

Swiss Association of Patristic Studies

# Demonic Voices in Late Antiquity

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## Abstract

I will start with an explanation of how I came by my topic, followed by a swift and informal tour of ancient views of various relationships between the self and others (with a few modern analogies, some light-hearted, along the way). These, often metaphorical, relationships could be seen as largely functional, some even as desirable. But what of more dysfunctional relationships between the Self and an Indwelling Other, namely, demonic possessions? Physical symptoms of demoniacs' behaviour are fairly familiar, but vocal phenomena haven't received quite the same attention. How did demons speak? What characterized their recorded and imagined utterances? One may not (or no longer) believe in the phenomena attested in Late Antique sources, but that merely concentrates interest on the why, e.g. what work the fiction is doing in a given author? Why did he bother to tell us about demonic speech? The bulk of my time will be devoted to close readings of selected narratives of possession from Late Antiquity, concentrating on the demonic utterance in its oral-aural dimensions. The passages will range from the NT down to the 6<sup>th</sup> C. CE.