside these confrontations with the in-house preacher, Dr Hart reveals that Joan was hedging her bets. Behind Mr Dod's back she was in touch with other ministers of her own choice, anxious for other opinions on whether a creature such as herself – whose heart was *'as hard as an anvil'*[26] – had any hope of going to Heaven. Nothing was committed to paper: she sent out her waiting-woman, Susannah Garbrand, who she trusted to ask questions using the correct phrasing and commit to memory the responses. She received some encouragement in this way, which she was careful to keep to herself for succour in trying moments.

The elderly Mr Dod was understandably worn out after a month of unrelieved disputes, and announced that he would be leaving. Joan looked directly at him and gave him *'a rude farewell'* that he should go and never return, asking him what manner of religious man he was that he would leave his calling, home and family to be with her, where he was an unwelcome intruder. Mr Dod, showing a first small sign of impatience, replied that he was *'very sensible of her reproof and dismissal, and therefore meant hereafter to stay at home, and look unto his own matters, not troubling her anymore'*. However, *'inwardly very sorry for what was done'*, on the day of his departure she took him aside and spoke to him in private, which meant that Dr Hart, who was still at all times poised with his pen, was unable to record the conversation, except that Mr Dod muttered afterwards that he would consult with God.

Mr Dod stayed away a month, but would not admit defeat and came back, then went again when he was fatigued, doing this several times in

[26] Hard-hearted, in the biblical sense, is an obstinate and calloused heart that fails to respond to God or obey Him.

succession over the next three years. So by then it was 1619, and there had been no change in the status quo *'with the same arguments stiffly maintained over and over again, a hundred times together without her being persuaded to come to Church or Sacrament…but carried herself as a desperate forlorn creature'.*

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Mr Dod eventually decided that a new approach should be taken. This involved not constantly urging Joan to go to church, but instead going along with wherever her spirit took her, and encouraging her with kind words, so that a true picture of how the Devil had taken hold of her might eventually emerge: up until now Satan appeared to be constantly shape-shifting in response to attacks. Dod reasoned that this would avoid errors like those of an unskilled physician who *'gives physick before they know the ground of the disease; who many times in place of curing, do another kill, or so much more ulcer their wounds'*. This tactic did on occasion appear to work, as Joan's moods lightened and she would sometimes smile and laugh, but Hart's text admits that even in the midst of this laughter, her heart was sad, and in private not long after they would hear *'sore fits of weeping'*.

Needing to recuperate once more, Mr Dod resolved to depart for a longer period to give his patient time to ruminate on what had been achieved. Paradoxically, in his absence (although Hart notes that there were *'divers worthy ministers'* who visited), Joan's moods darkened and led to desperation and stirrings of self-harm. It was winter and she blamed herself for any unfortunate events *'…that the great snow, and all the disastrous direful events happening abroad anywhere, she was guilty of them, and that things would*

never be better so long as she were alive.' At mealtimes, she would sometimes hide a knife in a napkin, and then slip it up the inside of her sleeve, until this habit was noticed and remedial steps taken. On one occasion, she swallowed a handful of pins, which fortunately passed through her without harm; on another, she sent out her maid to buy forty oranges, with the expectation of dying from dysentery[27], but instead *'these proved excellent medicines unto her, purging away abundance of black ugly filthy matter, which made her to look much better'*. Naturally her husband and parents were bewildered and alarmed by these episodes, and therefore sought further help.

[27] Fruit and vegetables were not advised for a healthy diet as they contained mainly water which, as it was unsanitary, was thought to make people more vulnerable to disease, particularly dysentery.

A Slight Scottish Lilt

'Of all my cares, it is one of the principal to procure her peace; therefore it maketh me send everywhere for help unto her.'

Dr Hart's book does not tell us how contact was made in 1619 with Dr James Ussher, who was then Vice-Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, having previously been Professor of Theological Controversies. Ussher was already a noted scholar and linguist, and *'a magazine of all knowledge and learning…with his infinite reading':* his magnum opus, "The Annals of the World", was to be a history of the classical world, from its creation to the time of Jesus Christ[28]. Frustratingly for such a learned man, the university library in Dublin contained only forty books, so that Dr Ussher was forced to travel to England regularly to visit the great libraries at Oxford and Cambridge, plus the private collections of wealthy individuals in London, and to purchase or copy rare books and manuscripts. We learn from Dr Hart that Ussher visited Joan Drake on 'many' occasions in the course of his stay in England from 1619 to 1621. In contrast to Joan's frequent hostility in her relations with Mr Dod, Hart notes with a hint of jealousy that she seemed delighted to meet with this new worthy man of a similar age to hers, and willingly listened to his advice and anecdotes with much reverence and respect, regardless of what state of health she was in. Dr Ussher himself, meanwhile, was *'contented when he came to her to drop upon her many*

[28] Later, Ussher was appointed Primate of All Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh, the most senior position in the Church of Ireland.

sweet distilling showers of precious speeches; leaving them to work after he were gone'.

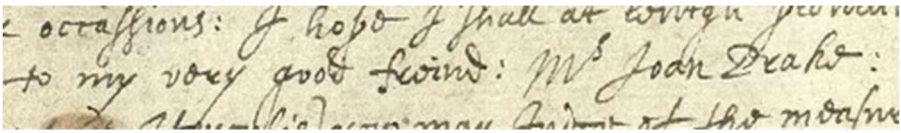
§

Three surviving letters explain how Dr Ussher first came to visit Joan Drake. In 1616, he received the first of these letters at Trinity College, Dublin, addressing him as *'Reverend and my loving friend'* and chiding him gently for not having replied to the correspondent's previous letters. This time, though, there was a specific request '*which is so great, that I think I shall never much joy in anything here until I have some hope from you to have it granted'*, which was to know exactly when Ussher was next planning to come to England; and there was a promise to meet him with a horse at the ready at Westchester[29], where they had last parted a few years ago, so that they could ride south together. The reason for this urgency, the letter continued, was that '*there is a dear friend of mine, whom now it hath pleased God to make Mr. Dod a means to bring from Satan's most horrible delusions a little… who hath so great a desire to hear you upon my report'*. As well as Mr Dod, there was news about mutual friends: Dr Burges had been given permission to preach again; and Mrs Scudamore was to be married. John Rogers of Dedham (whose name will reappear later) was mentioned as someone whose powerful preaching could be of assistance, but '*for divers reasons, it is impossible for aught I know'*. It is immediately apparent to most people familiar with Joan Drake's story (though not all, as discussed later in the Afterword chapter) that the letter writer, who signed himself 'J Heart', and Dr John Hart are one and the same person.

[29] Name for Chester used in the early modern period, from where ships sailed to and from Dublin.

In this letter Dr Hart anticipated Ussher's possible excuses, and reminded him that he must surely be due a break after the years of toil in his study; Hart also gave assurances that friends would cover the travel costs. Another reason to visit England would be so that Ussher could personally amend copies of his sermons, which were in high demand for publication, before they went to print, thereby avoiding problems like those that had dogged Mr Dod upon detecting errors in his book on the Ten Commandments, which had '*caused him great grief and much trouble to mend'.*

The letter was dated 22nd June 1616, and sent from London, but Ussher did not reply, so Dr Hart tried again nine months later, on 12th March 1617, this time enclosing four small religious books. He pointed out that it had now been three years since Ussher was last in England, but perhaps having become a married man had changed his habits? There was a repeat of the request for help, now with a name attached, as he referred to his '*very good friend Mrs. Joan Drake…for the present, though a little better, yet she continues in her mind troubled and tossed'* and his dedication to her cause was underlined: '*Of all my cares, it is one of the principal to procure her peace; therefore it maketh me send everywhere for help unto her, as also unto you, to know if there be any hope shortly to see you.'*



Ussher finally replied, but it was a whole year later in March 1618, and Dr Hart did not receive the letter until the beginning of July. Hart's further

response then began, tongue-in-cheek, with a rebuke: '*Wherein I perceived you deal with me as for the most part God doth with his children, to send them unexpected favours, not when they desire, but when he sees a fit time, after they have often begged and entreated, waited long, but chiefly when they have in a manner past hope of obtaining.'* This was a relationship of friends and contemporaries: '*Yet must you not imagine that ever I conceived any displeasure against you; only a story of the Old Testament hath taught me now and then to set my friend's corn on fire, to have some of their acquaintance, which I put in practice to you, only so far as that you might do as you would be done unto, seeing you are so well able; wherefore I must assure you there needs no forgiveness where there was neither fault committed nor offence taken, save so far as might, like a whetstone, sharpen you to write.'* Hart's only complaint was that Ussher's letter was not longer.

Presumably, Ussher had confirmed in the March reply his long-awaited visit to England that would start in 1619, because Hart now made no specific mention of Joan Drake's progress, although he noted that Mr Dod had been '*sick even unto death',* but had recovered. As he now knew that Ussher was reading his correspondence, this was a much longer letter and provided more details of his own character and background. There was confirmation of his Puritan and anti-Papist religious views, criticism of the poor standards of preaching in the English parishes, rumours of Catholic atrocities abroad narrowly averted, and a summary of the outcome from a General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. There was also further evidence of his ties to Scotland[30], with his calling John

[30] Dr Hart also dedicated his book 'Fort Royal', published in 1649, to Christian Cavendish, Countess of Devonshire, with a remark that he considered her mother, Lady Kinloss of Fife, a 'sometime noble friend'.

Forbes, the minister originally from Edinburgh but by then resident in the Netherlands, *'our countryman*'.

The letter ended with a flourish: '*Therefore, still entreating your prayers, and much wishing your presence, much happiness may still attend you; that out of your belly may flow rivers of the water of life to water the Lord's garden; and long may you flourish as a palm tree and a cedar in the courts of our God, until filled with your reward he give you to drink out of the rivers of his pleasures. Yours ever much and ever bound, J. Heart [sic].'*

§

All three of these 'J. Heart' letters, the only ones extant between the two men, were preserved among hundreds of others by Ussher's chaplain[31] after his death and eventually found their way to the Bodleian Library in Oxford, courtesy of an eighteenth-century antiquarian collector called Richard Rawlinson. At various times, they were transcribed and published in collections of Ussher's works, but as the foreword to one of these volumes declared: *'The Editor has felt considerable doubts as to the course he ought to pursue with regard to the orthography of the names: the variety of spelling is very extraordinary, even in the signatures. He has, however, determined to leave them as given by Dr. Parr, for it is probable that he, being in possession of the autograph letters, adopted the spelling he found in them.'* Transcription error does certainly have an impact – in Hart's letters, for example, Joan Drake's name was transcribed as 'Mrs John Drake', Lady Scudamore was variously

[31] Dr Richard Parr was James Ussher's chaplain and biographer and published a collection of his letters in 1686.

'Skidmore' and 'Shedmore', and John Rogers was from 'Dodam' (Dedham). So an incorrect transcription of the 'J. Heart' signature cited above probably explains why the original letters have been classified as being written by a 'J Heartwell' in the Bodleian's catalogue.

Dr Hart's letters reveal that, far from being arbitrary ministers whom *'the Relater* (i.e. Hart himself) *brought to see her and judge her case'*, the divines that he introduced to Joan Drake were for the most part members of a well-connected Puritan network, ready and waiting to be called into action on just such an occasion, and in contact with those within the established Church who shared some of the same values. Dr James Ussher, on his way to becoming head of the Church in Ireland, was also such a 'friend', but one who apparently was carefully managing his association with nonconformists, in part through the infrequency and brevity of his written communications.

The content of the letters also begins to fill out the scant details that we have about Dr Hart himself: he was sociable and charming, playful and teasing, literary and poetic, well-read in European religious affairs and a fount of news and court gossip. One can also surmise that possibly he spoke with a slight Scottish lilt.

The Relationship with the Relater

'...the Relater, that sometime unworthy friend.'

Around this time, Joan Drake relocated to the Parsonage[32] in Walton-on-Thames (which her husband owned) because, she explained, not only did Esher Place hold sad memories, but it was also miserably cold and damp in the winter: apparently, even Cardinal Wolsey had complained of its 'moist and corrupt air'. The Parsonage's other appeal was that as a much smaller house only a few servants were needed, and there was no space for resident divines; Esher was also nearby if she felt the inclination, in better weather, to ride her horses.

In the Jacobean society in which Joan lived, after providing children and managing the household, there were few other ways for a wife to express herself or find outlets for her intellectual abilities, apart from religious zeal. So she was probably not opposed in principle to the use of divines to direct her spiritual journey. Her recently acquired Puritan leanings, even if initially adopted or adapted to placate her husband, were directed not outward to the world, but inward to her direct relationship with God. Quiet prayers and meditations in the home were preferable to the cold church benches, so a close relationship with a divine preacher could be mutually beneficial. She would

[32] Francis Drake was Lord of the Manor of Walton-on-Thames and owned the Parsonage, which appears on all early maps of the area, so must have been a significant building and estate. The house became known later as Walton Grove, but was demolished in 1973. There was no Manor House as such, and Francis Drake followed his father Richard as tenant at Esher Place, their landlord there being Charles Howard, the absentee Lord of the Manor of Esher. The manorial property of Walton-on-Thames was distinct from the Manor of Walton Leigh, whose timber-framed manor house still stands today. The wills of Francis Drake and his father, together with evidence from a document titled 'Title of Mr Pryce to the manor of Esher Episcopi 1583-1658' (SHC G3/1/36), show that the Drakes held a long lease to the house at Esher Place and possibly also the manor lands, but they owned no land in Esher.

have companionship, access to deep knowledge, a ready source of responses to her religious enquiries and concerns, and a constant gauge of her progress towards salvation – it would be almost as if God was walking beside her. In return, for the divine's part, she assumed, there was the not insignificant matter of patronage, and if need be, a place of residence. She had been disappointed to find that Mr Dod was elderly and infirm, and that when he looked at her, he saw only the Devil in disguise. But she had subsequently discovered that with Dr John Hart she could have conversations on matters that she shared with no one else, that her notions of self-worth had increased against all odds, and also perhaps that she had developed more intense feelings towards this alternative spiritual adviser than she had expected.

Throughout the text of his 1647 book Dr Hart refers to himself in the third person as *'the Relater, that sometime unworthy friend'*, the person to whom the characters tell their story, and whose role it is to relate the salient learnings to the reader. But he was by no means a passive actor. He took the lead from the moment that he first learned of Joan's circumstances, persuading Mr Dod to meet her, writing to her husband, inviting himself into the household, and seeking out other divines. Despite all this activity, however, he is hard to pin down from his writings. We have no clues as to his date of birth: but whether he was a young man in awe of an older Mrs Drake, or of similar age, or an older man who saw himself as her mentor, makes a difference to how their relationship is viewed. Although some indications about Hart's character can be gleaned from his letters, he gives nothing away in his book except that he was a major presence in Joan's life for almost a decade. He presented himself as a Doctor of Divinity – the most respected doctoral degree – and was able to

convince various Puritan divines to visit Joan repeatedly, but he was probably not a divine himself: he does not appear on lists of prominent Puritan preachers of the time. At the time that he first met Joan, in early 1616, we know only that he was learned, of a certain standing in Puritan circles, and very persuasive. But we may guess that, more likely than not, he was fairly close in age to Joan: between thirty and forty.

There are some notable omissions from Dr Hart's 1647 account. He rarely mentions Joan's husband, Francis, apart from registering her lack of affection for him, as well as Francis's bad temper. Although the Drakes had three children when he first met them, and a fourth was born later, how Joan interacted with her offspring was apparently of no interest to Hart (William, the eldest, was nine at the beginning of his involvement and nineteen at its untimely conclusion). It is also striking that there are not even any passing references to Joan's daily responsibilities as wife of the head of household, which may have contributed further to her burdens. In the frequent absences of her husband on business, one may wonder who was directing the provision of food, maintaining the accounts, and paying the staff's wages – and intervening in their squabbles or misfortunes – as well as ensuring the comfortable accommodation of the many visitors. Were Joan's shortcomings in these wifely functions significant grounds for Francis's frustrations in regard to her?

Dr Hart's own personal circumstances receive no mention either. Was he married, and was there a family at Whitefriars? Where had he studied to receive his doctorate? What arrangement for his services had been agreed with Francis Drake that enabled Hart to spend so many years at Joan's side, or did he have independent means? When not in London, did he stay at Esher Place or

rent rooms nearby? Most pertinently, what exactly was his role, when it was Mr Dod (and the other visiting divines) who took on the usual duties of a chaplain, directing Joan's spiritual journey and biblical studies in the hope of achieving her cure? And alongside all of this, were Francis or Joan aware of the detailed account of events that Hart was recording, and what his purpose might be in doing so?

The nature of the relationship between Joan Drake and Dr Hart is veiled, but two episodes that he records in his book are particularly intriguing. On one occasion, the pair had clearly been discussing whether Joan should leave the household and try to find solace elsewhere, perhaps under the roof of another divine, where she would be free of the attention of her relatives and responsibilities for her children, and could concentrate fully on her physical and spiritual recovery. For this purpose, they agreed that Dr Hart should go, secretly[33], to Essex to enquire whether Mr Rogers of Dedham – known as 'Roaring John Rogers' on account of the *'many wild notes'* of his lecturing[34] – would entertain her at his house. (It is a long way from Esher to Dedham – another indication of Hart's remarkable devotion to Joan and her cure.)

[33] The phrase that Dr Hart writes is: 'for this cause secretly made the Relater go into Essex…'

[34] John Rogers's sermons were legendary, and he was akin to a rock star in his time, with people travelling many miles to hear him speak. His approach to 'breaking through the stony heart' of a doubter was to terrify people by 'roaring hideously, to represent the torments of the damned'. Thomas Goodwin, who later became Oliver Cromwell's chaplain, recalled one occasion when he was so overcome with emotion that on leaving Rogers's church, he "was fain to hang a quarter of an hour upon the neck of my horse weeping before I had the power to mount".



On Dr Hart's return from Essex with an answer in the affirmative, Joan brought up the issue with her husband and parents, who flatly denied her request to go there. Mr Dod (who was back again) and a Mr Culverwell offered themselves as chaperones, if that might sway the decision. That the original intention might have been for Dr Hart to accompany her, given that he was making the furtive arrangements, hung in the air between them. The refusal of her freedom *'much unhooked her spirit… so much did it afflict her'*.

There is then a confession, which Dr Hart acknowledges he could have omitted from his account, but includes because it is an example of the Devil's subtleties: indeed the *'furthest example of Satan's malice'*. One day, as he and Joan (and an unidentified 'friend', possibly added into the story for the sake of propriety, since this person took no part in what came next) were walking in the garden at Walton-on-Thames, Joan suddenly stopped and fixed her gaze on the ground for several minutes, staring with a wild look in her eyes. When at last

Dr Hart managed to shake her gently out of her trance, she uttered a question: *'If God, who with a word made Heaven and Earth, can soften my heart, then why does he not do it?'* Taking this as blasphemy, *'for such speeches were not to be born with, countenanced, or disputed with, but to be cast off, with detestation and abomination'*, Dr Hart left by the garden gate immediately, without saying a word to her. A little while later, after he had recovered his composure, Joan asked him whether he would join her for a horse ride at Esher, to which he replied angrily that he would certainly not be comfortable in the company of someone who had so recently blasphemed, for fear that the ground might open beneath them and swallow them up; and furthermore that the punishment for blasphemy was death by burning and that he was going to complain of her to the Archbishop, and buy bundles of sticks for her bonfire. At this *'we both parted in seeming discontent'*.



Anyone observing from a distance – the garden stroll, the pausing and his hands on her shoulders, the arguing and the storming off – might have imagined that this was a lovers' quarrel. And while Dr Hart's reaction to what he perceived as a blasphemous question may have been entirely genuine, there is no doubting the intensity of their relationship.

It is also worth remarking again on the extreme selectivity of Hart's account, as it is known from the historical record that these incidents – Dr Ussher's first visits, Hart's secret journey to Essex, and the falling out – took place in and around 1619, when Joan Drake was pregnant and gave birth to her fourth child, John. But this birth is not mentioned anywhere in Hart's written portrayal.

The Museum of Melancholy

'And now also about this time, came to visit her another worthy minister, whom the Relater brought to see her and judge of her Case.'

Following the argument in the garden Dr Hart returned to Whitefriars for a month, but did write some kind words by letter in his absence. When he came back, Joan *'prayed him to stay no more so long away'* and thanked him for his harsh treatment of her, saying that she had deserved worse. She begged him to intervene more quickly if he ever saw her staring at the ground in such a way again.

Having forgiven Joan her profanity, Dr Hart arranged for John Forbes to visit: *'...another worthy Minister, whom the Relater brought to see her and judge her case'.* Forbes, the pastor for the Merchant Adventurers in the Dutch city of Middelburg, concluded that *'it was the strangest that ever he had seen, heard or read of... and no more he would come to visit her, nor could be drawn unto it'.* With news of his wife's predicament now reaching into Europe, it must have appeared to Francis Drake that Joan was becoming an exhibit of international repute, in what might aptly be described as a Museum of Melancholy.



Francis would probably therefore have welcomed the familiar face of Mr Dod, who soon returned with yet another new approach that he had discussed with God during his absence. This time, he had three proposals which, in stages, he believed would lead to Joan's recovery: firstly, that she should be firmly persuaded to go to church; then that she should take the sacrament; and thirdly that she should sing the psalms. It seems that Joan did now at last agree to attend church, and was taken to hear a local preacher, Dr Gibson[35], who had been warned in advance of her coming so that his sermon would be uplifting to doubters, and prudently avoid any contradictory messages, but this did not go unnoticed: Joan complained that *'he had been prompted, and had spoken things of purpose for her case'*. So on subsequent occasions there was a compromise: notice of Joan's attendance was still given, but preachers were requested to couch their sermons' messages in less obvious terms.

[35] Hart does not mention at which church Dr Gibson preached.

Joan was quite averse to taking the sacrament, however, so Mr Dod moved on to encouraging her to join in the singing of the psalms. This she professed she was quite willing to do, but only the ones of *'complaint, petition, mourning and deprecation'* and not of *'thanksgiving, and congratulation'*. For if she was like an ox ready for slaughter, what cause had she to give thanks; and if she was not going to Heaven, why should she sing Heaven's praises?

With some limited progress finally under his belt, John Dod brought up an issue that had been bothering him for some time: whether Joan still wanted to kill herself? On one occasion he approached this topic in a somewhat graphic manner. Imagine, he said to her, that you are condemned to be burned at the stake, or hung, drawn and quartered, or put on the rack, then scourged and whipped and tortured. If at the last moment you were reprieved and given the chance to live for a further ten or twenty years, would you now consider it favourably? To which she replied: yes, of course. Then why, he asked, *'did you all this while seem so eager to have departed from this life, not knowing whether you would be in Hell's fires forever,… rather than let nature take its course, and try… to understand God's will?'* Returning his gaze, Joan assured him that he should have no more suspicion, since she was resolved to live so long as God would permit her.

Such was the notoriety of Joan's case, and of the ongoing but as yet futile efforts to cure her, that Dr Hart began receiving letters offering advice, including a long missive from Robert Bruce, a Scottish minister who had fallen foul of King James and been exiled, and was currently in prison *'amongst the wild Irish'*. In his 1647 account Hart skips over Bruce's advice *('too long here to insert'*) but notes that he was highly impressed by a speech that Bruce had

addressed to the Devil, *'worthy to be written in letters of gold'*, which he copied out in full. The final part reads: *'The Lord pour His comfort and grace in[to] her weak heart, that she may find and feel the sweetness of the things we write of, and from her feeling to give God the praise of His glory, and of her victory, which I am sure to be most certain in God's good time.'*

At some point in 1620, after four years of intermittent service, Mr Dod announced his retirement from the *'hot skirmishes with Satan'*, and for his efforts was given a large reward by Joan's parents. Joan herself was not dismayed to see him go, but insisted that the next incumbent should live close by so that he could attend when she needed answers to her burning questions. Dr Hart might have thought that he had earned this role by now, but instead it went to Thomas Hooker, who was made curate of St George's Church in Esher by Francis Drake[36], agreeing to a *'poor living of forty pounds per annum'*, supplemented by being given food and lodgings at Esher Place; Joan being primarily in Walton-on-Thames. The new regime began well, and Hart noted with a touch of envy how, as a recent graduate of Cambridge, Hooker came with a *'new answering method, wherewith she was marvellously delighted, being very covetous of knowledge'*. Hooker was patient and observant, adapting his methods to suit changes in Joan's disposition brought on by her physical ailments – her restless thoughts, mood swings, heartburn and constant headaches. His interest seemed to stem partly from having undergone some similar trauma in his own life, and he admitted that he *'long had a soul harassed*

[36] The curacy at Esher was a Donative (i.e. locally endowed position), and not a Presentative endowment (i.e. where the candidate had to be personally approved by the Bishop), so that Thomas Hooker, a nonconformist, did not have to present himself and swear an oath, and Francis Drake had influence over his selection. Sources indicate also that John Dod had recommended Hooker to Francis, both being alumni of Emmanuel College, Cambridge: a major academic base for Puritan theology.

with such distresses'. He gave counsel in such a stirring fashion, that it was clear to all who met him that he was *'born to be considerable'*. Hooker indeed achieved lasting fame later for his achievements in New England[37], but he stayed in Esher only long enough to woo and marry Joan's waiting-woman, Susannah Garbrand, at Shardeloes, and left Esher Place at some point in 1623. Dr Hart tells us that Francis then *'provided another for the Cure, but not like unto the other'* (i.e. the clever and charismatic Hooker), but we hear no more about this latest divine. By this time Dr Ussher's visits had also ceased, following his return to Dublin in 1621, so Joan's spiritual support now came mainly through visits once a week on Thursdays to the local minister, Mr Wetherell[38] of Walton-on-Thames.

During this rather lonely interlude for Joan, did Dr Hart not step forward again to provide solace? Perhaps because he had been overlooked for the role of chaplain, or their relationship had cooled as she basked in the reflected glow of Dr Ussher and then Mr Hooker, John Hart is for once almost silent. He does mention in passing that Mr Dod paid at least one further visit in early 1625, and his choice of words (*'one time when Mr Dod was with her three months before her death'*) implies that this may not have been Mr Dod's only visit during these later years.

[37] See Hooker's entry in 'Brief Lives (concluded)'.
[38] A board in St Mary's church in Walton-on-Thames records that Brian Wetherell was vicar between 1618 and 1623.

Rapture and Regret

'You must forgive me that I have been so unkind unto you, who for so many years together have shown me so much love, and been a means of my everlasting comfort and happiness…'

For the last section of his book, Dr Hart moves the action forward four years, like a sudden shift to the denouement scene of a play. In doing so he skips over, unmentioned, the death of the Drakes' son John at the age of three, in 1623, and provides no indication of how this might have affected Joan, although given her fragility and lack of spiritual support, much can be imagined. All that we are told is that *'about this time, a strong distaste was given her from a near friend…not necessary here to relate, nor to our purpose'*. Hart does not tell us who was at fault: it seems that while he still kept a watchful eye on her during this period, it was from a distance.



By early 1625 Joan was bedridden, and convinced that she was dying. She told her husband that she wanted her final days to be spent at her parents' house, Shardeloes near Amersham, and was determined to leave Esher as soon as possible. When Francis demurred with the excuse that he had business to finish, she simply took two servants and left. Soon, Dr Hart heard reports that Joan was having some sort of feverish episode in which she was *'in a surpassing extraordinary strange humor of talking of the best things perpetually night and day without intermission, not having any jot of sleep…whereby her spirits were both much spent and tired out'*. He took it upon himself to fetch Mr Dod, and together they went to Shardeloes, where Joan explained that she had much she wanted to say, and little time left in which to say it.

Hart's account of Joan's final days, which unfolded over Easter 1625, reads like a series of diary entries: a countdown to death.

Sunday 10th April

Joan forbade her remaining children (William, who was then nineteen, Francis about fifteen and Joan aged ten) to go to church, as she could not be certain that she would last another week and wanted to prepare them for her death. She expounded scripture to them from memory, and gave them her blessing.

Monday 11th April

Joan spent the day in conference with Mr Dod, but it was not like the old times because she was the one in perpetual motion – speaking ill of this life

and wondering aloud about heaven and eternal glory and the life to come – and he was the listener. She was not sleeping, and barely eating.

Tuesday 12th April

At eight o'clock in the morning, the residents of the Tothills' manor house were *'strangely interrupted'* by otherworldly shrieks from Joan's bedroom, where she sat bolt upright in bed, staring upwards at the ceiling, her chest heaving, repeating the same phrases, over and over, at a great speed:

'What's this, what's this! I am undone, I am undone! I can't endure it any longer! Look, the Angels have come for me! They are waiting! Bring me my white robes! Quickly, quickly! Let me be gone, let me be gone! It overcomes me, it overcomes me! What shall I do, what shall I do?'



Whatever was the vision that Joan was seeing, it was one of extreme ecstasy, and the onlookers remained at some distance, tied to the spot in wonder.

Dr Hart thought she would fly away, leaving a hole in the roof. Francis had lost control: he was pacing up and down, weeping and wringing his hands.

When Joan did eventually return to her senses, she was able to describe what had happened. She had been praying, pleading with God that He would not absent himself forever, and that just once before her death He would reveal Christ to her and give her some brief sensation of His love, when she had a sudden feeling of such unsupportable joy rushing in at her that she could not help but cry out.

Next, in the retelling of a moment that gives the impression that his text had been worked on, honed, and revised, Dr Hart indicates to the reader where he had, at least to some extent, obtained the permission to write his book. He reports that Joan said:

'After I am gone, never despair of anyone, how desperately miserable so ever their Case might be, which at its worst could never exceed mine, but use and apply the same means unto them that you have used with me, and they will prevail at length.'[39]

That afternoon, as the room filled with more relatives and friends who had come to share her happiness – this being an unusual experience – Joan had another vision; and later on, with a few remaining to watch over her, she spent the night singing psalms. Dr Hart was most pleased that she even asked for Psalm 30, which he had *'always urged upon her, to belong unto her'* but *'dared never appropriate or apply the same unto myself, until now'*. It was their own

[39] Schmidt cites this as an example of the 'Puritan conversion narrative' to be copied and cultivated. See: Schmidt, Melancholy and the Care of the Soul. p. 74.

psalm[40] and they sang it together: *'...and so that Tuesday night [we] sung the same very cheerfully'*. She had not slept for a week.

Wednesday 13th April

When Mrs Tothill came to see her daughter on Wednesday morning, she found her already out of bed and dressed entirely in white *'like a bride'* from head to toe. Turning to her mother, Joan told her: *'I caused myself to be dressed thus this morning, that you might see how I would be laid in the grave'*. Hearing this, Mrs Tothill burst into tears, and had to leave the room to steady herself.

Joan spent the morning and afternoon taking her leave of members of the household, giving each a moment of her time where she passed on advice suitable to their station. In the evening, she called for her father and when he came downstairs again, Dr Hart, apparently brazen enough to accost a grieving man leaving his dying daughter's room, *'did what I could in a fair way to have fished from him, what she had said unto him',* but obtained only generalities, Mr Tothill preferring to keep his own counsel.

Next it was Dr Hart's turn to be summoned, and Joan asked him to sit beside her. She was solemn at first, thanking him for his care and the pains he had taken with her then, taking his hand, she asked if he would do her a favour. The favour, which he found strange and needless, was that he should forgive her. He protested that instead it was she that should forgive him, as he had failed both in his duty and love for her.

[40] Psalm 30 is one of thanksgiving, reflecting back on God's goodness in being delivered from trouble, blessed in life, showered with mercy, and the turning of mourning into dancing. It includes the line: "Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning" (30:5).

She said: *'You must forgive me that I have been so unkind unto you, who for so many years together have shown me so much love, and been a means of my everlasting comfort and happiness; for I have not loved you by the hundred part, in that measure I ought to have done, according to that love you have shown to me.'*



The reason for her reticence, she explained, was that until she was assured of God's love, she could not love him or anyone else. But now that the Holy Spirit had been rekindled within her, her only regret was that in so short a time left, she was *'so unfit and disabled to perform my desires'*.

Was this a declaration of love, of sorts, and a statement of regret on her deathbed that she had not been in a position to act upon it? Or simply a long-overdue explanation of her uncharitable treatment of Dr Hart for all those years, despite being aware of his utter devotion?

Whatever it was that she was trying to say, or how he understood it, the matter was resolved in so far as it could be, and Dr Hart was dismissed.

Thursday 14th and Good Friday 15th April

Dr Hart's prose becomes quite poetic as he describes the changes that occurred towards the end of the week.

'For, lo, the scene now changes again, the curtain waves and tosses a little with an uncouth[41] *wind… she who lately was in a glorious triumph, flying away forcibly from us all, as it were with Eagles wings mounting upwards, is now suddenly surprised with an extreme fainting and weakness of spirits…not being as formerly so lively and substantial.'*

A letter was sent to London, begging for two physicians to be sent urgently, in the hope that Joan might be given some potions to make her sleep, there having now been ten days of wakefulness.

Easter Saturday 16th and Easter Sunday 17th April

Mr Dod was seen entering Shardeloes on Saturday, where he was going to keep a private fast for Joan, accompanied by someone with a familiar profile – Thomas Hooker. It was a partial reunion of the divines who had attended her in earlier years. Soon afterwards, they were joined by a new face, a minister called Dr Preston, who had been present at the deathbed of King James I just three weeks before in his capacity as Chaplain to the Prince, now King Charles I.

[41] Archaic meaning: Mysterious; unfamiliar.

In the afternoon, Joan asked for the three churchmen to pray with her, after which she told them that her time was now at hand. Her parents, husband and children were called for, and she blessed and took leave of them, then began quietly singing hymns and verses of psalms, until by Easter Sunday her hollow, low voice could scarcely be understood.

Easter Monday 18th April

On Sunday night Joan finally fell asleep, and when she awoke on Easter Monday morning, she found herself surrounded by family, friends, and the divines, and rejoiced and smiled, taking their hands in turn as they were offered. Before midday, she beckoned to Mr Dod to join her, and lifted up her hands in prayer; then as he was about to begin, her arms suddenly collapsed and she departed.

Two days later Joan was buried all in white as she had requested, with Dr Preston, the King's chaplain, preaching her funeral sermon. Among the praises that Dr Hart wrote down, and possibly himself spoke during the service, were these:

On her melancholy (a great understatement): *'She was a good creature, in her natural state, qualified with the best of mere nature's endowments, accidentally encountering with some grand difficulties, which a little overcame her natural parts.*'

On her legacy: *'The vision is for an appointed time, though it tarry, yet wait, for it will come, as it did unto this good woman after ten years expectation… and in the end did manifoldly surmount all her sufferings and*

troubles…leaving herself as the matchless monument of God's unspeakable mercy, unto all stout, stiff, and hard-hearted sinners for ever.'

On her character: *'She always wore her worst side outmost, and wonderfully cloaked all the good things she ever did or said.'*

What is meant by this last observation becomes clear on further consideration; i.e. that the divines saw her at her worst, as a difficult woman possessed, who argued with them at every turn; but this was not her true character. In secret, behind their backs, she had a glorious, if melancholic, temperament that her waiting-woman, and of course Dr Hart, were well aware of, but she forbade them to disclose: *'it was treason for any she entrusted to betray any part or parcel of her goodness'.*

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Carved in marble on Joan's memorial[42] her husband chose to reveal that, in another challenge to convention, she had nursed her youngest son John herself, and that they were entombed together.

[42] Joan Drake's memorial is in the Drake Chapel in St. Mary's Church, Amersham; the text is reproduced in the Appendix.

Part 2: Afterlife

Predestination

Whether it was the prime cause of her melancholy, or a contributory factor, Joan Drake's spiritual angst created an awkward predicament for those attempting a cure. The Puritans took the doctrine of Predestination from Calvin, which stated that God had already decided membership of the small group of people who were saved and would have eternal life (the 'elect'), and that therefore everyone else was barred from access to salvation and sentenced to eternal hellfire (the 'reprobates')[43]. The major conundrum arising from Predestination was this: how could anyone know for certain if they were among the elect? The Puritans' answer was that at some point in your life, you would receive a profound sense of God's 'saving grace' that was your assurance of being chosen, but that while some might experience this in their youth, and therefore live a life of great peace and security, others might have to wait until near death, by which time they would presumably be somewhat distraught. For this latter group, the only recourse was to conform to Puritan beliefs and practices in the hope of a future sign from God, all the while trying to avoid the temptations offered by the Devil. This was also the response to those who pointed out that, since being saved or rejected was decided before one was born, they could see no point in living according to strict and unpalatable rules as it made no difference to one's chances of salvation. Understandably, the Predestination doctrine caused great anxiety for many adherents, but especially those of a melancholic disposition, who were quite likely to be thrown into a

[43] Predestination developed in reaction to the Catholic position that a sinner could gain salvation by penance or paying for an indulgence. The argument was that only a small percentage of people would be saved, sometimes said to be as few as one in a thousand.

deep, even suicidal, despair that could easily provoke physical symptoms unresponsive to the rudimentary medicine available. In this context it's unsurprising that Joan Drake's spiritual angst was not quite as unique as Dr Hart maintains in his written account.

The irony in Joan's case was that she did not appear to be particularly religious before her marriage, but the more divines she met, then the more she learned of Puritan theology and the relevant biblical passages, and also of how to exploit the divines' weaknesses. Dr Hart observed that she became adept at backing up her arguments with various passages from the Bible that she had found while apparently randomly *'tumbling and tossing'* over the scriptures: an act that, like a game of chance, would have been perceived as heresy by the divines. So the challenge for the divines involved – Mr Dod in particular – was basically how to proceed in the face of such a fiercely held and argued belief in her own damnation, on the part of an obviously intelligent and charismatic woman who might serve as a dangerous example to others. Their aim was therefore to turn her doubt into a positive sign by attributing her anxiety and counterarguments to the Devil's wiles and insisting that to suffer was a sign of God's love, and thus to prepare her in the best possible way for her salvation. Their approach mainly took the form of a rudimentary 'talking cure', but one that involved unrelenting scrutiny and religious pressure to conform. Once possession by the Devil was assumed, all of Joan's words and deeds were then interpreted by those closest to her on this basis, and her own humanity was, to a large extent, ignored. Her parents, husband, children, servants, neighbours and friends, as well as the divines who put forward this diagnosis, all looked past her to the enemy beyond. This must have been hard for Joan to take in, and it is

little wonder that her hold on sanity began to dissolve. The strategies she had available to fight for the survival of her selfhood were limited, so she was forced to focus on those that were still within her control. She defied Mr Dod with dramatic distractions, found rebuttals to his pronouncements, and sent out her maid to seek alternative arguments that she could use. She refused to take the sacrament or sing uplifting psalms. She formulated a determined, if impracticable, plan to escape, and in desperation, she cut herself and swallowed pins. Against convention, she nursed her precious youngest son. Then, as her final acts of defiance, she symbolically left her husband, and specified how she wanted to be buried.

In the end, when living became untenable, psychosis was a natural response to Joan's disconnection from reality. The divines had tried for a decade to pull her back to the path of salvation, while Joan's despair threatened on many occasions to cross over into blasphemy, so of course they hailed her deathbed visions of Christ as a sign from God that she was, after all, one of the elect. They maintained that Joan's brief moment of joy and rapture made up for her miserable experience of life on this earth: *'if a touch, a taste, a short glance only be so forcible and ravishing, how surmountingly excellent and glorious shall that estate be to drink at the fountainhead of the beatific vision, out of the rivers of His pleasures forever?'* The news of this joy spread by word of mouth, and in letters: it became a cornerstone of Thomas Hooker's theology, and also the *'perpetual monument'* of Dr Hart's account.

But it could possibly all have all turned out quite differently, as there were several near-contemporaneous cases that bear striking resemblances to Joan's, but had more positive outcomes.

The Survivors

Despite the Puritan divines' rejoicing at the timely vision before her death, the 'cure' had been a disaster for Joan Drake personally, in that she did not live to enjoy God's grace for a longer period, or to witness, in better health, her three surviving children grow to adulthood. Dr Hart perhaps did not know, or learned only much later, that there were other women who had survived similar experiences – some even under the guidance of Mr Dod – and lived on quite happily.

When Mr Dod 'retired' from Joan's case in 1620, worn out by four years of intense scriptural arguments, one might have expected him to return home to Northamptonshire to recuperate. Instead, selflessly and/or reluctantly, he ministered to Lady Judith Isham of Lamport Hall, who was also suffering from religious melancholy. As with Joan Drake, Lady Isham's story is known via a secondary source, in this case her daughter Elizabeth Isham who wrote her autobiography in 1638. Remembering her mother's illness some twenty years before, Elizabeth wrote, simply, that *'my mother began to be something sad'*. There are remarkable similarities to Joan's case: Judith Isham was a sickly woman, often confined to her bedroom; she suffered from a spiritual anxiety and was *'tempted with blasphemous thoughts also of hardness of heart in concealing her wickedness, doubtings and great distrust of Gods mercies'*; and the experience with Mr Dod was not without its problems: Elizabeth wrote *'I*

am not of their opinion who extol Mr Dod above all others'[44]. The differences were that Judith Isham was never suicidal or delusional, and also that she apparently kept a notebook of remembrances detailing the self-examination of her suffering, which is no longer extant but was used by her daughter as a reference. The most jarring contrast to Joan's case, though, is that with the help of her religious adviser, the comfort of friends and the written reflections on her experience, Judith made a quite rapid and full recovery, and lived for a further six years. Her daughter wrote: *'I can no better express my mother's troubles than out of the notes of her own hand-writing, which she kept as remembrances and instructions to herself: how horribly low she was, the Lord leaving her, as it were, to herself [and] the vile visions and outrages, the sinful words the which the tempter did assault her weakness.'* But like Joan, Judith Isham died in 1625, so John Dod may have attended two funerals of his 'cases' that year.

A few years earlier, in 1606-7, Dionys Fitzherbert – a young woman in her mid-twenties employed as a lady-in-waiting in the Puritan household of the Countess of Huntingdon at Ashby de la Zouch Castle in Leicestershire – suffered a period of religious anxiety that she termed a spiritual battle for her soul. Initially a self-inflicted illness, resulting from a faux pas of which she felt ashamed, this evolved into a conviction (like Joan Drake's) that she was damned after having committed the Unpardonable Sin against God. This led to blasphemous ravings and hallucinations, during which she became suicidal and felt that her body was breaking apart. But she too slowly recovered. After having

[44] This sentiment may also have been due to Mr Dod's close involvement in Elizabeth's own undesired marriage arrangements at the age of eighteen. Despite this negative view, a list of the books in her library made in 1649 included John Dod's 'A plain and familiar exposition of the Ten Commandments', as well as works by Dr John Preston.

been confined to her room for a month, she was cared for first by a Dr Carter and his wife in London until the delusions receded, then was sent home to her family in Oxfordshire, and finally to the peace and quiet of Wales, where normality returned. Like Judith and Elizabeth Isham, she wrote down her experiences in an autobiographical form, partly to offer support and comfort (as Joan Drake also wished) to those in similar circumstances. There were other tensions influencing Dionys Fitzherbert's behaviour that chime with Joan's story, such as the question of marriage causing family conflict, financial worries, and the constraints of social conventions for independently minded women.

We cannot know today whether Joan Drake had some physical health condition that contributed to her early death. Her symptoms could have been caused by any one of a number of disorders, and even at the time it was recognised that chronic health conditions and psychological problems were linked and impacted each other. It is also clear that in comparison to the survivors mentioned here, other factors may have contributed to Joan's predicament, such as a lack of 'peace and quiet' or a comforting circle of friends. Dr Hart mentions only three women who had a role in supporting Joan through her suffering: her mother, Mrs Tothill; Sarah Harris, a gentlewoman and 'cousin'[45]; and Susannah Garbrand, her waiting-woman. The impression is that Joan did not have close female companions of her own age, or that they had fallen by the wayside as a result of her troubles.

[45] In this period 'cousin' had a broader meaning, and could refer to any familial relationship, especially when unclear, or simply friendship.

In late 1622, however, Elizabeth Wheeler of Esher made her will,[46] in which she bequeathed *'to my loving friend Mrs Joan Drake, the wife of Francis Drake Esquire, my needlework cushion made with flowers called water flowers'*. Elizabeth died the following year, and one can picture Joan later sitting in bed, perhaps still using the needlework cushion – with its floral pattern imitating the water lilies on her precious pond garden beyond the orchards at Esher Place – and reminiscing about the times she had spent in the company of her recently departed friend.

Joan also lost other friends in 1623: her long-serving waiting-woman, Susannah Garbrand, left Esher together with her husband Thomas Hooker, who had been (at least initially) highly appreciated by Joan as her resident divine. Following these departures Joan would have felt lonelier than ever, and the struggle to prevent her premature death was now solely in the hands of the divines, whose work made little contribution in this respect. There were, though, already other approaches emerging for the treatment of melancholy, much closer to home than Joan could have imagined, that might have proved more beneficial.

[46] The will of Elizabeth Wheeler of Esher was made on 9th December 1622, and proved on 11th November 1623. Francis Drake was a witness. (TNA 11/142/498)

Alternative Medicine

How does a mother's long-term disorder affect her children? How did Joan's apparent lack of interest in them, along with her distressing illness, leave its mark?

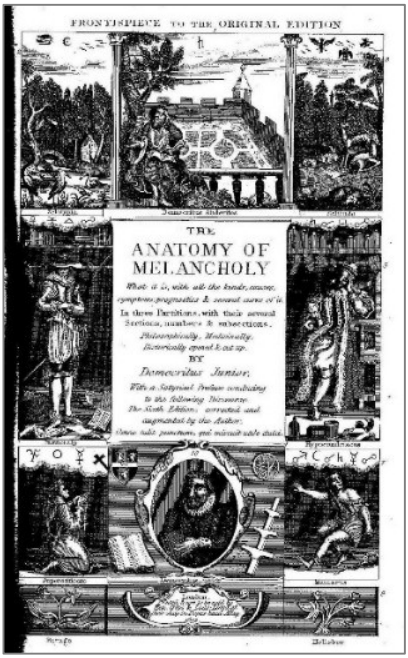
William Drake emerged from a blighted childhood as a serious and bookish young man. His education seems to have taken place partly in Amersham, presumably residing at least in term-time with his grandparents at Shardeloes, since his tutor was Charles Croke, rector of Agmondisham[47], who had gained a Doctorate of Divinity from Christ Church, Oxford. This link may have helped William to be accepted at the same college: he arrived at Christ Church to begin his studies at the beginning of the Michaelmas Term in autumn 1623, at the age of seventeen[48]. He would have been aware, having been brought up at Esher Place, the former home of Cardinal Wolsey, that he was now entering the college – created upon the dissolution of a twelfth century Augustinian priory and originally called Cardinal College – that Wolsey had founded before his fall from grace.

The college library, where William spent many hours pursuing his quest for knowledge, was housed in the former monastic refectory on the south side of the cloister, adjacent to the Cathedral. William would have come to know the college librarian, a Church of England minister by the name of Robert Burton. This gentleman was a scholarly, solitary and celibate figure in his late forties,

[47] Agmondisham is an old name for Amersham.
[48] The Dean of Christ Church, Oxford recorded a Drake 'gentleman' in his registry for the 1623/4 academic year.

absorbed almost entirely in his books and his writing, in whom William might have recognised a kindred spirit, and who could indeed have encouraged his lifelong interest in reading and self-education. This bookishness, which (as evidenced by his later writings) mutated into an icy detachment in regard to other people, may have been in part a deliberate means of distraction from the challenges of everyday life.

Robert Burton had recently finalised a revision of his major work, 'The Anatomy of Melancholy', first published a couple of years previously in 1621. Despite not possessing a medical background, in this volume he had elaborated – with great apparent authority – a fulsome history of melancholy: its types, causes and cures.



Burton had begun this work as a result of his own life experience, and he appears to have been concerned enough in his youth about his physical and mental state to have consulted Simon Forman, the renowned physician and astrologer in London, who noted his patient's *'great heaviness and drowsiness in the head, pain in the stomach, sluggishness of the blood…and wind in the bowels' and diagnosed melancholy, with the conclusion that 'he carries death upon him'*.

In researching and writing his tome, shuttling between his own library at Christ Church and the Bodleian, and collecting evidence from both classical and contemporary medical sources, Burton found solace to the extent that he wrote: *'I write of melancholy, by being busy to avoid melancholy. There is no greater cause of melancholy than idleness, no better cure than business.'* The ample evidence he found led him to the view that melancholy was a symptom of the human condition, and was to be taken seriously because it impaired normal functioning. He concluded further that it had become an epidemic in his own time; so he broadened his reading to include religious, philosophical, historical and literary works.

While acknowledging that everyone experiences melancholy individually, Burton identified some common themes. He noted that the condition might arise from love, religion, poverty, bereavement, or other stresses, even scholarly pursuits (*'over-learning'*). He noted how attitudes to the condition had changed over time, from it having been viewed as a sign of madness, to possession by the Devil, to even a mark of artistic genius, and also how there appeared to be a hereditary aspect. He focused on the symbiosis

between the body and the mind, in which mental anguish gave rise to physical symptoms and, vice versa, where chronic sickness could give rise to depression.

His magnum opus became an epic self-help guide, which promoted introspection as a way to change thoughts and behaviours. In addition to the accepted methods of blood-letting and purging, Burton's list of cures, unusually for his time, was practical and holistic, advocating treatment of the person and not simply the disease: he recognised how sufferers were soothed by the natural world, and recommended fresh air, slow walks in the countryside and swimming in the cold water of rivers and lakes; he proposed appealing to the senses though natural light, warm baths, perfumes, and herbal remedies, and insisted that diet could contribute much to recovery through avoidance of foods that were difficult to digest, and drinking cordials instead of wine; he recommended rest and relaxation, such as listening to soft music or singing in the company of friends, and stressed the importance of undisturbed sleep. He preached moderation, even in religion, whereby the patient should avoid both excessive zeal and also neglect of religious duties, but find comfort in the routine activities of prayer and rituals.

Burton seemed to view his book as a work in progress and was constantly adding to it, so that the first edition of 900 pages would expand to 2,000 pages (over half a million words) in the sixth and last edition before his death. Fortunately, his writing style was highly engaging – with copious quotations, case studies, anecdotes and digressions – and he was among the first authors to show real awareness of, and speak directly to, his readers.

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Over 300 years later, in 1943, an antiquarian bookseller came across a large bundle of papers in the library at Shardeloes, containing several notebooks and diaries dating from the seventeenth century. At first, these were thought to have been written by William Tothill, Joan's father, but in the mid-1970s they were definitively attributed to her son, William.

In the notebooks, known as 'commonplace books', William had kept lists of every book he read (hundreds of titles from classical philosophers and historians to humanist thinkers) and made notes on everything he found of interest, or learned from conversations and debates, as well as extracts from letters he received, quotes he wanted to remember, fables and proverbs, medical remedies and details of his estate dealings. These notes would form the basis of his approach to life: the acquisition of useful knowledge and its practical application, via rules of behaviour that he devised for himself to enhance his fortunes. Many of these rules were misanthropic and self-seeking in the extreme, though one must admit that William also displayed honesty in committing them to paper.

In his dealings with other men – whom overall he considered deceitful, vain liars – William aimed to treat social situations like a game in which he arrived fully prepared with background information, but said little, giving nothing away, yet noting what views others had that could be exploited later for monetary gain. He evaluated everyone only for their potential value to him in financial terms or for their contacts. Any new acquaintance would probably

have thought him an introverted snob, and many must have sensed his manipulative approach toward them.

William approached marriage, and women generally, in a similarly detached way, as a means to an end of acquiring more property and providing children, which he thought were *'certain cares, but uncertain comforts'* and hugely expensive. He was particularly suspicious of intelligent women, who he felt overawed or tricked their husbands, and he noted the dangers implicit in decisions made in the heat of passion. As for religion, he believed that it was the only way that a woman's natural libertine impulses were tempered, though he was highly critical of Puritan preachers who *'attached themselves to women like the serpent applied himself to Eve at the beginning'*. The upshot, unsurprisingly, of his 'isolationist' personality was that he did not find a suitable wife and remained a bachelor.

William's younger brother Francis, on the other hand, married three times, and evidently possessed a more sociable temperament, although he too was troubled[49]. Witnessing their mother's long decline, and the procession of visiting divines who failed to relieve it, must have been a deeply unsettling experience for the two young boys.

[49] See Francis's entry in 'Brief Lives (concluded)'.

William Drake mentioned Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy in one of his diaries discovered at Shardeloes, but it is not clear when he read it, or how much of it he ploughed through. One can only wonder what he thought of the book, and whether he associated the subject matter with his mother, who might well have benefited from Burton's presciently relevant alternative medicine.



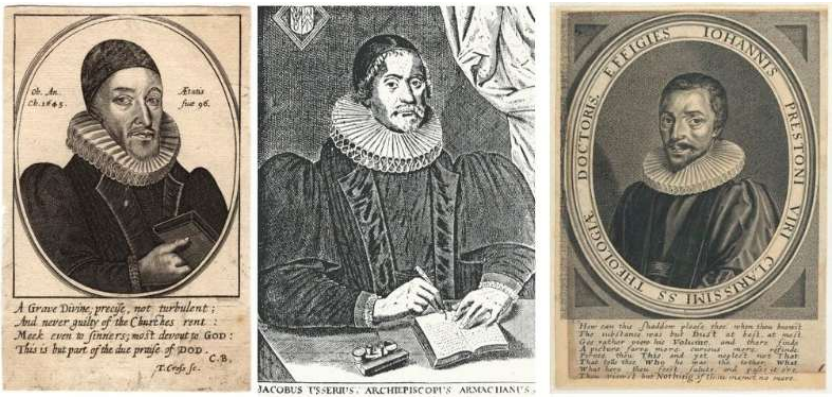
Biography, Memoir, Eulogy and Love Letter

Joan Drake's deathbed confession to Dr Hart suggests that she may have developed intense feelings for him, and guilt resulting from this could have added to her anxiety. Even if Hart was inwardly elated by her words (despite the circumstances), upon reflection he may have come to the view that an emotional relationship was the natural outcome of their time spent in close proximity, discussing matters of great personal import, which broke down the otherwise strict gender (and possibly class) barriers. Through his extensive contacts, Dr Hart may have known of others in a similar situation, such as Ezekiel Rogers, chaplain to Lady Joan Barrington (c.1558–1641) who wrote to her: *'You were the first with whom I had any so serious and solemn converse about matters tending to the work of grace... I have therefore good cause to have you in my choicest remembrance… I must not, I cannot forget those times, when the Lord working powerfully on your soul, made you (in seeking my poor help) an occasion of much quickening and benefit to me.'* The letter reveals that Lady Barrington also had mental struggles: *'I hope that your old disease of melancholy is banished away by faith, as it is high time.'*

Dr Hart of course intended his book about Joan's case to be a spiritual guide, but it also became rather more: a biography, a memoir, and a eulogy that reads in places like a recollection of a lost love. His stated aim was to help others suffering from spiritual anxiety, but he chose to include so many personal details about Joan, which she had recounted to him on their walks or horse rides together, or which he had observed as an eyewitness: her upbringing; her character and appearance; feelings about her marriage; an episode of domestic

violence; her physical ailments and suicidal thoughts; her expression of affection; the fine detail of the final days. Whether he realised it or not as he was writing, we can sense his emotions, such as his jealousy of the more charismatic and learned divines, his excitement at the secret mission to Essex, his passion during the argument in the garden, and his utter anguish at Joan's death. Was Dr Hart, in his pious outpourings, oblivious to the intimacy of his revelations?

The book was first published in 1647, in a brief period of respite during the Civil War, as "Trodden Down Strength, by the god of Strength. Or, Mrs Drake Revived" but under a partial pseudonym: 'Hart On-Hi'. A later reprint used his full name – John Hart D.D. – but with a new, and much longer, title: "The Firebrand taken out of the Fire, or The Wonderful History, Case and Cure of Mistress Drake, sometime the wife of Francis Drake of Esher in the County of Surrey, Esq., who was under the power and severe discipline of Satan for the space of ten years, and was redeemed from his tyranny in a wonderful manner a little before her death, by the great mercy of God, and (instrumentally) by the extraordinary pains, prayers and fastings of four reverend divines, whose names are here subscribed, viz. Dod; Ussher; Hooker; Preston."



John Dod; James Ussher; John Preston

Dr Hart called his work a 'Tragic-Comedy'. In the meaning of the period, this was not a mixture of tragedy and comedy (for there was little light relief in Joan's story) but a play that had a serious theme throughout, yet a happy ending. Given his professed urgency to spread the message of hope to doubters, the date of first publishing this account of Joan Drake's case is puzzling. Why did Hart hesitate so long after her death – fully twenty-two years – and then publish initially under a pseudonym? Perhaps he had waited until all of those most closely involved had died and could not question his version of events: Francis Drake in 1634; John Dod in 1645; and Thomas Hooker in 1647, the same year that the book first appeared in Mr Pilkington's bookshop.

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Dr Hart's writings provide two sources of evidence about Joan Drake's later life and her relationship with her loyal 'Relater'. The early letters to Dr Ussher testify that Hart's intentions – to help her find peace – were, at least initially, virtuous and beyond reproach; but his long-delayed book, a treasure

trove of literary eyewitness detail, unwittingly exposes the reality that her untimely death was at least in part an unintended consequence of the all-engulfing and perhaps ultimately suffocating cure for which, with the backing of her husband and parents, Hart placed himself front and centre, orchestrating proceedings.

And these proceedings were indeed vast: Dr Hart had tapped into the close-knit community of like-minded souls who were dismayed at the ungodly ways of the world and wished for a more direct conversation with God, unhindered by the man-made church hierarchy. He was helped by the fact that several of those involved had effectively been excluded from conventional Anglican church activities, due to their refusal to conform to its standards and practices. They were therefore free to intervene where patronage from wealthy Puritan sympathisers, such as the Drakes and Ishams, was available. Further, this 'underground' network was maintained by frequent meetings in various safe houses, and by these means, the details of Joan's case spread far and wide, attracting visitors, such as John Forbes (exiled from Scotland and resident in Holland), and advice by post, such as from another Scotsman, Robert Bruce. For a decade Joan was the embodiment of one of the Puritans' thorniest issues: the worst case of a seeming epidemic of religious melancholy. Hers was therefore a cure that had to succeed in spiritual terms, because otherwise the Puritan network, and its foundational tenets, would have been seen to fail. Accordingly, there was joy, not despair, during Joan's final days.

In Dr Hart's defence, one could argue that Joan was beset by a range of insuperable problems: physical illness; mental troubles and spiritual anxiety; dislike of her husband; worry over their financial position; distress over her

inability to uphold the duties of a good wife and manage the household; suspicion of Puritanism and pressure from its daily burdens; the quandary, and guilt, over her feelings for John Hart; and heartbreak following the loss of her precious last child. But the fervent presence of so many divines, over so many years, and the constant pressure to conform to their demands, was surely not conducive to her wellbeing. Yet, if she could not write her own autobiographical remembrances and instructions to achieve some form of comfort, she was at least fortunate to have Dr Hart as a confidant, who faithfully noted everything down. Thus, most poignantly for posterity, in addition to the main religious message of Hart's text, we are privileged to observe, as he did, Joan's struggles and coping mechanisms, and to relive the complex and intriguing intimacy of their relationship.



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Afterword: Jasper Heartwell

John Hart's book, and the memoir of Mrs Joan Drake that it contains, is little known today and is mainly cited briefly in academic circles as a case study of religious melancholy. The only publication that has attempted a broader analysis is a two-part article "Called by thy name, leave us not: The case of Mrs. Joan Drake"[50] by George Huntston Williams (1914-2000), from 1968. Williams was a noted theology professor who held the Hollis Chair of Divinity at the Harvard Divinity School between 1963 and 1980. He was less interested in Joan Drake's life story than in how her case influenced the pastoral career of Thomas Hooker, who became a prominent figure among New England Puritans. While the first section of the article provides a useful overview of key passages for anyone who has not read the original book, the second part – in which Williams dramatically unveils the 'identity' of the book's author ('the Relater') – has created some confusion. Williams took at face value the Bodleian Library's classification of the author of the three letters to Dr James Ussher as 'J Heartwell', also assuming that this same Heartwell was likewise the author of the 1647 book about Joan's case (as discussed earlier, the fact of shared authorship is clear from the text of the letters).

Based on this assumption, he began to search the Jacobean archives, alighting on Jasper Heartwell, a young law student[51] at Middle Temple, whose

[50] George Huntston Williams, 1968. Called by thy name, leave us not: The case of Mrs. Joan Drake, a formative episode in the pastoral career of Thomas Hooker in England. Harvard Library Bulletin XVI (2), April 1968: pp. 111-128; Harvard Library Bulletin XVI (3), July 1968: pp. 278-300.

[51] Williams notes that Jasper Heartwell was not being admitted 'generally' (where the age would typically be 16) but 'specially', in which case he was probably a year or two older.

family were from Preston Deanery in Northamptonshire, conveniently close to John Dod's ministry at Canons Ashby. He then proceeded to provide the logical basis to support his proposition of Heartwell as author, by eliminating all other apparent options (Francis Drake; Joan's father or mother; Mr Dod or one of the other attending ministers; a close relative; a woman, possibly a waiting-woman; or a physician).

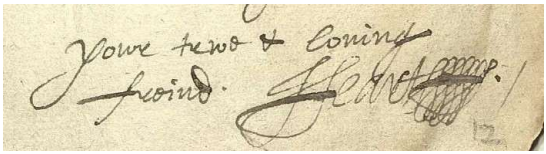
By this point, Williams appears to have developed a substantial level of 'confirmation bias', leading him to downplay spectacularly the mass of evidence to the contrary. He called the identification of John Hart as author by George Thomason[52] – the respected contemporaneous expert on pamphlets – a 'faulty seventeenth-century ascription'; assumed that a young law student (Jasper Heartwell) could by 1616 have somehow already established the letters' cited volume of contacts across the close-knit Puritan network, as well as the religious authority to ask for support; ignored the fact that the 1617 letter refers to a 1613 visit to England by Ussher when the writer accompanied him to Chester (Jasper Heartwell would still have been a schoolboy); and passed over without comment the jaunty tone of the letters, which clearly indicates friendship between men of similar age, status and religious education.

There is also the existence, unmentioned by Williams, of John Hart's first work, the 'Burning Bush', published in 1616 with a dedication to the Drakes and Tothills, and the fact that, while the 1647 publication took place

[52] George Thomason (d. 1666) was a bookseller and publisher based in St Paul's Churchyard, who began collecting copies of all books, pamphlets, and newssheets printed after the outbreak of the Civil War in 1641. By 1661, his collection consisted of over 22,000 publications. It is now held in the British Library.

under the partial pseudonym ‘Hart On-Hi’, a later reprint of 1782 used his full name – John Hart D.D.

But in the final analysis, all of these arguments against Williams’s theory are secondary, because a simple mistake had been made by those classifying the letters at the Bodleian. The originals (which Williams understandably never saw as he was based on the other side of the Atlantic) clearly show that the signature is ‘J Heart’ plus a few decorative strokes of the pen, and definitely not ‘J Heartwell’.



Brief Lives (concluded)

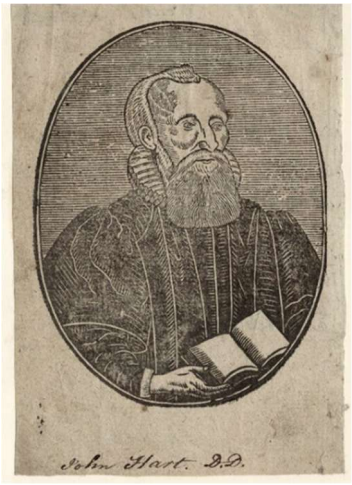
Dr John Hart (spiritual adviser and confidant)

At some unknown date, presumably after the death of her son William in 1669, a Latin inscription dedicated to Joan Drake was added on a plaque beneath William's bust in the Drake Chapel inside St Mary's Church, Amersham[53]. This referred to the book written by 'a worthy author', qualified with the phrase 'no more than a witness'. Was this meant to imply a widespread belief that the Relater was, in fact, more than just an observer? The mystery as to who commissioned the plaque at such a late date is also intriguing.

John Hart's 1647 book was not the end of his literary career: he was responsible for a number of other later publications[54], either as author or editor, and a woodblock portrait of him as an old man appeared on the frontispiece of some of them. One publisher even offered a second volume of his collected works, as a 'famous author'. We know from his letters that he was resident in the Whitefriars area of London during most of the period of his involvement with Joan. Apart from this, no other facts are known about his life, not even the dates of his birth and death, or whether he ever married.

[53] The full translated text appears in the Appendix.

[54] As researched in the EEBO-TCP corpus consisting of the works represented in the Early English Books Online collections known as Short Title Catalogues I and II (based on the Pollard & Redgrave and Wing short title catalogues respectively), as well as the Thomason Tracts and the Early English Books Tract Supplement collections. Together these trace the history of English thought from the first book printed in English in 1475 through to 1700.



John Hart as an older man, from the frontispiece of a book

Francis Drake (husband)

Francis Drake remarried twice, firstly to Philadelphia Davies with whom he had a daughter, Mary, born in 1630; and then to Anne White. He pursued a parliamentary career until his death in 1634. In his will, he left the Manor of Walton-on-Thames to his younger son Francis, on the basis that William had already been well provided for through inheritance from the Tothills. William was instead offered 'the pictures in the gallery at Esher at his choice with the largest hangings in the great chamber there and other furniture.' Among other bequests Francis left £30 to 'Joan Hooker who lives in New England at her marriage' (Thomas Hooker's daughter), and £10 to John Dod.

William Drake (eldest son)

When John Hart's book was published in 1647, Joan's eldest son, now Sir William Drake, 1st Baronet of Shardeloes, was aged forty-one and reputedly

in Italy (he later claimed to be able to read Machiavelli in his original language), having left England during the early uncertainties of the Civil War. He told those who queried his decision that it was for health reasons, and indeed he had never possessed the deportment of a soldier. He returned to England at the Restoration in 1660, and died unmarried in 1669.

Francis Drake (younger son)

Unlike his brother William, Francis (or 'Frank' as he was known) Drake of Walton-on-Thames was an active Parliamentarian MP during the Civil War. Locally, he was best known for harassing the Diggers who had set up an encampment on common land on St George's Hill in 1649, where he organised attacks in an attempt to drive them away. He married three times, the first of which gave him connections with the Verney family, now famous for the survival of more than 30,000 family letters from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. In one of these, Lady Mary Verney wrote to her husband in 1648 about Frank Drake that: 'there is no trust to be given to anything he says, for he is one day so kind and the next so churlish that there is no dealing with him and he has not kindness to anybody but for his own ends'. The proliferation of loans received against Frank's manor at Walton, and subsequent court records over several decades, suggest that he was not careful with money, which was confirmed by a spell in a debtors' prison. William Drake referred to his younger sibling in his will as 'my unfortunate brother', and Frank lived only for one more year, dying in 1670.

Joan Drake (only daughter)

Joan Drake senior appears to have had a close connection to her ill-fated youngest son, John, whom she nursed herself, going against convention. There

is no evidence for how she felt about her only daughter, also named Joan, whose birth she maintained was the cause of the escalation of her illness. Aged around nineteen, the younger Joan married John Parker, a London haberdasher, on 28th May 1634 at St Ann's Church in Blackfriars, soon after the death of her father, with the support of her two brothers, William and Frank, who signed a 'mutual agreement' with the bride and groom on the same day. It is tempting to envisage Dr Hart, possibly still resident in nearby Whitefriars, in attendance.

John Parker died a little more than five years later, in August 1639, and it is from his will[55] (and Boyd's 'Citizens of London and Family Units') that the family background emerges. He was married previously to Bridget, who died in 1630, and seven births were recorded to the couple in the parish church of St Pancras. Of these only a daughter, also named Bridget (born in 1629) survived to witness John's second marriage. He also had four daughters with Joan: Sarah (born in 1635), Joan (1636), Mary and Elizabeth.

John Parker had connections with New England where a brother, James, was living with his family. There must have been talk in the household of joining them in the New World, as he began his will with the words: "for my burial, I cannot tell whether I shall die in England, at sea or beyond the seas." Another of John Parker's brothers, Joseph, left a will in 1642 in London, in which his five nieces (John's daughters) received a bequest of £50 each. Among other relatives and in-laws, there is no mention of Joan Parker (née Drake). So

[55] See Genealogical Gleanings in England, by Henry F. Waters vol.2; published by Princeton University, 1901. p. 578.

it appears likely that the younger Joan died sometime between 1639 and 1642, having reached only her mid-twenties.

John Dod (Joan's longest-serving divine)

Already a holy man highly regarded among reformists for his learning and preaching, John Dod's reputation only increased as he aged. He had written his most famous work 'A Plain and Familiar Exposition of the Ten Commandments' in 1615, which earned him a nickname that would stick: Decalogue Dod. Quotes from his books and sermons were later collected into another volume, 'The Celebrated Sayings of Old Mr Dod', and it was common practice for ordinary people to remove pages and paste them onto the walls of their cottages as inspiration.

During the Civil War Mr Dod's house in Canons Ashby was raided three times by Royalist forces, who ransacked his belongings – on one occasion including the sheets of the bed on which he was lying – and threatened to end his life, at which he professed to be unconcerned: 'if you do, you will send me to heaven, where I long to be.' When he eventually died, in 1645 at the age of ninety-six, he was feted by great men including Archbishop James Ussher, who declared 'I desire that when I die my soul may rest with his'.

Dr James Ussher (frequent visitor)

In 1625, as Joan Drake lay dying, Dr Ussher was appointed Primate of All Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh, the most senior position in the Church of Ireland. For some, this would have been a life's ambition, but Ussher had a separate obsession, which was to write a Christian history of the world, from creation to the death of Christ. His initial goal was, logically, to calculate the

precise date and time when God created the heavens and the earth – by adding up all of the genealogical information in the Bible; putting a precise figure on the gap of indeterminate length between the Old and New Testaments; and cross-referencing mentions of historical events or celestial phenomena – which resulted in what became known as 'Ussher's Chronology'. In this map of time, the universe began at 6 o'clock in the evening on 22nd October, 4004 BC.

The rest of Dr Ussher's great book, "The Annals of the World", remained to be researched and written, but luck (or God) was not always on his side. He was in London in 1641 when he learned of the Irish Catholic Rebellion that had plundered his bishop's palace, but fortunately had not destroyed his library, which he arranged to have shipped over. Then the Civil War in England broke out, and as an appointee of King Charles I he joined the Royalists in Oxford, where he continued his studies at the university. When the tide turned against the King, Ussher was forced to flee, and was heading for Cardiff with his wife and daughter when he was ambushed by thieves, who broke open the chests containing the only copy of his manuscript: it was scattered by the wind across the hillside. Devastated, Dr Ussher implored the priests in the local area to ask their parishioners to keep a lookout for papers and, amazingly, after two or three months, he was able to regather a great number of his precious pages. In later life he resided in London, and despite his support for the Royalist cause, his intellectual and literary achievements were such that Oliver Cromwell gave him a state funeral. He was buried in Westminster Abbey in 1656.

Thomas Hooker (curate of Esher)

Thomas Hooker attended Joan Drake as a divine between 1620 and 1623, while curate at St George's Church in Esher, and then providently

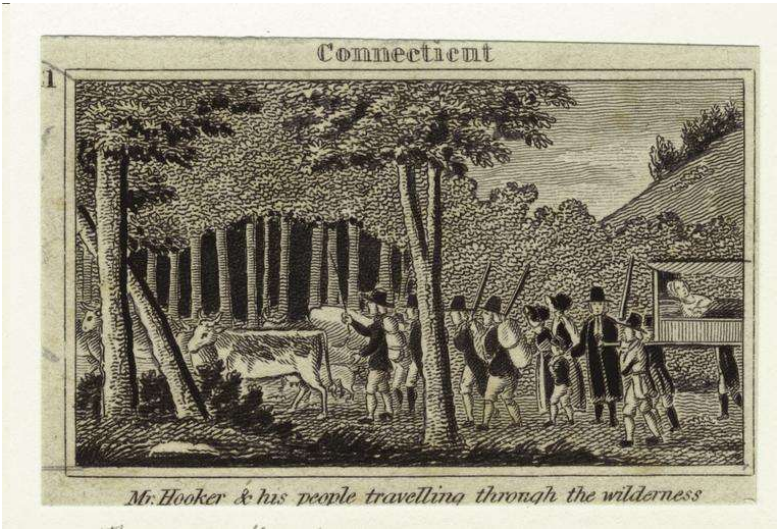
returned to witness her salvation in 1625. This experience became part of the foundation for his theological thinking and writing. Four years later in 1629, having been forced to retire from a lectureship and curacy role in Essex due to his non-conformist sermons and practices, he set up a small school in his rented house and in his spare time produced his celebrated work "The Poor Doubting Christian Drawn to Christ"[56]. Hooker drew general guidelines from the specifics of Joan's case (without mentioning her name), and his book is still considered by Christians today as 'timeless and relevant': although written in the style of centuries ago, it 'still manages, with the use of colourful analogies, to speak to current spiritual lives'[57].

A legal summons connected to Hooker's continued leadership of Puritan sympathisers led to a subsequent decision to leave England for the Netherlands, where he stayed with Mr Forbes (Joan Drake's least enduring divine) and other churchmen for two years, before setting out for the New World in 1633. In Boston, Hooker became the first pastor at Newtown (now Cambridge, Massachusetts), and three years later, following an influx of immigrants and consequent overcrowding, he led a party of settlers from his church community, known as "Hooker's Company", one hundred miles to the southwest, where he established the Connecticut River Colony, and set up its capital at Hartford. Inspired by a sermon Hooker gave on civil government, the fledgling colony decided to create a constitution – adopted in 1639 and called the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut – in which the principles of a modern democracy to establish a representative government, and to set up its structure

[56] Originally published in 1629.
[57] Recent reviews on Amazon and Good Reads.

and powers, were first written down. Notably, the document confirmed that the colony was a self-governing 'law unto themselves', and did not contain any reference to the British Crown. Hooker is still referred to as "The Father of American Democracy", and the official nickname of the state of Connecticut, which grew from Hooker's colony, is "The Constitution State".

Thomas Hooker died aged sixty-one in Hartford during the influenza epidemic of 1647, which spread through all the New England colonies and was initially blamed on witchcraft. Historians suggest that this led to the first execution of a convicted witch in North America: Alice Young was hanged on Meeting House Square in Hooker's hometown, some weeks before his death.



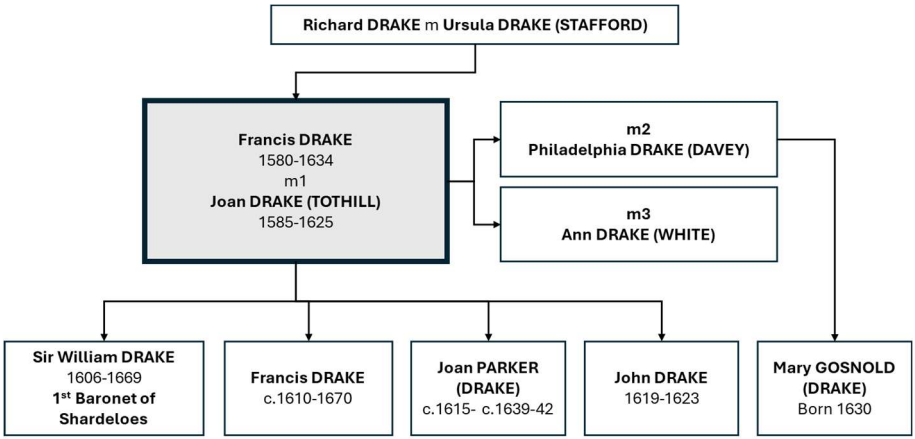
The reclining woman being carried through the North American wilderness is Mrs Drake's waiting-woman and Thomas Hooker's wife, Susannah Hooker née Garbrand.

Appendix: Timeline, Family Tree, Memorials, Hart's Letters, Maps, Acknowledgments

Timeline

Date	Event
1585	Joan Tothill is born at Shardeloes, near Amersham.
1603	Francis Drake of Esher marries Joan Tothill on 3rd March.
1610	The Drakes attend Ben Jonson's play 'The Alchemist' at the Blackfriars Theatre in London.
c. 1615	Joan Drake's health and spiritual anxiety worsen after the birth of her daughter Joan.
1616	John Hart DD is introduced to Joan Drake. He dedicates a book to his new patrons. 'J. Heart' writes his first letter to Dr Ussher (June).
1616-20	Attempts made to 'cure' Joan Drake over four years by John Dod. 'J. Heart' writes further letters to Dr Ussher (March 1617 and July 1618).
1619	Birth of John Drake, third son of Francis and Joan, but not mentioned in Hart's account. Hart makes a secret trip to Essex in an attempt to find an alternative place for Joan Drake to live.
1619-21	Dr James Ussher makes several visits to England, studying, writing and buying books for his library in Dublin.
1620	Thomas Hooker is made curate of St George's Church in Esher, and lives at Esher Place in order to help Joan Drake.
1621	Hooker marries Joan Drake's waiting-woman, Susannah Garbrand (3rd April). Robert Burton publishes 'The Anatomy of Melancholy'.
1623	Thomas Hooker leaves Esher. John Drake dies, aged three. William Drake begins studying at Christ Church, Oxford.
1625	On Easter Monday 18th April, Joan Drake dies after a rapturous vision at Shardeloes, aged 40; Dod, Hooker and Hart are reunited in attendance. Dr Ussher is appointed Primate of All Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh.
1629	Thomas Hooker writes "The Poor Doubting Christian Drawn to Christ" based on his experiences with Joan Drake.
1634	Francis Drake, having married twice more, dies and is buried at Walton-on-Thames (17th March, aged 54).
1647	Dr John Hart publishes his version of events, under the pseudonym Hart On-Hi. Thomas Hooker dies in Connecticut, the colony he had founded.

Drakes of Esher Family Tree



Child Brass of John Drake



Child Brass of John Drake 1619-23 in the Drake Chapel (Source: Amersham Museum)

The Drake Chapel Memorials

Mrs Drake's Memorial in the Drake Chapel, St. Mary's Church, Amersham

TO THE GLORIE OF GOD TO YE BLESSED MEMORIE OF MRS JOANE DRAKE

WIFE TO FRANCIS DRAKE OF ESHERE IN YE COUNTIE OF SUR[REY]

ONE OF YE GENTLEMEN OF HIS MAJESTIE'S MOST HO: PRIVIE CHAMBER IN ORDINARY

ESQ DAUGHTER TO WILLIAM TOTHILL OF SHARLEES ONE OF THE 6 CLARKES

OF YE HIGH COURT OF CHANNCERIE ESQUIER

WHO WHILST SHEE LIVED WAS A PATTERNE OF ALL VIRTUES OF A GRATIOUS WOMAN

& WIFE AS HIGHLY ESTEEMED OF ALL GOOD T[HAT] KNEW HER AS LOWLY IN

HER OWNE EYES

A LIVING MONUMENT

Of Gods mercie Above Satans malice; Of his wonders in Casting downe his Children t[hat] hee may raise them up; Of the truth of his p[ro]mises in refreshing the weary soule; Of the force of faythfull prayer; Of the power of Godlines even in this life

FOR HAVING FOUGHT YE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH & WAYTED FOR THE SALVATION OF GOD

SHEE OBTEYNED A GLORIOUS VICTORIE & BEGINNING YE LIFE OF HEAVEN UPON EARTH

WAS TRANSLATED FROM EARTH TRYUMPHANTLY TO HEAVEN

18 APRILL ANNO DNI 1625 HAVING SENT BEFORE HER HER DEARE CHILD JOHN D

WHOM SHEE HAD NURSED HER SELFE & BY WHOM SHEE LIETH

BURIED & LEAVING BEHIND HER 2 SONNES & ONE DAUGHTER VIZ WILLIAM, FRANCIS,

AND JOANE DRAKE, HER HUSBAND LAMENTING HIS OWNE LOSSE

YET REJOYSING IN HER GAINE, DEDICATETH THIS MONUMENT

Inscription beneath the Bust of Sir William Drake (1606-1669)
(Translated from Latin)

Joan Tothill, daughter of William and Katherine and wife of Francis Drake (from the ancient family of the Drakes of a not humble village named Ashe, originating from Devonshire), was in matrimony, if any [such] woman ever existed, of remarkable character, of uncommon humanity, both by nature and by grace, with exceptional qualities. She was so distinguished in the worship of piety that she was even written about *by a worthy author, no more than a witness*[58]. Her life was renowned, and from her life the book captured the love she had to give. I would say in a word that her life and her holy death were equal; she departed this life at the age of forty, while engaged in heavenly matters, having left behind her husband, two sons, and a single daughter, together with an example by which others might learn both to live and to die.

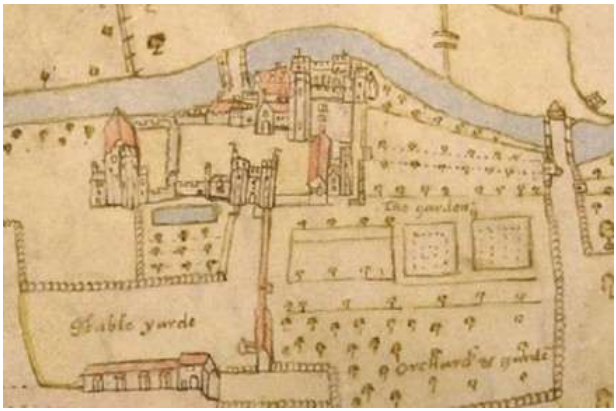
[58] The Latin reads: 'Idoneo Auctore, non magis quam Teste'.

John Hart's Letters



Page from letter to Dr James Ussher from London dated 12th March 1616/17, mentioning Joan Drake's name, and signed by 'J Heart' (Source: Bodleian Library MS. Rawl. Lett. 89 fols. 9r-12r)

Maps



Esher Place 1606 (Treswell's map – extract)



Esher Place 1606 (Treswell's map – reimagined)

In 2006, Channel 4's 'Time Team' used the results of their archaeological investigations, together with Treswell's map[59] and Aubrey's sketches, to create a 3D reconstruction of Esher Place.



Esher Place reconstruction (Time Team Channel 4 S13 Ep4 2006)



Esher Place and the Parsonage at Walton-on-Thames

[59] In 1606 after his inheritance of Esher Place, Francis Drake commissioned an estate plan. He chose Ralph Treswell senior (1540-1616), a celebrated surveyor.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to David Morgan of the Esher District Local History Society (EDLHS) for his many editorial comments and insightful suggestions.

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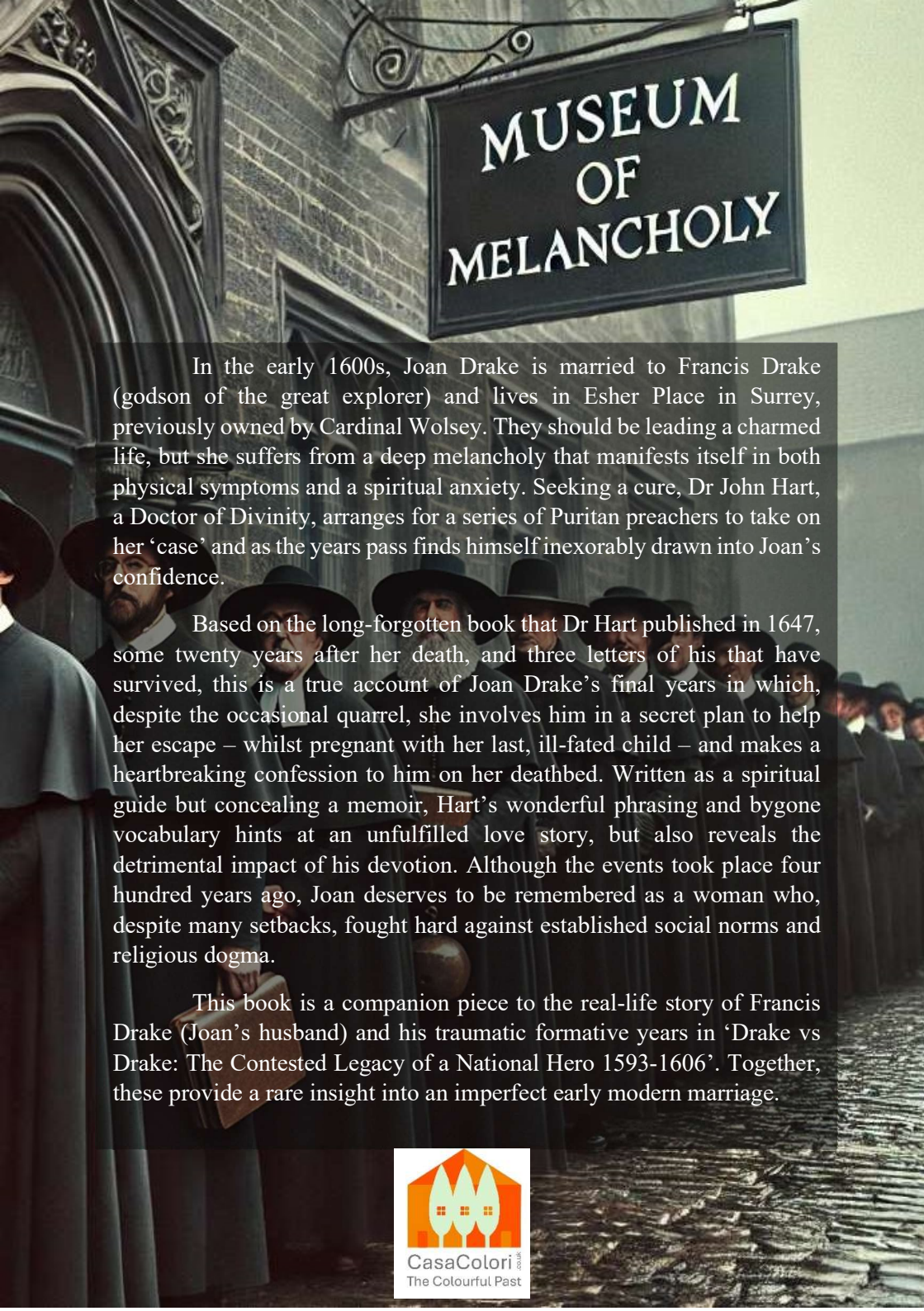
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About the Author

C.L. Dawson is a local historian from Weybridge in Surrey. Unsurprisingly, being resident in the former hunting grounds of Hampton Court Palace, his preferred period is the Early Modern, covering the seismic changes brought about by the Renaissance, Reformation, Civil War and British colonial expansion. He focuses on researching and writing engaging stories involving local people, ideally finding connections with famous faces or key events, and whenever possible using eyewitness accounts from antique books, letters, diaries, pamphlets, and other primary sources.

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In the early 1600s, Joan Drake is married to Francis Drake (godson of the great explorer) and lives in Esher Place in Surrey, previously owned by Cardinal Wolsey. They should be leading a charmed life, but she suffers from a deep melancholy that manifests itself in both physical symptoms and a spiritual anxiety. Seeking a cure, Dr John Hart, a Doctor of Divinity, arranges for a series of Puritan preachers to take on her 'case' and as the years pass finds himself inexorably drawn into Joan's confidence.

Based on the long-forgotten book that Dr Hart published in 1647, some twenty years after her death, and three letters of his that have survived, this is a true account of Joan Drake's final years in which, despite the occasional quarrel, she involves him in a secret plan to help her escape – whilst pregnant with her last, ill-fated child – and makes a heartbreaking confession to him on her deathbed. Written as a spiritual guide but concealing a memoir, Hart's wonderful phrasing and bygone vocabulary hints at an unfulfilled love story, but also reveals the detrimental impact of his devotion. Although the events took place four hundred years ago, Joan deserves to be remembered as a woman who, despite many setbacks, fought hard against established social norms and religious dogma.

This book is a companion piece to the real-life story of Francis Drake (Joan's husband) and his traumatic formative years in 'Drake vs Drake: The Contested Legacy of a National Hero 1593-1606'. Together, these provide a rare insight into an imperfect early modern marriage.

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