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King James's Daemonologie: the evolution of the concept of witchcraft in Scotland

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Table of Contents

FOREWORD	5
CHAPTER I: The Scottish social and political situation in the second half of the sixteenth century.....	13
I.I. A social geography of the Reformation in Scotland	13
I.II. Witchcraft as an enemy of the State.....	17
I.III. The shaping of the new Kirk and the concept of authority	21
CHAPTER II: Biographical background.....	25
II.I The political situation in the 70s and 80s.....	28
II.II Marriage and witches	35
CHAPTER III: The books behind <i>Daemonologie</i>	41
CHAPTER IV: <i>Daemonologie</i>	61
CHAPTER V: God, the king, and the people in the game of authority.....	89
RIASSUNTO	101
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	110
Primary sources.....	110
Critical Literature	112

List of illustrations

Figure 1: Map of all Scottish Earldoms	17
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FOREWORD

Humanity is not an aggregate of individuals, a community of thinkers, each of whom is guaranteed from the outset to be able to reach agreement with the others because all participate in the same thinking essence. Nor, of course, is it a single Being in which the multiplicity of individuals are dissolved and into which these individuals are destined to be reabsorbed. As a matter of principle, humanity is precarious: each person can only believe what he recognizes to be true internally and, at the same time, nobody thinks or makes up his mind without already being caught up in certain relationships with others, which leads him to opt for a particular set of opinions. Everyone is alone and yet nobody can do without other people.¹

With these words, Maurice Merleau-Ponty explains the relationship between one's inner self and the inner self of the other individuals. He explains, also, the relationship there is between one's inner self and the external world. Everyone lives in a world of their own, a world that communicates with the worlds of others throughout the body. In Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology what gets value is then the language and the forms of communication. Every thought needs a body, and that body is made of words. Given this premise, King James's quest into the literary world has a lot to do with the evolution of the king himself, together with his reign. And, even though it is always too easy to apply a new system to old content, I find phenomenology, as a science, a good way to describe my approach to James, his world and his book. After all, as Andrea Bonomi says in the preface of the Italian translation of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, "la fenomenologia si lascia praticare e riconoscere come maniera o come stile ed esiste come movimento ancor prima di essere giunta a un'intera coscienza filosofica."² In this way, then, there is surely no reason why it could not be used as an instrument of analysis of what James does and how

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, translated by Oliver Davis, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 87.

² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Fenomenologia della percezione*, traduzione di Andrea Bonomi, Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1965, p. 16.

James relates to his audience, in both matters of authorship and authority. Many pages have been written about King James VI of Scotland, and many more probably will be. James has been described with many different adjectives, and in his life, he was depicted with dialogically opposing characteristics: he was a fool, and a wise man, both “God’s silly vassal”³ and “the greatest enemy he [the Devil] hath in the world.”⁴ What is clear, once one starts to study the character and the history of James, is that it is hard to find one truth about him and that, indeed, writing about him means picking one side. In these pages, while still expressing my opinion, I try to be as objective as I can: I observe and describe the inner side of James’s evolution as a man, a writer, and a king, and verify his role in the Scottish witchcraft hunt and in the demonological literary context. Then, I study and comment in-depth his book *Daemonologie*.

Dealing with witchcraft can be a difficult task: the perception people have about it has changed a lot over the centuries. Witchcraft in the sixteenth century was a day-to-day technology that was to some extent considered effective. For this reason, it can be analysed under many different aspects: from social to religious, from moral to historical.⁵ For these same reasons, what one needs in order to start studying such a world is a date: after that, one just needs to study every aspect of witchcraft.

The starting date of my analysis will be 1563, the year of the Witchcraft Act.⁶ The Act comes three years after the Confession of Faith Ratification Act of 1560⁷ and the Papal

³ The expression “God’s Silly vassal” was reported as used by Andrew Melville, meant as an offence, in James Melville’s autobiography, Robert Pitcairn, *The Autobiography and Diary of Mr. James Mellvill*. Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1842, p. 370.

⁴ Melville, Sir James, *Memoirs of His Own Life*, Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1827, pp. 155-156.

⁵ Max, Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans Talcott Parsons, London: Routledge, 2005, pp. vii- xxiv.

⁶ Lawrence Normand, and Gareth Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland. James VI’s Demonology and the North Berwick Witches*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000, p. 75.

⁷ Confession of Faith Ratification Act of 1560: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/aosp/1560/1/contents>.

Jurisdiction Act⁸ that led Scotland into being a Protestant country. I find that the Witchcraft Act is important under many different aspects: firstly, it is the law under which the North Berwick trials took place; secondly, it gives a clear definition of witchcraft and witches.⁹ As shown here, the image of witchcraft, and witchcraft users, that did not change over the years from the *Malleus Maleficarum* to the Witchcraft Act, would finally change by the time James wrote his *Daemonologie*. And this was mostly due to James's life experience.¹⁰

In the first chapter of my thesis, I start by creating an environmental background from a socio-historical point of view. The social component of witchcraft is quite predominant at the beginning of my analysis. While the setting stage is the one of the Protestant Reformation, I find it important to underline that, at this point, Scotland was still a rural country with only a fifth of the population living in the cities.¹¹ Differences in social and local aspects of life in the country took part in the evolution of the concept of witchcraft by the end of the sixteenth century. In fact, even if Scotland became a protestant country in 1560 by law, in practice the conversion process was slow and localised. Old rites survived into domestic settings and into the Lowlands and the rural areas, far from the cities and the centres of power. In this background, the connection of womanhood and witchcraft was seen as amplified, due to a series of social misconceptions and stereotypes.¹²

As shown in the third chapter, the literature on witchcraft reports, too, a clear and persistent link between womanhood and witchcraft: for instance, women were believed to be “more credulous and with poor memorie”, and, for this reason, more easily tricked and

⁸ Papal Jurisdiction Act: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/aosp/1560/2/contents>.

⁹ Goodare, Julian, “The Scottish Witchcraft Act”, *Church History*, 74 (2005), pp. 39-67.

¹⁰ Mack, Elizabeth “The Malleus Maleficarum and King James: Defining Witchcraft”, *Voces Novae*: 1 (2009), pp. 181-182.

¹¹ Normand and Roberts, p. 56.

¹² Robert Allen Houston and Ian D. Whyte, *Scottish Society, 1500–1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 120-128.

seduced by the Devil.¹³ This link is taken into consideration under many aspects here. I show how the concept of witchcraft started to abandon some stereotypes by the end of the century. Even so, there was one other thing that was always more linked with witchcraft than womanhood: that is the Devil. A journey into understanding witchcraft is also a journey into religion, human behaviour, and faith.

As I consider in the second part of my first chapter, with the intention to deal with King James, one needs to understand how witchcraft entered politics. The role of the Kirk in Scotland was decisive, in some way, to the creation of the character of James as we know him nowadays. The positive endorsement of the Kirk made it possible for James to acquire some of the prestige he needed to reach a wider audience while discussing theological and moral matters.¹⁴ Even more, witchcraft, that in those years was acquiring day by day more attributes as a political entity and a political enemy, suggested a valid political alliance between the king and the Kirk, strengthening the king himself. The same initial endorsement made it so that the king had some degree of authority to speak and to decide about religious matters, enabling for James, among other things, the consequent attribute of a vessel of God that, by the end of the century, the same James would start to attribute to himself.

After describing the complete background of the years from 1563 to the end of the century, my second chapter is dedicated entirely to King James VI of Scotland, and those events that were significant in his life. As the same James pointed out in one of his last speeches in the English parliament, he lived in constant fear of murder, and his paranoia

¹³ Heinrich Kramer, and James, Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, part 1 question VI, p. 99. <http://www.malleusmaleficarum.org/downloads/MalleusAcrobat.pdf>.

¹⁴ Normand and Roberts, 76.

was, after all, in every decision he had to take.¹⁵ Even understanding the impossibility of psychoanalysing him, I find that the shaping of the personality of James, his trauma and his troubled young age, have a lot to do with the evolution of the author, the king and the theme of witchcraft in Scotland. Even if one can see different variants of James's personality — he can be seen either as a pawn in someone other's hands, or as a genius of his own — one may consider some aspects of his life as valuable and decisive to understand his character. I have followed his footsteps into his childhood and education, underlining the role that his tutors, Peter Young and George Buchanan, had in his life. After that, I introduce the political situation in which James was about to step in, describing the time of the four regencies — with all the consequences — and the early political life of James. Almost all the fields that obsessed him during his entire life, as both a king and a writer — the political struggle, the questions of faith and loyalty, the concept of monarchy and the thought of his legacy — are abundantly present even at his young age. The only thing that was not there was witchcraft, a problem that would enter his life entirely only after his travel to Denmark and his marriage to Princess Anne. This travel meant a lot in the life of the king: upon his return to Scotland, James would take part as a juror to the trial for his attempted murder via witchcraft: trials that will lead to the writing of *Daemonologie*, the book that I analyse in-depth in the fourth chapter.¹⁶

The topic of witchcraft, as already implied, deserves a history of its own. So, I dedicate my third chapter to the literature of witchcraft, in accordance to the history of it,

¹⁵ William Oldys, John Malham, *The Harleian Miscellany: A Collection of Scarce, Curious, and Entertaining Pamphlets and Tracts*, 3, p. 6. [https://archive.org/stream/harleianmiscell03malhgoog/harleianmiscell03malhgoog_djvu.txt - The_Harleian_Miscellany, accessed 11 Nov 2014].

¹⁶ Normand and Roberts, 84-85.

or at least — in order to avoid roaming too much — I discuss the books and authors that James himself referred to in the preface of his *Daemonologie*. I proceed from the Bible, and the theologians and philosophers that initially discussed the problem of evil and witchcraft, directly to the five authors explicitly quoted by James in the preface of his book: Gerhard Andreas Hyperius (1511-1564), Niels Hemmingsen (1513-1600), Jean Bodin (1530-1596), Reginald Scot (1537-1599) and Johann Weyer (1515-1588).¹⁷ At the end of the chapter, I introduce the *News from Scotland*, the short pamphlet that circulated right after the North Berwick trials. This introduction connects the research directly to the analysis of *Daemonologie* itself.

The fourth chapter discusses the book in depth. I have tried to unfold all the connections that are hidden in the book, mostly addressing those aspects that are made special by the king himself. I suggest, in fact, that the book is nothing special if not read by considering the author himself. The analysis of the book follows this opinion of mine, suggesting numerous interpretations of many different patterns, both thematically and linguistically. The book is used as a sort of lens for the analysis of the character of James, too. This same perspective has led my research to the discussion on the principle of authority, that I examine in the fifth and final chapter.

In my fifth chapter, then, I discuss the concept of authority both from a theoretical point of view and from a practical one. I talk about what it meant to be a writer in those years, and what it meant for James to be one. I show the issue of authority during the first stages of print and how writers dealt with those issues. I also discuss how James worked around the issue of being both a king and a writer, suggesting a personal interpretation. In

¹⁷ James I and VI, *Daemonologie, In Forme of a Dialogue, Divided into three Bookes*, Edinburgh: Robert Walde-Grave, 1597, pp. 1-3. This is the edition I use.

Daemonologie, James supports many different interpretations of the role of the king, who needs to be both chosen by God and at the same time recognised by his people. I find it is a good way to discuss the concept of power in James, reading between the lines of what he told us.

CHAPTER I: The Scottish social and political situation in the second half of the sixteenth century

I.I. A social geography of the Reformation in Scotland

Scotland was not religiously united as a nation. The Confession of Faith Ratification Act of 1560¹ and the Papal Jurisdiction Act² of the same year that changed the official religion to Calvinism ignored the fact that most of the population was still Catholic. The Reformation lasted more than a century before being finalised, though Parliament and preachers, in the early years, swept away Masses and Catholic buildings. In 1566, John Knox, one of the six that wrote the aforementioned Acts and head of the Kirk of Scotland, was stating firmly how much idolatry and Catholicism needed to be eradicated:

AS we require Christ Jesus to be truly preached, and his holy Sacraments rightly ministered, so cannot cease to require Idolatry, with all monuments and places of the same, as Abbeys, Monkeries, Friaries, Nunneries, Chapels, Chantries, Cathedral Churches, Canonries, Colleges, others then presently are Parish Churches or Schools, to be utterly suppressed in all bounds and places of this Realm (...) as also that idolatry may be removed from the presence of all persons of what estate or condition that ever they be within this Realm.³

While the Reformation was quick in term of theories, the actual changes were localised and different in practice. Long-term economic pressure in the second half of the sixteenth century ensured a hard life for missionaries and reduced the figure of the Pope to the

¹ Confession of Faith Ratification Act of 1560: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/aosp/1560/1/contents>.

² Papal Jurisdiction Act: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/aosp/1560/2/contents>.

³ The first Book of Discipline <https://www.covenanter.org/reformed/2016/5/2/the-first-book-of-discipline>.

margins of Scottish life. Scotland was mostly a rural society, with only a fifth of the population living inside towns or cities. While most of the towns were small, the capital, Edinburgh, was growing fast and merchants, lawyers, clerks, etc, were getting more and more influential. The city was not a homogeneous area, many suburbs were places of social unrest and class clashes.⁴ The situation outside the cities was really something else. In the countryside, missionaries were not stationary and came and went between noble houses and their bases abroad. While Catholicism collapsed very easily after the Reformation, the old rites continued within a domestic setting and women played an important role in retaining central religious values and in passing them to the next generation. By law, in Scotland a husband was not held responsible for his wife's decision in conscientious matters and many Protestant noblemen in the late sixteenth century had Catholic wives.⁵ While the old rites could be held in the intimacy of one's home, the figure of the woman was becoming central to it: in the second half of the sixteenth century, women were more than half the population, and their work was not simply confined to agriculture and house-keeping — until well into the seventeenth century, healing was a predominantly female area, for instance. Many of them were able to travel across the land, taking stocks to the market or selling fish to the towns close by.⁶

Even though Scotland had been Protestant for years, by the end of the sixteenth century, rural areas received the Reformation's precepts slowly and partially. Control was not strict, and many villagers were left alone with their beliefs. Moreover, powerful local

⁴ Lawrence Normand, and Gareth Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland. James VI's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000, p. 56.

⁵ Alasdair F. B. Roberts, "The Role of Women in Scottish Catholic Survival", *The Scottish Historical Review*, 70 (1991), pp. 130.

⁶ Robert Allen Houston and Ian D. Whyte, *Scottish Society, 1500–1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 120-128.

families, such as the Setons, were able to contrast the poorly structured beliefs of people where the attachment to the old religion was strong enough. For instance, Seton Palace, during the last decade of the sixteenth century, was used to imprison witches waiting for trial but, at the same time, was giving shelter to Catholics and influencing the population against the new faith. This ambiguous behaviour is rendered even more incomprehensible by the fact that the Setons were related to the royal family.⁷

Regions such as East Lothian were still strongly Catholic; the farther the population was from the centre of power, the easier it was to find people still professing the old faith. The effort of the Reformed Church was not enough to control the Lowlands, and missionaries and priests could easily hold on to old rituals and beliefs.⁸ In 1590, a series of trials on witchcraft — which I will discuss in the following chapters — started in East Lothian, trials that would be named after North Berwick. The place was well known for its connection to a Cistercian nunnery and to the old religion, and, as a matter of fact, for the imagination of common folk was the perfect place for witches to meet. None of the subjects put on trial was actually from East Lothian. The geographic position of the place — the nunnery sat on a volcanic law that overlooked the entire region — made it visible from Edinburgh and the land around, or, at least, so it is said in Normand and Gareth's book. During the confession of Agnes Sampson, one of the persons of interest of the abovementioned trials, she described a place that, underlining the connections to popular imagination, resembled that nunnery on the top of that hill.⁹ Furthermore, North Berwick was known for the pilgrims and poor people hosted by the nuns and, eventually, even being

⁷ Normand and Gareth, 58.

⁸ Normand and Gareth, 57.

⁹ Normand and Gareth, 59.

a pilgrim was condemned.¹⁰ It was, in fact, an old Catholic observance. As said before, the image of pilgrimage was well connected with the area of North Berwick and it was the travelling itself that posed a problem: it provided a prototype of association with spiritual intents and hope for miraculous events. Moreover, as we already know from literature, pilgrimages were connected to a long history of sinful behaviour, such as drinking, having sex and selling fake icons and idolatry.¹¹ The Catholic history of bad behaviour would become more and more a target under the lens of the new Protestant believers. The newly reformed society recognised that an excommunicated individual was also to be considered an outlaw from a civil perspective.¹² But, although this was the aim, the Kirk was not able to influence social changes uniformly. Soon, the attention of the Kirk was held by harmful behaviour against a godly society: discipline worked in different ways, ideologically, socially and subjectively, concerning the identification of what was sinful and how to punish it, as well explained by Normand and Gareth.¹³ In cities like Perth, cultural reforms were needed. The folkloristic side of the old faith, such as dancing, carol singing, plays, celebrations at weddings was prohibited or restricted. Different behaviour from different religious heritage was in fact creating a gap in society. The Kirk repeatedly called on the King and the council for help, in order to act against such as pilgrimages, “Jesuites, ... profainers of the Sacraments; ... idolaters, ... papistical Magistrates, ... publick mercatts upon the Sabbath day; violent invaders of Ministers be strikeing of them or shedding of thair blood; ... Robein Hoodes playis; murderers and blood shedders quhilk overflow the

¹⁰ Normand and Gareth, 63.

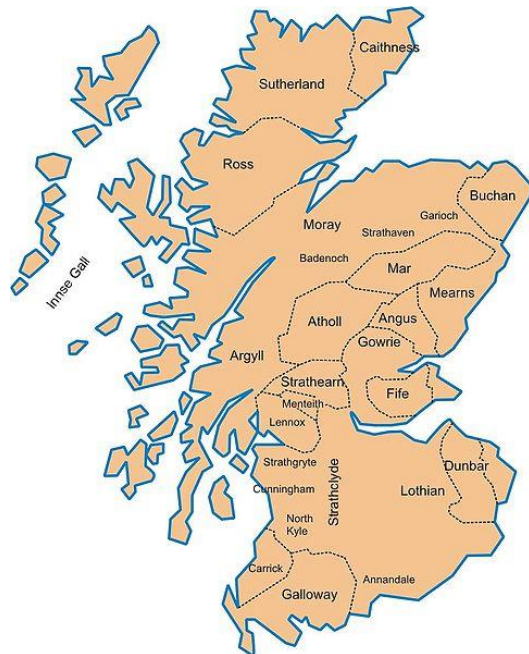
¹¹ Traces and examples of this kind of behaviours are easily found in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, in tales such as the Summoner's Tale, for instance or Sir David, Lyndsay, *The Poetical Works*, ed. David Laing. Edinburgh, W. Patterson, 1879, Volume III, p. 40.

¹² Thomas Christopher, Smout, *A History of the Scottish People: 1560-1830*, London: Fontana Press, 1998, p. 72.

¹³ Normand and Gareth, 62.

land.”¹⁴ All these notions are necessary to understand the climax of the witchcraft hunt in the end of sixteenth century.

Figure 1: This map represents all Scottish Earldoms. From here, it is easy to see why Earldoms such as Argyll, Atholl, Mar or Gowrie would have the importance they had in James' struggle to rule over Scotland.



I.II. Witchcraft as an enemy of the State

In the second half of the sixteenth century, a new common entity temporarily united the Kirk and the King: witchcraft. The way witchcraft was now seen, in fact, resembled a lot the way religion and politics did. Witches' meetings were called conventions, and as Protestantism began as a clandestine hidden movement in Scotland, so did witchcraft. As

¹⁴ *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland, 1560-1618*, ed. T. Thomson, 3 vols, Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1578-1592, vol 2, 784, quoted in Normand and Gareth, 65.

described in *Daemonologie*, witchcraft was a popular movement with a strict list of rules, a behaviour code and separate communities of believers. In a sort of paranoia, the reformed Kirk was watching itself in a mirror, seeing the evolution of witchcraft as a devilish enemy against the godly reformed society. In fact, the way witches were linked to each other and to the Devil was a pact. Furthermore, even Protestants started as a minority. And, now, the pact well resembled the band made by men in Scotland, declaring their allegiance to a person or a cause in a social or political context. Bands, in fact, provided an ‘indigenous Scottish model for the satanic pact’.¹⁵ As witches supposedly met the Devil and pledge an alliance to him, bands’ members signed a bond to swear a pledge of fidelity. Since the first band in 1557¹⁶, many were created in Scotland, pledging alliances to “the blessed word of God and His Congregation and to forsake and renounce the Congregation of Satan”.¹⁷ In doing so they created a pattern. On the one hand, they recognised the enemy as the Congregation of Satan; on the other, they underlined the distance between the two factions. For, being part of a band meant not being part of a witch covenant. Moreover, witches’ covenants were now seen even more as a congruent political enemy, as individuals and as a group. The most important propaganda pamphlet during the time of the Scottish Witch Hunt of 1590s was the *News from Scotland* — which I will discuss in detail in chapter three — and it is the only kind of evidence we can have on those witchcraft trials. If we then consider the information we find in the *News from Scotland*, we find positive evidence of

¹⁵ Normand and Gareth, 67.

¹⁶ The first bond was signed by the Erle of Ergyl, Glencarn. Mortoun, the Lord of Lorne, Johnne Erskyne of Doun. ‘to maintain, set forward, and establish the most blessed Word of God and His congregation, and shall labour according to our powers, to have faithful ministers, truly and purely to minister Christ’s sacraments to His people’, cited in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing, Edinburgh: Thomas George Stevenson, 1864, vol. 6., xxxvii.

¹⁷ Quoted in McRoberts, David, *Essays on the Scottish Reformation, 1513-1625*, Glasgow: Burns, 1962, 19 and Normand and Gareth, 67.

a net of witches, that well explains the need to act against witchcraft. But just a few years back, in 1563, witchcraft was not considered the same.

Anentis Witchcraftis.

ITEM Forsamekill as the Quenis Majestie and thre Estatis in this present Parliament being informit, that the havy and abominabill superstitioun usit be divers of the liegis of this Realme, be using of Witchcraftis, Sorsarie and Necromancie, and credence gevin thairto in tymes bygane aganis the Law of God: And for avoyding and away putting of all sic vane superstitioun in tymes tocum: ! It is statute and ordanit be the Quenis Majestie, and thre Estatis foirsaidis, that na maner of persoun nor persounis, of quhatsumever estate, degre or conditioun thay be of, tak upone hand in ony tymes heirefter, to use ony maner of Witchcraftis, Sorsarie or Necromancie, nor gif thame selfis furth to have ony sic craft or knowlege thairof, thairthrow abusand the pepill: Nor that na persoun seik ony help, response or cosultatioun at ony sic usaris or abusaris foirsaidis of Witchcraftis, Sorsareis or Necromancie, under the pane of deid, alsweill to be execute aganis the usar, abusar, as the seikar of the response or consultatioun. And this to be put to executioun be the Justice, Schireffis, Stewartis, Baillies, Lordis of Regaliteis and Rialteis, thair Deputis, and uthers Ordinar Jugeis competent within this Realme, with all rigour, having powar to execute the samin.¹⁸

In this Scottish Witchcraft Act (1563) we see no reference to the Demonic pact. Underlining this act is important, though, because this is the law under which the trials of North Berwick took place. It helps us set a timeframe within which things had changed. In fact, the concept of the pact gained great importance by the time King James' book *Daemonologie* was published. In 1563 witchcraft was still seen as an endemic problem, various events were reported all over the kingdom, but they were not considered connected. Even the definition of witchcraft was neither clear nor accurate. The witchcraft trials from the beginning of the 1590s can only be understood in relation to the Scottish reformation. In *The Book of Discipline* (1560), the book in which John Knox set his precepts for the new church of Scotland,¹⁹ the vision of a newly reformed church and society was just a vision;

¹⁸ Quoted in Julian Goodare, "The Scottish Witchcraft Act", *Church History*, 74 (2005), 39.

¹⁹ His precepts can be summed up in four points: 1) The new Protestant Church to gain the properties and lands of the Catholic Church, 2) Superintendents, without specific religious powers, would organise the Church in their areas, 3) Congregations were to play a key role in the new Church by appointing their

but by 1590, on the eve of the first trials, many of those aspirations were almost accomplished.²⁰ This is because witchcraft became the centre of the Reformation in Scotland: by the end of the sixteenth century witchcraft was seen as public enemy number one, by both the church and the state. In the same way “using of Witchcraftis, Sorsarie and Necromancie, and credence gevin thairto in tymes bygane aganis the Law of God” was considered a political act of treason. Moreover, a symptomatic fact is the propagation of the Kirk into the Lowlands between the 60s and the 90s. During the trials, those regions known for protecting Catholics, such as East Lothian, were the same regions where there was a growing hate against witchcraft.²¹ The Kirk was in fact trying to model the new society into a godly society, and that was the purpose *The Book of Discipline* and the other books stood for. The Kirk needed to gain control and power. It needed to create a system where most of the population could fit, a set of rules easy to follow. At the same time, it needed to gain authority over all the things it was dealing with, to represent God in His duty to save His people. So, on the one hand it needed to define who was worth saving, and on the other it had to remove those who were not worthy, those who were against the plan of God, such as witches.²²

These were the circumstances in which the demonic pact was believed to be made. As interest in witchcraft was increasingly rising, the phrase *demonic pact* was taking on a new meaning, giving a new identity to the whole witchcraft issue. Witches were no longer cellular entities who randomly harmed people for personal reasons; they became a

ministers, 4) The Protestant Church to provide education and look after the poor. For all his works see *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing, Edinburgh: James Thin, 1895, vol. 1.

²⁰ Normand and Gareth, 72.

²¹ Normand and Gareth, 73.

²² Stuart, Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, Chapter Unstable Meanings, p. 171-81.

community, a group of people with common rules who shared allegiance to the Devil. A new army ready to march against the Kirk and the State, against those, King James *in primis*, who wanted to create the perfect state of God on Earth. Witches acquired the status of political enemy.

I.III. The shaping of the new Kirk and the concept of authority

In the eyes of the Kirk and godly society, witchcraft became a political entity, perfectly fitting with the other political entities in play. But the recently formed Kirk had itself internal political problems to solve. A few years after the Declaration Acts, in 1574, Andrew Melville, who would become John Knox's successor, returned to Scotland from Geneva, heart of Calvinism, with ideas that would increase the pressure for the Kirk to adopt a Presbyterian polity, in which bishops should be replaced by a hierarchy of church courts. A presbytery consisted in the kirk session of ministers and elders. Bishops, instead, drew much of their authority and power from being appointed by the crown, and they were the way in which the king was asserting his will on to the church. At a local level the Protestant Kirk was run by ministers; at a national level, there was a General Assembly. The power the King had over the Kirk started to grow with the so-called "Black Acts" in May 1584, supporting the King's authority and reaffirming the power of bishops.²³ These acts affirmed that "our souerane lord and his thrie estatis assemblit in this present Parliament ratefeis and apprevis and perpetuallie confirmis the royall power and auctoritie over all statis alsweill spirituall as temporall within this realme in the persoun of the kingis

²³ Antonia Fraser, *King James VI of Scotland I of England*, London: Book Club Associates, 1974, p. 46.

maiestie”.²⁴ In 1592, though, the Kirk got back some of its power with the so-called “Golden Act”: on the one hand, the Acts restored a certain degree of power to Presbyteries, on the other, they seduced the ministers from their prolonged political opposition to James, giving the King a certain amount of control over the remaining Catholics Lords.²⁵

The Roman Catholic Church, in fact, was spoiled of its ‘self-given authority’: both the feeling that translated texts would take care of their own interpretations, and the belief that the authority lay on the Sacred Text only, dismantled the value of representation of the Roman faith. The Word of God created everything, and the same Word was the one to give power to any priest. Martin Luther strongly believed that “the time for silence is past, and the time to speak has come”.²⁶ For him, every Christian was now empowered to speak, being directly invested with divine right and in direct contact with divinity, every man was but a priest in the eye of God.²⁷ In simple terms, the Roman Catholic Church had founded its power and legitimisation as self-standing above the Scriptures. Luther’s model had instead rooted the authority on scriptures only, granting both power and right to everyone who read and used them.

The Protestant effect of legitimation no longer drew its strength from representation as a delegated act of institutionalized power and homogeneity, where authority was affirmed as something given even before the particular acts of writing, thinking, or reading began.²⁸

²⁴ Sovereignty Act 1584: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/aosp/1584/2/paragraph/p1>.

²⁵ Fraser, 61.

²⁶ *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress Presses, 1958-86, p. 44.

²⁷ Quoted in Henry Wace and C.A. Buchheim, *First Principles of the Reformation*, London: John Murray, 1883, 31:356.

²⁸ Weimann, Robert, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 34.

While the new faith had to destroy all that was bad in the old one, the work of new preachers was soon connected with the role of folly.

Men in making lawes are subject to ignorance and error ... Therefore it is against reason, that humane lawes being subject to defects, faults, errors, and manifold imperfections, should truly bind conscience, as God lawes doe, which are the rule of righteousness.²⁹

Here, William Perkins, a Cambridge theologian and one of the leaders of the Puritan Movement in England, would say that a man has power over reason, if guided by his conscience. Therefore, the role of fool and the wise was actually overlapping. As in the Letters of St. Paul, “he who wishes to be wise must become a fool” (1 Corinthians 3:18).

Luther then discussed temporal authority: to what extent should it be obeyed? The autonomy of individual conscience tended to limit the authority of those in power. In Calvinism, though, and in countries like Scotland where Calvinism was rooted, this discussion took a step forward. In England the head of the State was the head of the Church, there was no real discussion on power. In Scotland, following Calvin and Beza’s teachings, the Kirk was fighting for an independent Kirk run by Presbyteries. Religion was becoming politicised. This struggle for autonomy from the crown would be a trait under King James’s reign. Not by chance in fact, would James be called the wisest fool of Christendom.³⁰ His role would be both political and religious.

The situation in Scotland was much more complicated, though. Not only was the Kirk internally fighting for more power over the King. As said before, different regions had different religious beliefs and different noble houses were still claiming their right to

²⁹ Quoted in H. D. Traill and S.S. Mann, eds., *Social England*. London: Cassell, 1901, 3:434.

³⁰ The title of wisest Fool in Christendom was given by Sir Anthony Weldon in his book *The Court and Character of King James*, London: John Wright, 1650.

remain Catholics. The last decades of the sixteenth century saw different Earls trying to gain control over the King. A special mention then goes to the main events between 1560 and 1603. Especially during James VI's reign, political sympathies and envy mixed up. Both Catholics and Protestants were trying to gain influence over the King, either with cunning or brute force, either with local forces or international alliances. The crown's income after the reign of King James V had fallen so that it could not afford a conspicuous army, and its power mostly relied on political alliances with houses and lords. These alliances, though, were fragile and easily breakable, moved by self-interest and personal interest most of the time.

CHAPTER II: Biographical background

James VI and I (1566–1625), king of Scotland, England, and Ireland, was born in Edinburgh Castle on 19 June 1566; he was the only son of Mary Queen of Scots (1542–1587), and her second husband, Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley (1545/6–1567). He was baptized with the Roman ritual: Charles for his French godfather Charles IX, King of France, and James as a traditional name of all Stewart Kings.¹

In my research I focus on the main events that influenced the King’s beliefs and opinions and that led him to put in writing and then publish *Daemonologie*; talking about the man that James was is, in fact, hard and, even if many studies have been published, King James, as a king and as a man, remains greatly debated. He was “unkindly born king of a pugnacious people” to some², a “slave to his favourites” to others.³ One thing is certain, though: King James lived in constant fear of murder and death. As he said in one of his last speeches at the English Parliament, some of his troubles and fears had been hunting him “not only ever since my birth, but even as I may justly say, before my birth: and while I was yet in my mother’s belly”.⁴ As was said in the previous chapter, the late sixteenth century saw many different attempts made both on Mary, Queen of Scots, and, after her, on James, to obtain control over Scotland. It was on the evening of 9 March 1566, that

¹ Jenny Wormald, ‘James VI and I (1566–1625)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2014. [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14592>, accessed 29 Oct 2014].

² Clara and Hardy Steeholm, *James I of England: The Wisest Fool in Christendom*, New York: Covici Friede, 1938, intro.

³ Sir Anthony Weldon, *The Court and Character of King James*, London: John Wright, 1650, ix.

⁴ William Oldys, John Malham, *The Harleian Miscellany: A Collection of Scarce, Curious, and Entertaining Pamphlets and Tracts*, Vol 3, 6.

[https://archive.org/stream/harleianmiscell03malhgoog/harleianmiscell03malhgoog_djvu.txt - The_Harleian_Miscellany, accessed 11 Nov 2014].

James risked his life for the first time. That night, his mother's secretary, David Riccio, was killed. Bystanders would say that Mary had a gun pointed at her belly that night.⁵

On 16 May 1567, Mary Queen of Scots set sail from the Firth of Forth to England, never to come back. She was then held prisoner in England and her place in the King's life was taken by the Countess of Mar, a zealous protestant, by Mary's wish.⁶ James's father, Henry Stewart, was killed on 9 February, 1567, and Scotland was ruled under the regency until James was twelve, after his mother's departure. Two men were chosen by the Lords of the Congregation for the boy's day-by-day tuition, in order to form, both scholastically and religiously, the royal child: George Buchanan and Peter Young. These two were connected to the King in different ways, and each of them left a strong spiritual and didactic imprint. Buchanan was more respected than loved: in fact, in the King's mature life his master's figure would hunt the King's dreams and memories.⁷ Buchanan was surely the greatest scholar in Scotland, and he was known all over Europe, but it is difficult to determine the exact share Buchanan himself took in James's personal growth. He forged the King's way of talking and writing: James's excessive concern with minor details and rules is indeed a sign of his influence. James's learning under the guidance of such a great master made the King into a scholar able to translate from the Latin Bible, at only eight years of age, ex-tempore from Latin to French and then from French to English, but with no instructions on court manners.⁸ Buchanan was a proud master and James a proud

⁵ Julian Goodare, 'Mary (1542–1587)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. [Accessed 01/02/2017].

⁶ Lucy Aikin, *Memoirs of the Court of King James the First*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, Paternoster-row, 1822, 2.

⁷ George Philip Vernon Akrigg, *Jacobean Pageant, or The Court of King James I*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962, p. 7.

⁸ Among Young's papers there is a sketch of a day's work at a particular period of James's education. After morning prayers he read Greek the New Testament, Isocrates, and Plutarch; after breakfast Cicero and Livy or modern history. The afternoon was devoted to composition, and, when time permitted, to arithmetic or

student, but the King's high respect for him was not enough to assimilate his master's moral or tastes. When in 1579 Buchanan wrote his dialogue concerning the constitution of Scotland, *De Jure Regni apud Scotos*, his moral statements were extremely clear: "Scorn the barbarism and solecisms of the court language (...) fearing notwithstanding lest evil custom, the fosterer of all vices, added to the seductions of which the senses are but too susceptible".⁹ Buchanan thought that Mary was justly set aside, that that was the right of the Scots. Buchanan was persuaded that the King was not in any case superior to the right of people to act against injustice. "That princes ought of right to be amenable for their private crimes to the ordinary tribunals of the land, in the same manner as the meanest individual; and that a refusal on their part to submit to such jurisdiction, authorizes the wise and virtuous part of the citizens to rise arms, and to punish or dethrone them." What Buchanan transmitted to the young king was debatable.¹⁰ By then, though, James was too young fully to understand his message (sixty years separated them) and this made the role of the other tutor even more important. Young was a theologian close to John Calvin's ideology and actually instructed by one of Calvin's closest friend, Theodore Beza, professor of theology in Geneva. He was only twenty-five and just back from his studies in Geneva; the King's affection for him was so evident that Peter was later chosen to be the King's son's preceptor.¹¹ Peter Young made the King the Protestant we remember nowadays. This was what the Lords aimed at in choosing these two masters for the king, since a royal Protestant integrity was needed to pacify further rebellions.¹²

cosmography, or logic and rhetoric." Peter Hume Brown, *George Buchanan Humanist and Reformer. A Biography*, Edinburgh: David Douglass, 1890, p. 252.

⁹ Quoted in Aikin, 6.

¹⁰ Quoted in Aikin, 7. For further information, read Ralph Anthony Houlbrooke, *James VI and I: Ideas, Authority, and Government*, London: Ashgate, 2006, p.50.

¹¹ Akrigg, 7.

¹² Stewart, 41.

II.I The political situation in the 70s and 80s

After Mary's departure the Earl of Moray was nominated Regent of Scotland. At the time, Scotland was divided into the Queen's Party, those who wanted to restore Mary's power, and the King's Party. The Earl of Moray was the son of James V and Mary's half-brother, and the very same Lord that accompanied Mary Queen of Scots in France. Moray was, also, the main reason for Mary's flight, since he opposed her since her return to Scotland in 1560 — he fought Mary's army at Langside, in fact, his victory convinced Mary to flee to England. He died in January 1570, killed by one of the Hamilton clan, and he was succeeded by the Earl of Lennox, James' grandfather. Lennox was under the influence of Elizabeth I of England; Lennox's wife was basically held hostage in England. He was a Catholic, as his family always had been, and he was being equally unpopular with the King's Party for his religion, and the Queen's Party for his antagonism towards Mary — he blamed her for his son, Darnley's, death. It is easy to understand why his regency did not last long. After James' first public appearance to open parliament, the morning of September 4, 1571, the King escaped a coup d'état where the Earl of Lennox, James' grandfather and Regent since October 1570,¹³ died mortally wounded, succeeded then by the harsh Earl of Mar. Both assassinations, Moray's and Lennox's, were claimed by the Queen's party, apparently.¹⁴ Year after year, Mary's influence on Scotland, and with that the chances to gain her power back, ebbed away. The Earl of Mar, who died within the year from natural causes, was then followed by the Earl of Morton.

¹³ Stewart, 35.

¹⁴ Jenny Wormald, *Scotland: A History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 117.

In 1577 the two Earls of Argyll and Atholl managed to persuade the King against Morton,¹⁵ Regent of Scotland; James decided, just a few months before his twelfth birthday, to abolish the regency and gain full power. In 1579 the King's cousin Esmé Stuart, Lord of Aubigny, came from France. The figure of this thirty-seven-year-old man managed to seduce the young king, who was only thirteen, and Esmé was soon nominated the new Earl of Lennox.¹⁶ The cousin was indeed sent by the King of France with the intent to dissuade James from following the Protestant faith and lure back Scotland to the Roman Church. Lennox helped and guided the boy, and, in a few months, he became duke, the only duke in all Scotland.¹⁷ He became Lord Chamberlain and acquired most of Morton's estates. His influence over the King seemed supreme, and James's Protestant subjects vented their fears for the King's moral and religious state.¹⁸ Nearly at the same time, the young King began to relate to captain James Stuart, who was easily and hastily nominated Earl of Arran. It was, in fact, Arran and Lennox's fault if Morton was condemned in 1581, accused of having taken part in Darnley's murder. Morton was no common man at that time: he had been taking care of the King for the previous years and Queen Elizabeth made even some efforts to try and save his life.¹⁹ On many occasions, Arran and Lennox were provoking the Queen of England with their behaviour risking the failure of the alliance between Scotland and England.²⁰

All this went on until a successful coup d'état on August 22, 1582, the so-called Ruthven Raid, that forced Lennox to flee to France (where he died one year later). Due to

¹⁵ Aikin, 9.

¹⁶ Aikin, 10.

¹⁷ Akrigg, 9.

¹⁸ Aikin, 11-12.

¹⁹ Aikin, 10.

²⁰ Aikin, 11.

the coup the King was captured, and kept prisoner for one year by some Protestant lords — probably jealous of the influence that Lennox, believed to be of Catholic faith, and Arran, had on the King — surely worried at an attempt to recover Mary's power over Scotland and, with it, Catholicism.²¹ The King had to hide his indignation and acknowledge the lords until the day when he managed to convince his captors to let him see Arran, who at that time was kept prisoner too. Together with Arran and the army, the King managed to fight those lords who had no other option but to flee for their safety to England and were later banished from Scotland, blaming themselves for trusting the King.²²

James began to assert his authority as king. He attacked the Presbyterian Church, and in 1584 he forced the clergy to recognize the King as head of the Church: he did not want the Church to have its own power, separated from his. The struggle to control the Scottish church was a defining feature of James's rule in Scotland, and he managed to constantly enforce the so-called Black Acts of 1584, which asserted royal authority over the Kirk, until the Golden Act of 1592, which gave some independence back to the Kirk, by recognizing its authority in religious matters but retaining the King's right to summon it when and where he wished.²³ It has to be said though that the Presbyterians of those days wanted to inherit all the prerogatives of their Catholic predecessors.²⁴

James's ambition to be king of England was stimulated by his need for English money; despite the attack on his favourite, Arran, the alliance with England was maintained. After all, James was still the perfect candidate to inherit the title of King of

²¹ Akrigg, 9

²² Akrigg, 9.

²³ Aikin, 14-15.

²⁴ Aikin, 15.

England for many reasons.²⁵ All the attempts to the King's life made by the conspiring lords and the King's zeal against the power of the Kirk had, in the end, the effect of enforcing the King's power and strengthening his party.²⁶ Arran himself was named Governor of Edinburgh and of Stirling Castle, Lord Chancellor and even lieutenant general of the kingdom. Nonetheless, in 1585, all the banished nobles came back to Scotland with an army of ten thousand men forcing the King to surrender and Arran to lose all his powers and titles, though sparing Arran's life. After that, a formal treaty was signed with England on 5 July 1586.²⁷

The league between England and Scotland was just concluded when both countries were startled by the discovery of the so-called Babington plot. On 11 August 1586, Mary Queen of Scots was arrested on charges of conspiring to kill Elizabeth, Queen of England.²⁸ The English Secretary of State, Sir Francis Walsingham, had been trying for a long time to charge the Scot Queen with something, always in vain. She was the perfect subject for all kind of Catholic plots. But this time she let her guard down: in 1586 she wrote a letter to some conspirators with her approval of the so-called Babington Plot. Walsingham had the confessions he needed from the conspirators themselves after having them arrested.²⁹

It is, indeed, difficult to understand James's state of mind. He seemed, in fact, much more worried about the treaty he had just signed, and his reputation, than about his mother's life.³⁰ Mary was indeed a prisoner of England but, in order to proceed with the alliance,

²⁵ Alister McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How it Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture*, New York: Random House, 2001, 152-153.

²⁶ Aikin, 15.

²⁷ Stewart, 78.

²⁸ Stewart, 79.

²⁹ Stewart, 79-80.

³⁰ Stewart, 80.

Mary had to stay alive, at least in the eyes of the Scots.³¹ On the other hand, in Elizabeth's opinion, James had become for some reasons less suitable to inherit the title of King of England.³² So, for his interests, he needed both to defend Mary's life publicly, and to acknowledge Elizabeth's power and jurisdiction. In order to defend his people's beliefs he needed to try and save his mother otherwise he would have had his people against him: the nobles and commons of Scotland were horrified at the idea that a foreign government might take it upon itself to execute her.³³ The trial was set anyway and on 25 October Mary was declared guilty of planning and playing part to a plot aiming to kill the Queen.³⁴ James knew that Mary had been trying to dethrone him during her exile in England and he was indeed not certain of how to act. In Scotland he was soon accused of inaction but, in truth, he did not believe that his mother was seriously going to be executed.³⁵ He wrote to the Earl of Leicester, one of Elizabeth's councillors, a letter where he denied having taken part to any of Mary's plots or having heard from his mother since the previous autumn.³⁶ "My religion ever moved me to hate her course although my honour constrains me to insist for her life."³⁷ This sentence, written to the Earl of Leicester, is clearly underlining the real problem: his mother had been the symbol, even more than the actual leader, of all the Catholics Lords trying to dethrone the King.³⁸ But, how could a good and beloved King not save the one who bore him, even if just in front of all his Kingdom?³⁹ James and

³¹ Wormald, online.

³² Stewart, 85.

³³ John Bruce, *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth and King James VI of Scotland; some of them printed from originals in the possession of the Rev. Edward Ryder. And others from a Ms. Which formerly belonged to Sir Peter Thompson. Kt*, London: Nichols, 1849, p. 42.

³⁴ Julian Goodare, 'Mary (1542–1587)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. [Accessed 01/02/2017].

³⁵ Stewart, 82-83.

³⁶ Stewart, 84.

³⁷ James to [Leicester], 15 December 1586, Holyroodhouse. Rait & Cameron 101; *Warrender Papers I*: 248-8, in Stewart, 84.

³⁸ Stewart, 83.

³⁹ Wormald, online.

Elizabeth, though, both knew that their cooperation was far more rooted and that the King needed to publicly recognise the Queen's power. All her threats seemed to be not too serious. In a way, the course of the events would eventually underline that.⁴⁰ The Queen threatened James to deprive him of the succession by Act of Parliament, trying in this way to quit the quarrel.⁴¹ With or without James's consent, on 8 February 1587, in the Great Hall at Fotheringhay Castle, Mary Queen of Scots was beheaded.⁴²

James heard the news on 15 February: for the sake of his Kingdom he maintained a cold silence towards England. He publicly cut off all communications with England and even sent back the English ambassador.⁴³ The private exchange of letters with Elizabeth, though, tells us a different story. This a letter from James to Elizabeth:

By saving of her life, they would have mine. Do I not, trow ye, make myself a goodly prey for every wretch to devour? Transfigure yourself into my state, and suppose what you ought to do, and thereafter weigh my life, and reject the care of murder, and shun all baits that may untie our amities, and let all men know that princes know best their own laws, and misjudge not that you know not. (...) God, the searcher of all hearts, ever so have misericorde of my soul, as my innocency in that matter deserveth, and no otherwise; which invocation were too dangerous for a guilty conscience.⁴⁴

In fact, a pragmatic urgency speeded up the healing: both Spain and France were preparing to overthrow Elizabeth.⁴⁵ The Queen started to ask for a new peace with Scotland and James was indeed very careful how to answer.⁴⁶ Many in England pointed out that James

⁴⁰ Stewart, 85.

⁴¹ Even though the threat seemed to be needed just to end the quarrel it is in fact true that the Queen had her reasons. For further information, read Stewart, 86.

⁴² Goodare, online.

⁴³ Stewart, 88.

⁴⁴ John Bruce, *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth and King James VI of Scotland; some of them printed from originals in the possession of the Rev. Edward Ryder. And others from a Ms. Which formerly belonged to Sir Peter Thompson. Kt.*, London: J.B. Nichols and Son, 1849, xiii.

⁴⁵ Goodare, online.

⁴⁶ "a full satisfaction (...) be a mean to strengthen and unite this isle, establish and maintain the true religion, and oblige me to be, as of before I was, your most loving and dearest brother" from James to Elizabeth, [late February 1587]. Akrigg, 84-5.

should not have sought revenge and that his mother was anyway, by nature, supposed to die before him.⁴⁷ James was indeed much more powerful now, due to Elizabeth's fear. James explained to the English ambassador what tempting offers he had received from Spain, but assured Elizabeth

that she could not detest more deeply than himself the plots of the papists; that none of the messengers of Antichrist, their common enemy, should be encouraged; and that his single reason for suspending their usual loving intelligence was a feeling that she had failed to vindicate herself from the guilt of his mother's blood.⁴⁸

He asked for a letter signed by the Queen where she was to acknowledge James as her heir, successor to the Crown of England and he asked for the right to be consulted about the marriage of Arbella Stuart, the daughter and heir of Elizabeth's uncle, James's closest rival.⁴⁹ James played his part very well, being also in contact with the Duc de Guise, searching for money against the Queen, thus, scaring Elizabeth.

In Scotland, James managed to control both Catholics and Protestants. George Gordon, Earl of Huntly, was the new rising star among the Catholic Lords after Mary's death: he was made Privy Councillor and in July 1587 one of the four Lords of the Articles; gaining control over Huntly by buying his loyalty, James was in fact able to control the increasing disaffection among Catholics, keeping a balance among the Lords. Then on 21 July 1588 Huntly married Lady Henrietta Stuart, one of the daughters of James's beloved Esmé. Huntly and his wife publicly renounced the Catholic faith and embraced the Protestant one.⁵⁰ In the spring of 1588 rumours made James believe that Huntly and some

⁴⁷ Stewart, 91.

⁴⁸ Patrick Tytler Fraser, *History of Scotland, Vol 7*, Edinburgh: William Tait, 1845, p. 139.

⁴⁹ Stewart, 91-92.

⁵⁰ Stewart, 95.

other Lords were trying to bring the Spanish army to Scotland in order to force James's conversion to Catholicism — this plot was called Spanish blanks plot: in just a few days all the rebels surrendered but this fact was enough to make James understand not to underestimate the Catholics Lords anymore.⁵¹ Then, after the defeat of the Spanish Armada made by the English navy in 1588, Huntly was discovered to be plotting against James for three years, receiving funds for his party directly from Philip II of Spain. Huntly was, then, soon discharged and sent back in captivity to his estate.⁵²

II.II Marriage and witches

Negotiations for the King's marriage started not long after Queen Mary's death, in 1587, under the aegis of James' young tutor, Peter Young. After even Queen Elizabeth spoke in favour of Anne, the young Princess of Denmark, arrangements were made to discuss the dowry.⁵³ In 1589, George Keith, Earl of Mariscal, was sent to Denmark to negotiate it.⁵⁴ For James, though, marrying her was not only about money — even though James desperately needed money at this point — or about settling the score of the ownership of Orkney Islands — the islands had been contested since the time of James IV. Together with the small amount of money — one million pound Scots the original request, a hundred and fifty thousand was the amount paid in the end — Denmark agreed to be part of an anti-Catholic league, to help defend Scotland and to help in case there was to claim a foreign title rightfully earned.⁵⁵ On 9 September 1589, King James VI and Anne of

⁵¹ Tytler, 188.

⁵² Stewart, 104.

⁵³ Akrigg, 12.

⁵⁴ Sir Walter Scott, *Secret history of the court of James the First: containing, I. Osborne's Traditional Memoirs. II. Sir Anthony Weldon's Court and Character of King James. III. Aulicus Coquinariae. IV. Sir Edward Peyton's Divine Catastrophe of the House of Stuarts*, Edinburgh: Ballantyne, 1811, p. 330.

⁵⁵ Jenny Wormald, 'James VI and I (1566–1625)', Online.

Denmark were married by proxy. Unfortunately, on 10 October, James received the news that Anne's flotilla was sunk by a storm. In the most romantic act of his life,⁵⁶ James set sail to reach his queen, leaving behind some papers to explain his choice.

In respect I know, that the motion of my voyage at this time will be diversly scanslit upon, the misinterpreting whereof may tend as well to great dishonour wrangous blame of innocence, I have been moved to set down the present declaration with my own hand.... As to the causes, I doubt not but it [is] manifestly known to all how far I was generally found fault with by all men for the delaying so long of my marriage; the reasons were that I was alane, without fader or moder, brither or sister, king of this realme, and heir apperand of England. This my nakedness made me to be weak and my enemies stark; ane man was as na man, and the want of hope of succession breeds disdain.... Thir reasons, and innumerable others hourly objected, moved me to hasten the treaty of my marriage; for as to my own nature, God is my witness, I could have abstained langer, nor the well of my patrie could have permitted.⁵⁷

Even if James "could have abstained langer", his "*patrie*" could not. This letter was to many, from his times to the following, the most open-hearted/open-minded declaration ever expressed by him.⁵⁸ His nation needed him not to be "alane, without fader or moder, brither or sister, king of this realme, and heir apperand of England". His nation needed him to marry someone, to become a father, to have a descendance. Though these few lines could explain the marriage, we need to proceed with our reading to understand a bit more of his "enterprise of gallantry".⁵⁹ James continued his writing explaining that he took his decision upon himself, even though Bothwell, cousin of King James and Admiral of Scotland, was arranging to go to the rescue, "as I am a true prince".⁶⁰ He jumped to the rescue "to convince his subjects, in the first place, that he was not in reality the driveller and idiot whom they might take him for, (...) led by his chancellor by the nose, like an ass or a

⁵⁶ Scott, 331.

⁵⁷ Aikin, 20.

⁵⁸ Scott, 331.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Scott, 331.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Scott, 331.

bairn”.⁶¹ Even though, then, — as it appeared from this letter — he was not into marriage, he took it really seriously. This was his chance to prove to everyone what he was made of.

After reaching his queen, he married her again in Oslo, with solemn celebrations.⁶² Then, he decided to stay in Denmark until April where he got to know Hemmingsen — a Danish theologian that would be cited in the preface of *Daemonologie* for knowing “the opinion of the Auncientes”⁶³ — and Tycho Brahe and got introduced to both the Copernican theories and witchcraft. Witchcraft was already an important phenomenon on the continent: in fact, on the occasions of the sinking of Anna’s flotilla, Peter Munk, who was captain in charge, blamed it on witchcraft. Three times the flotilla that was trying to take Anna to Scotland set sail and three times it was caught by a storm. That storm was, in Peter Munk’s opinion, — as sources reported — created magically from a covey of witches.⁶⁴ This probably would not have mattered much if, at James’s return to Scotland, a series a witch trials had not already begun.

In order to understand what happened we need to take a step back, just a few years. Even after the Reformation and the Witchcraft Acts of 1563, magical activities were not contemplated as connected to the Devil. In 1573 bishops or superintendents were supposed to intervene and interview anyone who was suspected of consulting witches: yet, there was no sign of a Demonic pact, either implicit nor explicit.⁶⁵ From 1587 the crown and the Kirk moved to a period of cooperation under the guidance of Chancellor Maitland. A group of Presbyterian leaders — Andrew Melville, Robert Bruce, James Carmichael and John

⁶¹ Scott, 332.

⁶² Akrigg, 13.

⁶³ James I and VI, *Daemonologie, In Forme of a Dialogie, Divided into three Bookes*, Edinburgh: Robert Walde-Grave, 1597, preface. This will be the edition I refer to.

⁶⁴ Brian Paul Levack, *Witchcraft in Scotland*, New York and London: Garland, 1992, p. 235.

⁶⁵ Normand and Roberts, 75.

Davison of Prestonpans, above all — sought to influence James so that the king “did much to spearhead the attack on witchcraft”.⁶⁶ Most of the sermons of those years, before 1591, pressed on the imminent danger of witchcraft. Those Presbyterian leaders, in fact, urged “rigorous application of the law against witchcraft, (...) intended to strengthen both crown and kirk” asserting “justice and righteousness”. The Kirk was a major driving force behind the witch hunt, providing political support and justification.⁶⁷

When King James came back from Denmark, he found that a few, localised, trials had already caught the attention of the public. Evidence in depositions showed that a witchcraft hunt was going on in East Lothian before the King and the privy council became involved in late 1590.⁶⁸ In 1578, in England, a group of four witches apparently tried to assassinate the Queen burning a wax effigy, and this was, Normand and Roberts believe, very likely to be the prototype of what happened less than two decades later in Scotland.⁶⁹ Once in Scotland, James discovered that people believed that a covey of witches — gathered around North Berwick and led by Agnes Thomson — had been the cause of the storms that impeded the safe journey to Scotland to the new Queen Anna. James decided to attend Agnes Thomson’s trial — she had already been tried for witchcraft six months before — together with all the other witches who, after torture, confessed their crimes and were sentenced to death.⁷⁰ This series of trials would be remembered as one of the greatest massacres of all times in Scotland, the so-called North Berwick trial, of which Carmichael wrote about in his book *News from Scotland* — I will discuss it in the following chapter.

⁶⁶ Normand and Roberts, 75.

⁶⁷ Normand and Roberts, 76.

⁶⁸ Normand and Roberts, 84.

⁶⁹ Normand and Roberts, 85.

⁷⁰ Akrigg, 13.

After some years, James decided to write a book, which he published in 1596, about witchcraft in order to explain and simplify all the current ideas around that topic.

In the 1590s, James was also consolidating his status as a learned King, perfecting his theory on kingship and answering those attacking him, and his theories on statecraft, succession, divine right and absolutism. Even though it is not totally related to the topic of this thesis, understanding James's thought on kingship can help one understand James's role in the witch hunt. Over his life, James would often think, speak and write of himself as a Solomon or a David.⁷¹ Neither David nor Solomon, anyway, ever solved the problem of bridging the gap between tribal autonomy and central authority.⁷² In an attempt to clear himself of criticism, in 1598, James published the *True Law of Free Monarchies*, a book in which he discussed the role of a king as an intermediate between God and His people. Essentially, he drew from the Bible arguments that supported his claim to be both a political and a religious ruler: in fact, a true king had "found instruction of the truth",⁷³ and "monarchy is the true pattern of divinity".⁷⁴ James explains how a king is like a father to his people, and how a king is God's lieutenant. The role of a king is, to James, as following:

"to minister justice and judgement to the people," as the same David saith; "to advance the good and punish the evil," as he likewise saith; "to establish good law to his people and procure obedience to the same," as divers good king of Judah did; "to procure the peace of the people," as the same David saith; "to decide all the controversies that can arise among them," as Solomon did; "to be the minister of God for the weal of them that do well and, as the minister of God, to take vengeance upon them that do evil," as Saint Paul saith; and finally, "as a good pastor, to out and in before people," as is said in the first of Samuel; "that though the prince's prosperity the people's peace may be procured," as Jeremiah saith.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Stewart, 147.

⁷² James I and VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: And, Basilikon Doron*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1996, 54.

⁷³ James I and VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: And, Basilikon Doron*, 52.

⁷⁴ James I and VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: And, Basilikon Doron*, 53.

⁷⁵ James I and VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: And, Basilikon Doron*, 55-6.

From this passage we can easily see how James believed in his role as juror in the North Berwick Trials: punishing the evil as a good pastor would do, a king had to swear an oath to maintain the religion professed within the country and to punish those who pressed to alter it.⁷⁶ In opposition to what Buchanan thought, in James's opinion, people had a duty of allegiance to the king and rebellion was never an option "because of the looseness of all things will be far more awful than the behaviour of any tyrant", for "a King can never be so monstrously vicious and will generally favour justice and maintain some order".⁷⁷

By the law of Nature, the king becomes a natural father to all his lieges at his coronation. And, as a father of fatherly duty is bound to care for the nourishing, education, and virtuous government of his children, even so is the king bound to care for all his subjects.⁷⁸

While it was true that going against a king was like going against God — so that even rebelling against a tyranny would be wrong —, it was also true that the king had a duty to his people — that a tyrant would not grant. James seemed to be assuring that he would do good, upholding his duty to God and to his country. By being a good pastor, as Saul was chosen by God and anointed by Samuel, he would deserve his title in front of God and his people.

⁷⁶ James I and VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: And, Basilikon Doron*, 56.

⁷⁷ James I and VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: And, Basilikon Doron*, 76.

⁷⁸ James I and VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: And, Basilikon Doron*, 57.

CHAPTER III: The books behind Daemonologie

In the two centuries leading to James's ascent to the throne, witchcraft came to be conceived as a problem for moral and political reasons. The same model that Michel Foucault applied to the seventeenth century can be applied to witchcraft in fifteenth and sixteenth century: witchcraft became visible once the conditions were right, and it remained visible as long as natural science kept the lens above it.¹ Under the name of witchcraft there were two different subjects: sorcery and demonology. To understand how a book such as King James's *Daemonologie* (1597) could come to be written by such an author, we need to look closely at both subjects — James and his book — and their evolution in literature, following in James's footsteps throughout the authors in the preface of James's *Daemonologie*. As Reginald Scot explains in the *Discovery of Witchcraft*,

The fables of witchcraft have taken so fast hold and deepe root in the heart of man, that fewe or none can (novvadaies) with patience indure the hand and correction of God. For if any adversitie, greefe, sicknesse, losse of children, corne, cattell, or libertie happen vnto them; by & by they exclaime uppon witches.²

Even though Catholic rites and folklore lay on two separate planes, common folks had often lived them as one, without being able to separate one from the other. After all, how to deal with supernatural forces had always been a problem for both Catholics and Protestants. Augustinian, Neo-platonic and Thomistic philosophies had to deal with many theological issues, above all the one concerning the origin of Evil. It was utterly important

¹ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, trans. A.M. Sheridan, London: Routledge, 1973, pp. 195-196.

² Reginald Scot, *Discovery of Witchcraft*, London: Elliot Stock, 1886, p. 96.

to deal with this matter because it constituted the very essence of the discussion on witchcraft.³ To fully understand the long-lasting debate on witchcraft in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, then, we need to understand some theological aspects. The Augustinian and Thomistic vision explained the demonic causation within a praeternatural context: demons were a part of the natural world that one simply did not know, and they were actually unable to do things that went beyond natural and physical laws.⁴ Therefore, demons were considered part of a nature that could not be compromised by them. Nevertheless, stating that evil was part of the natural world also created the question: could angels — and devils — actually work miracles? According to the vision of Aquinas and Augustine, the requirement for a true miracle was of being beyond the order of the whole created nature; demons, being unable to go beyond natural laws, couldn't work miracles but only *mira*, i.e. demonic counterfeits.⁵ Having declared that demons could only mimic miracles gave an important role to science: if all natural phenomena could be understood, it would be a task for intellectuals to reduce the intelligibility gap and to show how demonic counterfeits were caused.⁶ Furthermore, the problem of evil could be understood better in terms of rhetoric. Neo-platonic thinkers considered evil as a necessity for good to exist⁷ and Thomistic ones expressed the belief that the knowledge of evil was a prerequisite for knowing good, following the Aristotelian rule of relationship of greatest difference.⁸ As a

³ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 64.

⁴ Peter G. Platt, *Wonders, Marvels, and Monsters in Early Modern Culture*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999, 78-86.

⁵ Clark, 190.

⁶ Clark, 165.

⁷ As Augustine said, “even that which is called evil, being properly ordered and put in place sets off the good to better advantage, adding to its attraction and excellence.” St. Augustine, *Ancient Christian Writers: St Augustine, Faith, Hope and Charity*, translated by Louis A. Arand. Westminster, Md: Newman Bookshop, 1947, p. 18.

⁸ Clark, 48.

consequence, considering Evil as part of God's plan, and therefore part of Nature, made demonology an important study, together with the concepts of natural philosophy and medicine. Yet we still need to understand how witchcraft, that had always been there, became such a hindrance all of a sudden.

Since the time of Simon Magus (Acts, 8:5-25), heresy had been strictly linked with magic. This is due to the contrast between positive entities and their contraries that pervaded medieval thought: if God is one, and the one of true religion, then heretics must be serving the Devil. The medieval church used to link heresy with demonism and heretics were often accused of crimes close to witchcraft, thus making witches of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries still connected to the old heretics. Heresy and magic were intrinsically connected: as magicians and witches were both cryptic and deceptive, their threat to orthodoxy was not always acknowledged. They were only betrayed by the use of superfluous rites, as for magic, or doctrines, as for heretics. To clarify this concept, we can read through this passage from Clark on the topic:

Adopting distinctions codified in Aquinas's theological summa, the Catholic casuists allowed for two broad types of superstition, one consisting in service to the true God but in some inappropriate or incorrect manner, the other in service to a false god but in the manner due to the true. It was customary to subdivide the first of these into *cultus falsus* and *cultus superfluis*. The usual explanation (given, for example, by Toledo, Lessius, and Sayer) was that the first occurred when God was honoured either with invalid ceremonies, like those derived from Mosaic law and the customs of infidels and heretics, or with ceremonies based on false relics and miracles. The second arose when the worshipper went beyond what was customary and official in the liturgy of the Church by, for example, multiplying its rituals, or attaching unwarranted significance to matters of ritual detail, or, as one Englishman expressed it, putting religion 'where none is'. At this point, Aquinas had warned against a disproportionate attention to 'mere externals' that had no connection with interior spirituality. Protestant theologians naturally thought it possible to extend this idea to much of Catholicism itself. Summarizing more than a century of polemics, the Basel professor Joannes Wollebius wrote that it was superstitious.⁹

⁹ Clark, 560.

But how did the hunt actually start? Is all that has been written up to this point able alone to justify the mere existence of evil, or of witch hunts, or else: what changed?

In 1326, the same Pope that canonised Thomas Aquinas, Pope John XXII, in the bull *Super Illius Specula*, spoke against those who had “forsaken the first light of truth” laying the foundations of a witch hunt that, after one and a half century, was accelerated by the publication of a book.¹⁰ This book was named *Malleus Maleficarum* (the Hammer of Witches) and it was published in 1487, written by two Dominican clergymen. What was really special about the book was the presence, as a preface, of the papal bull *Summis Desiderantes Affectibus* (1484). The bull granted the two men, Henry Kramer and James Sprenger, the permission to enquire throughout Germany, with almost infinite power, together with immunity from “being molested or hindered in any manner whatsoever” during their activities in Germany.¹¹ While it is true that the papal bull gave Kramer and Sprenger a reading public, more important was what they had to say. Their aim was to explore “Whether the belief that there are such beings as witches is so essential a part of the Catholic faith that obstinately to maintain the opposite opinion manifestly savours of heresy.”¹² So, as Wicasta Lovelace, who translated the *Malleus* into English, wrote

the immediate, and lasting, popularity of the *Malleus* essentially silenced those voices, it made very real the threat of one being branded a heretic, simply by virtue of one’s questioning of the existence of witches and, thus, the validity of the inquisition.¹³

¹⁰ Ben-Yehuda, Nachman, “The European Witch Craze of the 14th to 17th Centuries: A Sociologist's Perspective”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 86 (1980), p. 4.

¹¹ From *Summis Desiderantes Affectibus*, the “Witch-Bull” Issued on Dec. 5th, 1484 by Pope Innocent VIII, in Kramer, Heinrich and Sprenger, James, *Malleus Maleficarum*, <http://www.malleusmaleficarum.org/downloads/MalleusAcrobat.pdf>.

¹² Kramer and Sprenger, part 1 question I, 5.

¹³ Kramer and Sprenger, introduction, p. 2.

Women, especially herb gatherers, midwives, widows and spinsters started to be accused and called witches.¹⁴ Witchcraft remained a day-to-day reality, or, as Weber would say, a “technology”, only as long as there was no system around magic.¹⁵ Then, a systematic theory appeared, where specialists — demonologists — and hunters cooperated. Witchcraft lost its technological neutrality to anti-religion in the fourteenth century; the system of control where demonologists and hunters coexisted was, then, authorised and accepted in the fifteenth. The Dominican order — which Kramer and Sprenger were part of — saw the world as a battle that took place between Good and Evil. Such a battle was taking place in an actual physical incarnation. For instance, in the first part of the *Malleus*, among other things, we can find a discussion on the ways in which children can be born from devils, how *incubi* and *succubi* can steal semen from men and use it to procreate. While in the second part methods of destroying and curing witchcraft are treated, the real issue is the existence of methods to spot witches, together with all the superstitions one may find about women. The book connected witchcraft with womanhood, because women were believed to be “more credulous and with poor memorie”, and because “all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable”.¹⁶

So, while just during the fifteenth century more than fifteen books on witchcraft circulated (actually fifteen only between Nider’s *Formicarius* — another important book on witches and witchcraft — 1435, and the *Malleus*, 1487), a commercial revolution was taking place that, together with the idea of a Christian Europe and the rising of a urban society, created cultural diversity and a newly felt need for the definition of moral

¹⁴ Kramer and Sprenger, 726.

¹⁵ Max, Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans Talcott Parsons, London: Routledge, 2005, pp. vii- xxiv.

¹⁶ Kramer and Sprenger, part 1 question VI, 99.

boundaries.¹⁷ The role of women deeply changed between the thirteenth and the fifteenth century: in the thirteenth century, urban women often appeared as independent workers in craft and trades; in the fifteenth century, their participation to the urban work force greatly diminished.¹⁸ Guilds and governments imposed severe restrictions on women's work, leaving them to limited types of jobs. Those jobs were mostly women's only: women's instruction, and culture, was for the major part ignored by men, not codified and built on folklore and domestic knowledge.¹⁹ Women were pushed to marginal positions of the society free to pass their knowledge on to among themselves only. The more they were incomprehensible to men, the more they became suspicious.

Moreover, Thomistic philosophers said that even the knowledge of magic could help knowing revealed truths and, in doing so, they actually created the issue of demonology itself: demonology became thus a branch of religious studies.²⁰ By the time we reach King James's times, many authors eventually joined the crusade against witchcraft and the topic was effectively part of the Catholic-Protestant bone of content, among others. In order to analyse the evolution on the concepts around witchcraft before King James's *Daemonologie*, I will enlist, and then introduce, all the authors he addressed to on his book's preface: in this order, Gerhard Andreas Hyperius (1511-1564), Niels Hemmingsen (1513-1600), Jean Bodin (1530-1596), Reginald Scot (1537-1599) and Johann Weyer (1515-1588).

¹⁷ Clark, 187.

¹⁸ David Herlihy, *Women, Family and Society in Medieval Europe: Historical Essays, 1978-1991*, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995, p. 69.

¹⁹ Herlihy, 91.

²⁰ Clark, 203.

The problem of witchcraft dramatically increased during the sixteenth century due to the Reformation. Alongside the Reformation came a disenchantment due to fact that rites, for Christians, were evidently inspired by both magic and religion. The Reformation removed the supernatural elements, such as the transubstantiation in the Eucharist, as a newly discovered necessity that aimed at eliminating the ideas that religious rituals had any automatic efficacy.²¹ By exposing what was once hidden, demonology became explicit as it had never been before. The process came to be seen as the subject: consequently, witchcraft was taking over elements that had no longer a foundation on theology. So, while Protestants were rewriting Christian rites, witchcraft came to incarnate all that was not representing the true faith. In fact, Christianity hated witchcraft for its power to mirror religion itself. And it is important for orthodoxy to construct and maintain norms while their opposite is defined. So, at the same time, a strong link emerged between what witches were urged to deny and what good Christians should practice. After the first generation of Protestants — reformers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin or Huldrych Zwingli — and the revolutionary ideas that gave birth to the Reformation, theological matters came into direct touch with what witchcraft is concerned.

In the preface of *Daemonologie*, the two preachers mentioned by King James as those who “would know what hath bene the opinion of the Auncientes”²² were Hyperius (Gerhard, Andreas, 1511-1564) and Hemmingsen (Niels Hemmingsen, 1513-1600). The first, a Flemish professor of Theology from Ypres, wrote the *Elementa Christianae Religionis*, published in 1563, together with other books on the study of theology. The

²¹ Michael D. Bailey; “The Disenchantment of Magic: Spells, Charms, and Superstition in Early European Witchcraft Literature”, *The American Historical Review*, 111, 2006, pp. 383–404.

²² James I and VI, *Daemonologie, In Forme of a Dialogue, Divided into three Bookes*, Edinburgh: Robert Walde-Grave, 1597, Preface.

second wrote instead the *Admonition Superstitionibus* (1575). They both discussed matters from the Bible, in light of the new thought, and discussed in detail the dichotomy good-evil. In the *Admonition*, the first commandment is extended to witchcraft too and the necessity of a pact, implicit or explicit, as discussed in the centuries before James's book, now came to a more crucial role.²³ As a matter of fact, since "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft",²⁴ new Protestants preachers were defining the Devil as a different God, an alternate God, so that the first commandment was defiled.²⁵ This would be, in my opinion, an important passage for James, too: if kings are but vassals of God, it is a moral duty to fight evil, and those who are using witchcraft and worshipping the devil are enemies to be eradicated, for they are committing crimes against God and together with it to the whole nation, being allied with the enemy. For the evolution of witchcraft, it was one more step into a political direction.

Following the list of authors in *Daemonologie's* preface, we find the next name is Bodin's. Bodin (1530 – 1596) was a French philosopher who was widely credited with introducing the concept of sovereignty into legal and political thought, in Europe.²⁶ He wrote *Daemonomanie* (1580). This book is often called by historians the Malleus of the sixteenth century and Bodin will later be called the Montesquieu of the sixteenth century, for, while the theory and practice of witch's persecutions raised political issues, certain traditions of statecraft — both theoretical and practical — raised demonological ones.²⁷ Bodin thought of the human, the natural, and the celestial as mutually reinforcing variants

²³ Clark, 611-612.

²⁴ 1 Samuel 15:23, in the future King James Version, the Bible published in 1611 under the approval of King James, and also in the Geneva Bible (1560), this passage of the Bible will be translated as such. In previous versions of the Bible — such as the Wycliffe Bible —, the word "witchcraft" was not mentioned.

²⁵ Clark, 578-579.

²⁶ Jean Bodin, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-Bodin>. [Accessed 17/10/2019].

²⁷ Clark, 789.

of a single divine dispensation with principles of continuity, hierarchy, and plenitude. His theory about the construction of the State is close to James's one: Bodin poses kingship as a power *superiorem non recognoscens*, namely, a power that stands above everything but God itself. *Daemonomanie* is a work that stresses ideas of justice and magistracy and the concept of rulership to create a fair society. Witches committed ordinary crimes, against the positive law of men, such as murder (especially infanticide), cannibalism, killing by poison and charms, slaughter of animals, causing of famine, and sterility by blighting crops and copulation with the Devil.²⁸ According to Bodin, the prince had no authority to command actions contrary to God's law. Thus, he could neither order a subject to commit witchcraft nor pardon one already convicted of the crime.²⁹

Since it is sure that King James had Bodin's books in his library, we might as well take a closer look to Bodin's system of rational punishment.³⁰ Exploring Bodin's thought we can easily see how close it is to James's and, luckily, Clark helps us understand Bodin's thought and his application to his environment: Bodin believed that negligence had upset the balance of contrary moral principles and that the bad was then considerably stronger than the good.³¹ He suggested then a return to a stronger moral system inspired by the Old Testament:

In the *Démonomanie* the rationale of punishment is set out in seven heads, each, significantly, supported with a text from the Pentateuch. Its first and principal purpose is to appease divine anger (Numbers 25); thereafter it serves to obtain God's blessing on a land (Deuteronomy 13), to deter other malefactors (Deuteronomy 13), to prevent the 'infection' of the good (Deuteronomy 15, 19),

²⁸ Clark, 791.

²⁹ *Bodin, Jean, Six Books on the Commonwealth*, translated by M. J. Tooley, Oxford: Aldeen Press, 1955, p. 27.

³⁰ In Peter Young, *The Library of James VI, 1573-1583, from a Manuscript in the Hand of Peter Young, his Tutor*, ed. George F. Warner, Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable for the Scottish History Society, 1893.

³¹ Clark, 800.

to diminish the number of the evil (Leviticus 12, 14), to ensure security for the good (Deuteronomy 19), and to punish the actual crime (Deuteronomy 19).³²

Bodin thought that the role of man was to lie between all the brute beasts and the intelligible natures (angels and demons) and that God had placed him there because “part of whom is mortal, the body, and part immortal, the intellect.”³³ Furthermore, Bodin stood against Manicheism and used the concept of privation in Augustine to solve the issue of the existence of evil, because there can be no real dualism, and evil must be below good and God. Consequently, evil is for him necessary, and part of the divine plan to know what is good.³⁴

Following now on the preface to King James’s *Daemonologie*, we read about “the damnable opinion of two principally in our age, whereof the one called SCOT an Englishman, is not ashamed in publike print to deny, that there can be such a thing as witchcraft.”³⁵ Reginald Scot (1537-1599) was an English writer and politician: his text, *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584), is referred to throughout the entire *Daemonologie*. Scot

³² Clark, 795. The biblical references are: “Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel” ref [Num 25]; “prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee” ref [Deut 13]; “If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother. But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.” ref [Deut 15]; “life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” ref [Deut 19]; “The woman shall continue in purification from her bleeding for thirty-three days. She must not touch anything sacred or go into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are complete” Ref [Lev 12]; [a sinner] “shall be brought unto the priest” ref [Lev 14]; “Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it” ref [Deut 19]; to punish the actual crime, “both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges” ref [Deut 19].

³³ Bodin, Jean, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, translated by Randy A. Scott, Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1995, p. 56.

³⁴ Clark, 800.

³⁵ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, preface.

was convinced that witchcraft could not exist, and that all correlated issues were to be attributed to other crimes. In fact, in his *Discovery of Witchcraft* he stated:

In like a manner I say, he that attributeth to a witch, such a divine power, as dulie and onelie apperteineth unto GOD (which all witch-mongers doo) is in his heart a blasphemer, an idolater, and full of grosse impietie, although he neither go nor send to hir for assistance.³⁶

He stated how the regular process of law did not apply to cases of witchcraft:

Item, if a woman bewitch anie bodies eies, she is to be executed without further prooffe. Item, if anie inchant or bewitch mens beasts, or corne, or flie in the aire, or make a dog speake, or cut off anie mans members, and unite them againe to men or childrens bodies; it is sufficient prooffe to condemnation. Item, presumptions and conjectures are sufficient proofes against witches. Item, if three witnesses doo but saie, Such a woman is a witch; then is it a cleere case that she is to be executed with death. Which matter Bodin saith is not onelie certeine by the canon and civill lawes, but by the opinion of pope Innocent, the wisest pope (as he saith) that ever was. Item, the complaint of anie one man of credit is sufficient to bring a poore woman to the racke or pullie. Item, a condemned or infamous persons testimonie is good and allowable in matters of witchcraft. Item, a witch is not to be delivered, though she endure all the tortures, and confesse nothing; as all other are in anie criminall cases. Item, though in other cases the depositions of manie women at one instant are disabled, as insufficient in lawe; bicause of the imbecillitie and frailtie of their nature or sex : yet in this matter, one woman, though she be a partie, either accuser or accused, and be also infamous and impudent (for such are Bodins words) yea and alreadie condemned; she may neverthesse serve to accuse and condemne a witch. Item, a witsesse uncited, and offering himselfe in this case is to be heard, and in none other. Item, a capitall enemie (if the enimitie be pretended to growe by meanes of witchcraft) may object against a witch; and none / exception is to be had or made against him. Item, although the prooffe of perjurie may put backe a witsesse in all other causes; yet in this, a perjured person is a good and lawful witsesse. Item, the proctors and advocats in this case are compelled to be witnesses against their clients, as in none other case they are to be constrained there unto. Item, none can give evidence against witches, touching their assemblies, but witches onelie: bicause (as Bodin saith) none other can doo it. Howbeit, AV. Ga. writeth, that he came to the God speed, and with his sword and buckler killed the divell; or at the least he execution of wounded him so sore, that he made him stinke of brimstone. Item, Bodin saith, that bicause this is an extraordinarie matter; there must heerein be extraordinarie dealing: and all maner of waies are to be used, direct and indirect.³⁷

From these passages we can see that Scot went against Bodin's (and would be against James's future ideas, as shown in the next chapter) opinion that witchcraft was such a

³⁶ Reginald, Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, London: Elliot Stock, 1886, Second Book, chap 5, p. 9.

³⁷ Scot, Second Book, chap 3, 18-19.

terrible and dangerous crime that the rule of law had to be suspended in such cases. Moreover, it seemed obvious to him that any confession, true or false, could be extorted by force. In fact, to him, “what marvell then, thogh a poore woman, (...) be made to confesse such absurd and false impossibilities; when flesh and bloud is unable to endure such triall?”³⁸ He said that people were persuaded “that witches confesse they renounce the faith, and as their confession must be true (or else they would not make it) so must their fault be worthie of death, or else they should not be executed.”³⁹ Scot questioned this simple act of logic by saying that, as witches’ confessions were extorted, or else coming from an unsound mind, judges were mistaken. He went on,

that we our selves, which are sound of mind, and yet seeke anie other waie of salvation than Christ Jesus, or breake his commandements, or walke not in his steps with a livelie faith, &c : doo not onlie renounce the faith, but God himselfe : and therefore they (in confessing that they forsake God, and imbrace sathan) doo that which we all should doo.⁴⁰

With his logic, Scot was able to blame common folk, underlining how their kind of behaviour was far from being Christian, since folks were condemning each other, walking out of a ‘livelie faith’. Then, he meticulously enlisted all tricks attributed to magic and witches, explaining how easy it was to be misled, “as the common people thinketh the same to be miraculous; and to be compassed none other waie, but onelie by witchcraft.”⁴¹

A totally different approach is the one followed by the last writer enlisted in King James’s preface, Johann Weyer (1515-1588). He was a Dutch physician, occultist and demonologist, disciple and follower of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, who was a famous

³⁸ Scot, Second Book, chap 12, 29.

³⁹ Scot, Third Book, chap 12, 34.

⁴⁰ Scot, Third Book, chap 12, 46.

⁴¹ Scot, Thirteenth Book, chap 3, 236.

demonologist too. Weyer was considered a sceptic as he rejected the entire idea of female witchcraft. He explained his ideas in his first book *De Praestigiis Daemonum et Incantationibus ac Venificiis* (1563), translated as *On the Tricks of Demons*. Witchcraft was to him sex and age specific, explained in terms of pathology and female senility and tricks of the Devil.⁴² Voluntary confessions came from physical illness and mental disorder, and, as the pact was to him pure illusion — as the Devil was merely taking advantage of ill women — all acts of witchcraft were the direct work of the Devil, leaving the sin of witchcraft to pure and simple heresy. His explanations for witchcraft were rooted in medicine and what now one would call psychology; Weyer failed to convince the world to accept his explanations because he presented a new idea within the constraints of an old system.⁴³ For these thoughts he was simply called a misogynist. Just like Kramer, Weyer believed that the Devil was an expert in deceiving the senses and in harming people, even though acting within a preternatural context. According to the theories of that time, witches could be prosecuted legally because they had free will:

For S. Augustine says, in Book LXXXIII, that the cause of a man's depravity lies in his own will, whether he sins at his own or at another's suggestion. But a witch is depraved through sin, therefore the cause of it is not the devil but human will. In the same place he speaks of free-will, that everyone is the cause of his own wickedness. And he reasons thus: that the sin of man proceeds from free-will, but the devil cannot destroy free-will, for this would militate against liberty: therefore the devil cannot be the cause of that or any other sin.⁴⁴

Weyer defended witches through medicine, law, philosophy and theology in order to prevent “a constant shipwreck of soul”⁴⁵ due to misguided trials. Witch-hunters were

⁴² Johann Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance: Johann Weyer, De Praestigiis Daemonum*, trans by John Shea. New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1991, p. 174.

⁴³ Sam Migliore, “The Doctor, the Lawyer, and the Melancholy Witch.” *Anthropologica*, 25 (1983), p. 163.

⁴⁴ Kramer and Sprenger, Part 1, question V, 81.

⁴⁵ Weyer, 522.

actually tainting their own souls creating more misery in the world. He aimed to remove witchcraft from the field of law and make it something to be treated by priests and physicians. To him, the Devil's power was limited only by God, and the Devil's illusions were only due to lack of reason. Humans were in fact unable to commit crimes - or acts - beyond their natural power, and witches had even less strength than men. Ill men were, instead, "victim of demonic possession" where the Devil was acting directly through them, and not using witches as intermediaries as was believed.⁴⁶ Weyer asserted the physical impossibility of the acts attributed to witches and established a natural hierarchy where the Devil had a prominent position, overturning the idea that the Devil needed a human being in order to commit maleficia:

Satan needs the help of no second creature in displaying his power and declaring his actions, he who is constrained by the will or the command of none but God and God's good ministers⁴⁷

Moreover, Weyer undermined one of the justifying reasons of the witch-hunt by asserting that witches – and magicians – could do no physical harm. But, even if a witch could not perform any harmful magic, she was still guilty of heresy and apostasy. The pact was after all not legally binding since the Devil was not actually able to ensure what he promised. On the contrary, the pact between God and mankind at the moment of baptism was legally binding, since it relied on good faith, superior to the Devil's. Weyer was inspired by spiritualists, and, like them, he believed that the Devil was a symbol of humanity's inclination to sinful behaviour. To sin against God meant, in his opinion,

⁴⁶ Weyer, 491.

⁴⁷ Weyer, 173.

joining with the Devil, and all humans were eventually guilty of that.⁴⁸ He said, “for who of us is there who does not do the same? - since indeed everyone who sins is a slave to sin according to Christ’s teachings”.⁴⁹ And that type of sin could be punished only by God himself. The charge was not of heresy but of error. A witch was “dulled by age, or inconstant by reason of her sex, or unsteady because of her weak-mindedness or in despair because of a disease of the mind”.⁵⁰ Consequently, their weakness of spirit, mind, and natural disposition⁵¹ “should exonerate them or at least mitigate their punishment”⁵²: one should not, in fact, rely on the confession of a melancholic person or a mentally incompetent one, and punishment should not be inflicted on the basis of a confession extorted in a moment of weakness.⁵³ On the contrary, an ‘infamous [sic] magician’ is anyone willing to be instructed by the Devil, other magicians or books: someone who tries to overcome nature’s law by willingly negotiating with evil and in exchange for greater powers. They — magicians — were for Weyer guilty of heresy for having sharp minds and yet choosing the wrong path. However, as Augustine himself writes in *De Civitate Dei*, Weyer writes that “things which are done by magician’s tricks and illusions are proven to be not true but imaginary. Therefore, there will be no question here of a criminal proceeding.”⁵⁴ Weyer’s attitude against magicians was of intense opposition because magicians were actually hurting women by exploiting them, making them believe illusions and thus initiating witchcraft trials. The Devil could drive men “to wonderment, lack of

⁴⁸ Hans De Waardt, “Witchcraft, Spiritualism, and Medicine: The Religious Convictions of Johan Wier.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 42, (2011), p. 375.

⁴⁹ Weyer, 505.

⁵⁰ Weyer, 174.

⁵¹ Weyer, 540.

⁵² Weyer, 574.

⁵³ Weyer, 502-3.

⁵⁴ Weyer, 536.

faith, false opinions about others, lies, forbidden remedies, and murder.”⁵⁵ No wonder weak-minded women could be easily deceived. Moreover, magistrates might be blinded to the truth and their own blindness could destroy the lives of innocent victims. It was better to leave judgement to God whose senses remained immune to the Devil’s tricks.⁵⁶ The law was inadequate and could become a tool of the Devil, so the only way to avoid spreading more misery was to exercise caution and scepticism in the face of accusations of witchcraft and confessions by witches.⁵⁷ Witches should not be put to death for heresy, even if proved: heretics had already done too much damage to the community. Instead, witches should be converted back through religious instructions and gentle treatment.

Nothing is freer than thought. Indeed an intention retained within the mind works no harm, public or private, upon anyone. Therefore the contemplation of crimes of every sort — crimes which a person can actually carry through to completion — remains unpunished, since it is held within its own confines.⁵⁸

One could only read heresy as a choice based on imperfect data provided by imperfect senses, arguing that a ‘sin of the will’ is a result of disease, physical illness or mental impairment, making it not a real sin, otherwise punished by God only.⁵⁹ And all humans run into constant attack by the Devil.

The last piece of our reference-journey through James’s preface takes us to the pamphlet *News from Scotland*. This is the first book solely about Scottish witchcraft.⁶⁰ Probably printed around the end of 1591, it was addressed to “the manifold untruths which

⁵⁵ Weyer, 35.

⁵⁶ Weyer, 503.

⁵⁷ Weyer, 518-9.

⁵⁸ Weyer, 567.

⁵⁹ Weyer, 354.

⁶⁰ Normand and Roberts, 290.

are spread abroad, concerning the detestable actions and apprehensions of those witches whereof this historie following truely intreath.”⁶¹ The authorship of the text is blurry: it was associated with James Carmichael (1543-1628), minister of Haddington, due to a comment that Sir James Melville left on the deposition on the witches of Lothian.⁶² Carmichael was one of the drafters of the *Book of Discipline* of 1578. We know that Carmichael took part to the depositions of the North Berwick Trial and that he also had access to the written records of the pre-trial examinations — thanks to one of Melville’s letters of 1615.⁶³ In the *News*, the ‘manifold untruths’ are constantly contrasted with the author’s truth, and readers are those with “honest minds who are desirous to be informed of the verity and truth of their confessions.”⁶⁴ This is the reason why the pamphlet is often taken as pure propaganda. Even so, the text has some unique characteristics. There is a clear search for proof of the reality of witchcraft, beyond criminal records and the King’s presence. There are no criminal records where violence appears and the *News* uniquely provides a glimpse of the actual violence and torture that could not be documented in any official record — violence was, in fact, illegal during trials.⁶⁵

The great ‘News’ is the appearance of the Devil at a convention of witches: he instructed them on how to act against King James. Geillis Duncane was a maid serving at David Seaton’s house. Often out to help the poor and the sick, she had so much success and skill that her master, Seaton, grew suspicious. Therefore, Geillis was interrogated and tortured. When a mark was found on her throat that seemed to be that of the devil, she

⁶¹ James Carmichael, *Newes from Scotland, declaring the damnable life of Doctor Fian, a notable sorcerer, who was burned at Edenbrough in Januarie last*, 1591. London: Roxburghe Club, 1816, 5.

⁶² Normand and Roberts, 292.

⁶³ Normand and Roberts, 294.

⁶⁴ Carmichael, 6.

⁶⁵ Normand and Roberts, 302.

confessed to witchcraft. She was sent to prison where she named other individuals who were witches, including Doctor Fian (also called John Cunningham) and Agnes Sampson.⁶⁶ According to the *News*, Agnes Sampson — one of the main actor of the first trials — “had her haire shaven of, in each parte of her bodie, and her head thraven with a rope according to the costume of that countrie, being a pain most greavous”.⁶⁷ And, after that, she declared that “the king is the greatest enemy he [the Devil] hath in the worlde.”⁶⁸ It is thanks to the *News* that we get to know about the moment when Agnes apparently told the king the exact words of his conversation with his new wife on their wedding night:

He [the king] swore by the living God, that he beleved that all the Divels in hell could not have discovered the same: acknowledging her words to be most true, and therefore gave the more credit to the rest which is before declared.⁶⁹

In the case of Doctor Fian, the tortures are meticulously described in these pages:

First by thrawing of his head with a roape, wherat he would confesse nothing. Secondly, he was perswaded by faire means to confesse his follies, but that would prevaile as little. Lastly, he was put to the most severe and cruell paine in the world, called the bootes, (who after he had recieved three strokes, being enquired) (...) brought before the king, his confession was taken.⁷⁰

And after all this, as “God (...) would not suffer the intents of this divilish Doctor,”⁷¹

his nailes upon all his fingers were riven and pulled off with an instrument called in Scottish a Turkas (...) and under everie nayle there was thrust in two needels over even up to the heads.⁷²

⁶⁶ Carmichael, 10.

⁶⁷ Carmichael, 14.

⁶⁸ Carmichael, 15.

⁶⁹ Carmichael, 16.

⁷⁰ Carmichael, 18.

⁷¹ Carmichael, 22.

⁷² Carmichael, 27.

These pages take us closer to the political role of witchcraft in the last decade of the sixteenth century. Before 1590, witchcraft may have been seen as a minor issue by those in power. And, in 1583, the General Assembly complained that witchcraft carried no punishment despite being outlawed in 1563. Why did this change in 1590? How did witchcraft become so political? As I suggest, the reason may as well have been James himself, and we shall soon see why.

CHAPTER IV: *Daemonologie*

From the previous chapters we may derive a complete background of what the situation in Scotland looked like at the time James acquired an interest in witchcraft and demonology. A lot of legal documents have been lost and most of the proofs we have are reasonably inconclusive. The *News from Scotland* are mostly considered propaganda;¹ yet, they are almost all we have left from the trials. But, if we accept the *News* as valid proof, we can acknowledge the role James played in being both a member of the jury — the only member we know of — and a victim; he was thought to be bewitched and risking his life both in Denmark and Scotland. Both roles are indisputably decisive: while his role as a juror gave him the power to be called as a source of knowledge and authority on the matter, the fact of being a victim of witchcraft gave him the power and the reason to stand against witches, as a moral duty as king and servant of God.

Constructing witchcraft and the Devil in terms of contrariety is common in demonological thought. But James's participation in the questioning and prosecution of the East Lothian witches, and indeed his oblique part in producing text representing them (depositions, dittays, *News from Scotland*) may have made him particularly attentive to certain demonological commonplaces and *topoi*.²

While it is certain that James's figure gave great echo to the North Berwick trials, it is also true that the trials started before James's arrival in Scotland after his marriage in Oslo. The aim of this research does not include, however, analysing the North Berwick trials in detail: this research will address understanding *Daemonologie* and its author. For this reason, I need to clarify a few points.

¹ Normand and Roberts, 290.

² Normand and Roberts, 75.

The science of demonology was already part of the political aspects of ruling, and, for this reason, it was studied both as part of theology and literature. Despite the 1563 laws outlawing witchcraft, no one had ever been arrested in Scotland for consulting a witch before the North Berwick trials. In 1583 the Kirk was in fact complaining “That ther is no punischement for incests, adulteries, witchcrafts, [murthers,] abominable oathes, and vther horrible oathes, in such sort that daylie sin increases, and provokes the wrath of God against the haill countrey.”³ Only around 1590 did the entire concept of witchcraft start to change, as we can see comparing James’s ideas in his *Daemonologie* and Scot’s *Discovery*. In Scotland, the transcripts of the trials, and the *News*, showed us that it was Dr. Fian’s confession — and following confessions indeed — that connected witchcraft with politics, as I explained in the previous chapter. The web of witches that was seen as connected with political treason and murder attempt against the King was long and included different layers of society, different social statuses. Witches until 1585 — the year of the publication of the *Discovery of Witchcraft* — were seen as

commonlie unlearned, unwarned, and unprovided of counsell and freendship, void of judgement and discretion to moderate hir life and communication, hir kind and gender more weake and fraile than the masculine, and much more subject to melancholie ; hir bringing up and companie is so base, that nothing is to be / looked for in hir speciallie of these extraordinarie qualities ; hir age also is commonlie such, as maketh her decrepite, which is a disease that mooveth them to these follies.⁴

Now, witches were no longer distinguished by defined traits. The typical witch moved from the countryside to the town, changing social class: one of the foremost witches was a

³ Maitland Club, 'Acts and Proceedings: 1583, October', in *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland, 1560-1618* (Edinburgh, 1839), pp. 626-644. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/church-scotland-records/acts-proceedings/1560-1618/pp626-644> [accessed 23 January 2019].

⁴ Scot, 126.

country schoolmaster, another was a prosperous Edinburgh woman, from an important legal family who had contacts with nobles, such as the Earl of Bothwell — a Lord close to the King himself. Even the Earl of Bothwell was, then, suspected of consorting with witches, after many more proofs were found during later investigations — even if there was no mention of it in the *News*.⁵

Moreover, the role of the Kirk in the trials was also utterly important. The Presbyterian clergy were a major driving force behind the witch hunt, providing political support and ideological justification.⁶ Ministers took James's escape from witchcraft as a sign of God's favour to him:

Diuers practesies of witchcraft and deuilrie was against him, as he was certified of ther efter, bot the mercifull and mightie hand of God watched ower him, and preserued him at the earnest prayers of his fathfull servands the minifers, whom then he acknowlagit to be his maist fathfull freinds.⁷

In this necessary background — the political role of the trials and the push of the Kirk — the intentions of the *Daemonologie* are often misinterpreted. I believe that the book, apart from drawing from the experiences of the trials, is not to be misunderstood as a key component of them. Once we leave apart these issues, we can address the real *Daemonologie*.

The reason for the existence of the book is explained at its very beginning:

The fearefull aboundinge at this time in this countrie, of these detestable slaues of the Deuill, the Witches or enchaunters, hath moved me (beloued reader) to dispatch in post, this following treatise

⁵ Normand and Roberts, 220.

⁶ Normand and Roberts, 76.

⁷ James Melville, *The diary of Mr. James Melville, 1556-1601*, Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1829, p. 187.

of mine, not in any wise (as I protest) to serue for a shew of my learning & ingine, but onely (mooued of conscience) to preasse thereby, so farre as I can, to resoluē the doubting harts of many⁸

After all, we have no reason to believe anything but what he tells us: James felt the urge to write and explain it. Any other hypothesis would remain unverified. One could say, for instance, that it is written “against the damnable opinions of two principally in our age”⁹ but Scot (1584) and Weyer (1563) do not seem close enough in time to prompt this text from James. With the introduction made by the two characters Philomates, the lover of knowledge, and Epistemon, the knowledgeable, we understand the urgency of this matter: “what thinke yee of these strange newes, which now onelie furnishes purpose to al men at their meeting:”, they ask each other.¹⁰ This “strange news” is a precise reference to the *News from Scotland*, a sign that the book is actually written in response to the trials of the beginning of the 1590s. From a literary point of view, one can understand *Daemonologie* as a second and final part of the *News*. The *News* was not written as a definitive account since some of the presumed witches are said to remain in the king's custody for further investigation: it appears so that the *News* was likely written at the beginning of the trials, at the end of 1591.¹¹ In 1597, the king revoked the standing commissions granted in 1591, which entitled local courts to proceed against suspected witches, ending de facto the witch hunt. In the same year, the *Daemonologie* was published.¹²

⁸ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, xi.

⁹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, xi.

¹⁰ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 4.

¹¹ Carmichael, 8.

¹² Modestin, Georg *"The King is the greatest enemy he hath in the world"* (The devil at North Berwick on Halloween 1590). The relationship between witchcraft and royal power in *Newes from Scotland* (1591-1592) and King James VI's *Daemonologie* (1597), 1998, p. 2.
https://www.academia.edu/19864628/_The_King_is_the_greatest_enemy_he_hath_in_the_world_._The_relationship_between_witchcraft_and_royal_power_in_Newes_from_Scotland_1591-1592_and_King_James_VIs_Daemonologie_1597_ [accessed last 10/07/2019].

The book presents itself as a typical demonological book. Even though it is a very modest volume of eighty-one pages, it covers many of the same questions of the works listed in the previous chapter. Historians agree on calling for its uniqueness for one trait only: it is the only book on demonology written by a Renaissance monarch.¹³ I agree that the uniqueness of this book resides with James, the author. As I noted before, James's role was ambiguous, or ambivalent, from the start. *Daemonologie* is full of ambiguities of concepts and values that would not be there if it was not for James, the monarch, and James, the author.

The first form of ambiguity is the same James's decision of to use the dialogue as a form of expression for this topic. It is true, indeed, that the dialogue was popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a part of the humanistic desire to imitate models of classic authors. It creates, in this instance, a series of problems: James tried to solve some of them — as we can see while looking at his original manuscripts and the corrections he made after that — but only managed to hide them. Philomates and Epistemon in the original draft are called Q and A, nothing else than question and answer.¹⁴ Philomates role is the ideal listener, or reader, the one who would love to know more. Epistemon, instead, represents James himself, who is knowledgeable, and draws his authority from the Scriptures. The Scriptures are in fact the only declared model of authority of the book, and Epistemon is the one who is drawing from them. The dialogue between the two creates two main problems: the first is the relationship between question and answer; the second is the fact that Epistemon, in a few situations, will go to incarnate the same ideas that James

¹³ Normand and Roberts, 331.

¹⁴ Jane Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 105.

would like to confute.¹⁵ If Epistemon represents the power of the king to inspire and give answers, why would he have to depend on the question? In this situation, it seems that the King needs the question, and an attentive listener with it, in order to have the authority to be listened to, and, even more, to have a purpose and a legitimisation.¹⁶ As suggested by Fischlin,

the troublesome recognition of the collective required extraordinary measures to reduce the exercise of absolute power. Absolute power I define, ability of the state to inscribe, literally and figuratively, its presence on the body through the intervention of ideologies and technologies.¹⁷

The king seems to be subordinating his power to people's recognition, or consensus, creating a sort of symbiotic link, an interdependence, between the king and his people. The entire book does that. If in the *News*, the effect we have is the strengthening of the image and the necessity of the king, in *Daemonologie*, the effect is the establishment of dialogue in the hierarchy. In the end, the king can provide no answer if there are no questions.¹⁸ The intention of the king is transparent; he wants to "proue two things, as I haue already said: the one, that such diuelish artes haue bene and are. The other, what exact trial and seuerer punishment they merite."¹⁹ He has a point; he is talking about facts against the "damnable opinions"²⁰ of Scot and the others. The Bible itself proves those facts; yet, he draws for information on Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft*.²¹ By doing that, not only does James risk

¹⁵ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 107

¹⁶ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 106.

¹⁷ Daniel Fischlin, "Counterfeiting God": James VI (I) and the Politics of "Daemonologie" (1597), *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 26 (1996), p. 9.

¹⁸ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 106.

¹⁹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, xi.

²⁰ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, xi.

²¹ Normand and Roberts, 330.

proving and validating what he declared to be against, but he also highlights “the malleable and exploitable nature of the ‘evidence’ for and against the existence of witches, and the impossibility of definitively containing subversion.”²² And this, too, represents something that evidently the king could not hide well enough, a meaning that he could not fix.

James realises that the topic is quite hostile, but he cannot avoid discussing it. The sense of urgency that comes with the text underlines one more thing: James believes that the danger is real. Epistemon uses passages from the Bible to prove and recognise the presence and strength of the Devil’s power — such was the case for the episodes of Job’s afflictions (Job 1) or Saul’s pythoiness (1 Sam 28) — so that it can be felt to be as scary and real as it should be. Clark justifies the usage of this passages by underlining that,

IF Job was the greatest demonological archetype in the sphere of religious conduct, King Saul was scarcely less significant. This is because Christians who failed to behave like the former were very likely to behave like the latter. For many people, spiritual consolations were undoubtedly a very real answer to affliction; it would be foolish to underestimate the success with which early modern religions coped at the mental level with the disasters and tribulations that befell the faithful. But in many other cases the advice we have just been surveying went unheeded, and more concrete steps were taken to prevent misfortune and alleviate distress. Study after study has shown how, all over Europe, ordinary people regularly appealed not to their own consciences, or to the collective conscience of the Church, but to local practitioners skilled in healing, divination, and astrology for help with their everyday problems. They did this frequently in cases of suspected maleficium, but any kind of misfortune, anticipated or experienced, could justify a visit to the ‘cunning’ man or woman. This is why Saul—the Saul who, on the eve of his fatal battle with the Philistines, asked a woman with a familiar spirit to summon up the dead Samuel for divination—also became a relevant Old Testament exemplar.²³

Job was a man of great virtue, exhibiting hope, patience and perseverance. He was put to the test by the Devil — under God’s permission — in many ways. Apart from being a book that discusses God’s relationship to human suffering, in fact, the Book of Job is a perfect display of the Devil’s abilities: the Devil has both minions (Job 1:15, 17) and powers (1:16,

²² Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 107.

²³ Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 540.

19) that do his bidding; he uses sickness (2:7) to inflict pain on God's people with the goal of having them curse God; he steals Job's livestock (14-15, 17), he kills Job's sheep, servants, and children (1:15, 16, 19), he destroys Job's houses and health (1:19; 2:7); it appears to delight him to inflict pain. In Saul's passage, instead, the Devil shows the ability to appear to humans and interact with them. Saul had no trust in God: after the prophet Samuel died, Saul tried to make a sorcerer, the witch of Endor — also called Pythoness, summon the spirit of Samuel in order to understand God's plan. Samuel was like a guide to Saul, and Samuel knew the word of God: Samuel was, in fact, the one who summoned the people of Israel and proclaimed Saul their king in front of the Lord (1 Sam 11:15). The summoning was forbidden by the law of God because it trusted on demonic power: "turn ye not unto them that have familiar spirits, nor unto the wizards; seek them not out, to be defiled by them: I am Jehovah your God", said the Law of Moses (Lev 19:31). Saul spent most of his life chasing after the summoners, and diviners in general. Yet, when he felt abandoned by God, he decided to seek help from one of them.

In the sixteenth century most intellectuals believed that, in the episode of the witch of Endor, what was raised was not the spirit of Samuel, but the devil in disguise. Philomates explains that believing that what was raised was in the spirit of Samuel is "prophane and against all theologie."²⁴ It is unprecedented in the Bible that God would lower Himself to the use of such a method to produce His Word; moreover, there is no reason to believe that a deceased person has any ability to leave heaven and hell (Cor 11:14-15). Furthermore, why would God give a pagan the power to summon one of his prophets? And, as I explained at the beginning of chapter three, demons had the power to produce *mira*, and to counterfeit

²⁴ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 5.

God's actions, but "the Devill hath no knowledge of things to come."²⁵ The text emphasises the ability of the Devil to show himself as an angel of light and his ability to deceive, to make people "beleue that they saw and harde such thinges as were nothing so indeed."²⁶ In other words, the Devil has the power to enslave people's mind, to make them perceive a distorted reality. When I introduced *Daemonologie*, I talked about the role of Philomates as an ideal listener, and the importance for the king, as Epistemon, to have a specific attentive audience. If the Devil can corrupt the perception of men, then, he can endanger the correct dialogue between the king and his people, and, eventually, the Devil will prevent people from understanding the word of God. The Devil threatens, then, political and social order, and so do witches.²⁷

In the first book of *Daemonologie*, James says that the less educated people may come to magic through rudiments like charms and divination,²⁸ but he says that what scares him most is the learned magician, because magic tempts the "restless minds" of those moved by curiosity, making them cross the boundaries between what is legitimate and what is not: this is where lawful science shades into magic.²⁹ In the fourth chapter of his book, he spends some lines trying to distinguish what is lawful and what is not. Again, his definitions are quite blurry, and, despite his attempts to use etymology to keep what is lawful and what is not apart, the difference between astronomy, lawful use of astrology, judicial astrology and divination, for instance, it is not always clear.³⁰ As for the distinction between magic and witchcraft, he puts most emphasis on the subject's intentions, motives,

²⁵ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 5.

²⁶ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 58.

²⁷ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 107.

²⁸ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 11.

²⁹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 12.

³⁰ Normand and Roberts, 343.

and class. It seems not by chance, then, that in *Daemonologie* the first biblical episode to be mentioned is the one about Saul's pythoness. This episode gets linked with different issues: the first one is linked with James's life. As said at the beginning of this chapter, one of James's closest Lords, the fifth Earl of Bothwell, was implicated in the North Berwick trials. Created Earl of Bothwell in 1581, he became lord high admiral of Scotland and was well-known at court. He believed that an invasion of England should avenge Mary Stuart's death, and in 1589 he suffered a short imprisonment for his share in a rising.³¹ During the trials, he was accused of treason and of consorting with witches. None of this is written in the *News*, though mostly because of the sense of urgency under which the *News* was written, in my opinion. Bothwell was the Saul of the situation: as Saul lost his faith in God and sinned to understand more about his future, so did Bothwell. Saul fought against God's will and jealously contrasted the rightful heir recognised by Him — i.e. David (1 Samuel 18:8-16). Bothwell was scheming against the king, who was the vassal of God; Bothwell was, as said, against James's political strategy towards England. The biblical discussion on the summoning is quite a cliché — the discussion on whether or not something or someone was summoned, and on what was actually being summoned: Epistemon, and Philomates, in the end, agree that what was raised was a demon resembling Samuel — which was the common opinion of many on the interpretation of this biblical passage.³²

Even if the passages of the Bible chosen by James in his *Daemonologie* are, as I said, quite typical in demonological writings, it is curious to underline some connections between the three main biblical characters that in *Daemonologie*, are linked with the person

³¹ Francis Stewart Hepburn, Fifth Earl of Bothwell, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Francis-Stewart-Hepburn-5th-Earl-of-Bothwell>. [Accessed 13/07/19].

³² Normand and Roberts, 335.

of King James: Saul — as just quoted — David and Solomon, who even if not directly quoted in the book are often associated with the King — David is, for example, used as a character in the *True Law*. Saul was the first king of the Jewish nation: he was anointed King of Israel by Samuel — prophet, and judge of Israel (1 Samuel 9:15 and 1 Samuel 11:15). Saul's life was full of military victories but, during his battle with the Amalekites, God abandoned him, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he also hath rejected thee from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23). God chose David to guide His Israel, instead, and David was anointed King of Israel to carry the legacy of Saul. David had humble origins and fought for his people even before they recognised him. Both in his prophetic and his regal character, David was a type of the Messiah, and he is attributed much poetry (1 Samuel 16:13). The Book of Psalms is known, in fact, as the Book of David, too. Solomon — the last of three characters — was the king that followed David. Solomon was one of David's sons; he was chosen by his father and became king before his father's death. Solomon was a great king; he settled himself in his capital, Jerusalem, and arranged the affairs of his extensive empire. He surrounded himself with all the luxuries and the external grandeur of an Eastern monarch, and his government prospered (1 Kings 3:1). This period was the golden age of Israel where the royal magnificence and splendour of Solomon's court were unrivalled, not only for excellent material prosperity but for equally remarkable intellectual activity. He was the leader of his people also in this intellectual life (1 Kings 4:32).

All these three characters represent something for James: as they were the first kings of Israel, Saul, David and Solomon were commonly used as a symbol of the anointment of the Kings, the act where the king is blessed by God and becomes another

man, a better man. As Modestin suggests, characterising King James as "the Lord's anointed," a "true Christian" and "child and servant of God" — as Carmichael did in the *News* — is by no means special or original.³³ What is unique is, in *Daemonologie*, the fact that Saul is used to represent James's enemy, the Earl of Bothwell: during the trials the Earl was believed to be the chief of the whole group of witches that were conspiring with the Devil against James. Like Saul, the Earl sinned consorting with witches. Saul also represents the tyrant, when he refuses to accept God's will, and he chases after David consumed by envy. Bothwell can be the tyrant of the situation, or, in other words, a bad example not to be followed. Then similarities with David can be captured: David was the king poet. He was anointed King of Israel and recognised by his people — both for being king and being a poet.

David inspired James in both these characteristics; yet, David, too, represents a problem. James was obsessed with his theory of kingship. His tutor, Buchanan, taught him that "princes ought of right to be amenable for their private crimes to the ordinary tribunals of the land, in the same manner as the meanest individual; and that a refusal on their part to submit to such jurisdiction, authorizes the wise and virtuous part of the citizens to raise arms, and to punish or dethrone them."³⁴ James grew convinced instead that kingship is "the trew patterne of Divinitie."³⁵ After all, "we never reade, that ever the Prophets perswaded the people to rebel against the Prince, how wicked soever he was."³⁶ The role of the king was hereditary: God anointed the king, and He would be the one to judge the king's deeds. David was indeed anointed by God, as we know from the Bible, but he was

³³ Modestin, 9.

³⁴ Quoted in Aikin, 7.

³⁵ James I and VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: And, Basilikon Doron*, 261.

³⁶ James I and VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: And, Basilikon Doron*, 266.

also the one who broke the line of succession starting a new one. In James's political affairs, these connections represent a problem.

On the one hand, James defends his interest in the English crown — and his claim as first in the line of succession. On the other hand, he connects himself with a character that underlines both the innovation of a new bloodline and the authority that was recognised to him by the common people. The last of the characters I listed before, Solomon, is different from the others: he represents the rightfulness of being heir by blood. Solomon was blessed by God and became the wisest man on Earth. James was compared to Solomon for his political choices and James's role as an absolutist monarch.³⁷ Being associated with Solomon actually helps James's defence on absolutism: the biblical example of Solomon is the perfect match to underline how much the distance between wisdom and folly — and with that the distance between the rightful king and the tyrant — only depends on following God's teachings. Solomon was the wisest and richest man on Earth: yet, he threw it all away, abandoning God's teachings and dying as a fool (1 Kings 11:1-43). All that has been described before could be enough to enlighten the similarities between the two. In the *True Law*, Solomon works as an example in order to “decide all controversies that can arise among them [the people].”³⁸ He represents the right way of ruling: indeed, there is no ambiguity here, one could even see in Solomon a detailed example of what to do and what not to do to be a good king.

While Scot believed that attributing power to witchcraft was idolatrous, James counterattacked by quoting the Bible in saying the one “shaltl not suffer a witch to live” as

³⁷ Maurice Lee, Jr. *Great Britain's Solomon: James VI and I in His Three Kingdoms*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 1990, pp. 199-201.

³⁸ James I and VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: And, Basilikon Doron*, 261.

said by the Law of God (Exodus 22:18). Moreover, when Samuel rebuked Saul that “rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Sam 15:23), sinners and craft-men were considered “all alike guiltie.”³⁹ Even so, he displays how three different passions are dragging mankind into the Devil’s snares. These three are:

Curiositie in great ingines: thirst of revenge, for some tortes deeply apprehended: or greedie appetite of geare, caused through great pouerty. As to the first of these, Curiosity, it is onelie the inticement of Magiciens, or Necromanciers: and the other two are the allureres of the Sorcerers, orWitches, for that olde and craftie Serpent, being a spirite, hee easilie spyes our affections, and so conformes himselfe thereto, to deceaue vs to our wracke.⁴⁰

I find that there some strings that link themes and characters in book I. In the urgency of explaining that things “are and may be,”⁴¹ different reasons are said to make humankind fall from Grace. Even so, the dichotomy good-bad keeps being highlighted. Curiosity, thirst of revenge and greed are, in fact, recalling those same attributes that sent characters like Saul (thirst of revenge) and Solomon (greed) in disgrace. Philomates, then, explains how God would permit humankind to fall:

Although man in his Creation was made to the Image of the Creator, yet through his fall having once lost it, it is but restored againe in a part by grace onelie to the elect: So all the rest falling away from God, are given over in the handes of the Devill that enemie, to beare his Image: and being once so given over, the greatest and the grossest impietie, is the pleasantest, and most delytefull vnto them.⁴²

The image of the fall from the grace of God is particularly important in Book I, as the whole book is representing magic as a tragic fall of knowledge and scholarship.⁴³ However,

³⁹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 56.

⁴⁰ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 12.

⁴¹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 60.

⁴² James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 11.

⁴³ Normand and Roberts, 345.

one must not forget how the first book of *Daemonologie* is linked to mostly male characters, and is indeed generally referring to them. And evident is, at this point, the resemblance between Faust and the kind of magician that is described in these pages. Epistemon tries to draw a line between the good and the bad use of this devilish knowledge, arguing, nevertheless, that those who try to practice — even if avoiding dealing with the Devil — are still endangered “for in my opinion our enemy is over-crafty and we over-weak (except the greater grace of God) to assay such hazards wherein he presses to trap us.”⁴⁴ None is exempt from temptations, and none is immune to them.

By the end of the Book I, when asked to tell the difference between God’s miracles and the Devil’s works, Epistemon explains how different they are, using as example the biblical episode of Moses, and Aaron, and the Pharaoh’s magicians.

For that is the difference betuixt Gods myracles and the Deuils, God is a creator, what he makes appeare in miracle, it is so in effect. As Moyses rod being casten downe, was no doubt turned in a natural Serpent: where as the Deuill (as Gods Ape) counterfetting that by his Magicians, maid their wandes to appeare so, onelie to mennes outward senses: as kythed in effect by their being deuoured by the other.⁴⁵

Trying to convince the Pharaoh to let the sons of Israel free from the slavery in Egypt, Moses and Aaron challenge him in order to show him the power of the Lord. The Pharaoh’s magicians replicate every attempt of Aaron’s. With his first attempt, Aaron transforms his rod into a serpent, but the magicians seem to do the same: “they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods” (Exodus 7:12). While God creates anew, the Devil can only mimic. God’s miracle creates a real serpent;

⁴⁴ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 17.

⁴⁵ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 21.

the Devil can only transform the staff into something that strongly resembles a serpent on the outside. And this is the reason Aaron's rod could swallow the other serpents: evidently, the other serpents were not real enough to fight it. It may appear that this is also a discussion about faith. While on the outside the outcomes may appear to be the same, it is what is on the inside that matters. Faith is not about preaching and acting. It seems tricky, then, that if we consider it contrarywise, it does not work the same. While acting well does not grant one's faith, acting badly implies not having it. Moreover, as said a few lines ago, acting bad can corrupt your faith and enslave you to the Devil:

For it is no wonder, that the Deuill may delude our senses, since we see by common prooffe, that simple juglars will make an hundreth thinges seeme both to our eies and eares otherwaies then they are. Now as to the Magicians parte of the contract, it is in a word that thing, which I said before, the Deuill hunts for in all men.⁴⁶

The Devil hunts everyone who sets himself apart from true faith. As God's ape, the Devil shows that trusting the senses only can be dangerous enough. Bad deeds, and bad intentions, can never be accepted as a good law.⁴⁷ And the means does not justify the ends. James quotes "Numquam faciendum est malum vt bonum inde eueniat:" no good can come out of a bad deed.⁴⁸

The second book turns from the male world of magicians to the female world of sorcery and witchcraft. Philomates wonders how witches exist and how to justify the existence of sorcery and witchcraft, underlining three different concepts:

For first, whereas the Scripture seemes to prooue Witchcraft to be, by diuerse examples, and speciallie by sundrie of the same, which ye haue alleaged, it is thought by some, that these places

⁴⁶ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 21.

⁴⁷ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 22.

⁴⁸ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 23.

speakes of Magicians and Necromancers onlie, & not of Witches. As in special, these wise men of Pharaohs, that counterfeited Moyses miracles, were Magicians say they, & not Witches: As likewise that Pythonisse that Saul consulted with: And so was Simon Magus in the new Testament, as that very stile importes. Secondlie, where ye would oppone the dailie practique, & confession of so manie, that is thought likewise to be but verie melancholicque imaginations of simple rauing creatures. Thirdly, if Witches had such power of Witching of folkes to death, (as they say they haue) there had bene none left aliue long sence in the world, but they: at the least, no good or godlie person of whatsoeuer estate, coulde haue escaped their deuillrie.⁴⁹

The subject of the relationship between women and witchcraft has been discussed more in the last century than it was discussed in the sixteenth. James uses concepts familiar to all those who read Weyer and Scot, without the lengthy misogyny of the *Malleus*.⁵⁰ It is clear that here James is stuck in between what the Bible says — and, thus, what he believes to be true — and what he has somehow experienced from the North Berwick trials. James seems to be pointing out that there is a sort of problem in translation. In fact, Epistemon answers Philomates that even if the only witch in the Scriptures, Saul’s pythoness, is not called a witch, the Law of God addresses “all Magicians, Diuines, Enchanters, Sorcerers, Witches, & whatsover of that kinde that consultes with the Deuill, plainelie prohibited, and alike threatned against.”⁵¹ The only authority on the matter is the Bible, indeed, and the Law of God: all magic practitioners sinned in the same way. So, there is no point in distinguishing between male and female. James shows no pressing concern about the connection between female and witchcraft.⁵² Even if this may be seen as a practical choice — avoiding declared misogyny could avoid his book from being treated lightly— I feel that James believes genuinely that misogyny is not the point to discuss. The book echoes materials from the trials “by the daily experience of the harmes that they do, both to men,

⁴⁹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 24.

⁵⁰ Normand and Roberts, 345.

⁵¹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 36.

⁵² Normand and Roberts, 345.

and whatsoever thing men possesses.”⁵³ But, then, only a few lines later, Epistemon asks to come back to the real point and talk about sorcery and witchcraft.

James draws authority from both his experience and the Bible: nevertheless, he remains as vague and general as he can while talking about his experience. Many examples of what a witch can do, such as “to make pictures of waxe or clay” or the usage of “stones or poulders, as will helpe to cure or cast on diseases”, are used more to give credit to the author than to the book.⁵⁴ Such examples are, in fact, quite typical for a demonological text. Yet, in this case, such references are addressing James’s life, and the confessions that the alleged witches made during the North Berwick trials. Once again, then, what is typical for a book like this, is made special due to the author himself. Even when James could be using his life’s events to justify his writings, he does not do it. He prefers to generalise and take the concept back to the Bible. In other words, one could say that James seems more enthralled by making theory fit reality than the opposite. What Philomates says, then, could underline the same tendency. Philomates tries to pre-empt the discussion on the difference between magic and witchcraft — concept expressed by Weyer and Scot — by saying that the Bible only condemns magic, and that witchcraft is explained by physiological theories — such as imagination, disturbed humours, and melancholy.⁵⁵ Epistemon answers by underlining how there is no real boundary that limits and divides magic and witchcraft, the same way in which there is no limit to social ranks when talking about witches. When Epistemon states that there are socially superior types of witches,⁵⁶ once again, the situation echoes James’s life. James is probably referring to Barbara Napier and Euphame

⁵³ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 25.

⁵⁴ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 36.

⁵⁵ Normand and Roberts, 345.

⁵⁶ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 27.

MacCalzean, the two witches from the trials that were prosperous women from Edinburgh.⁵⁷ Before the North Berwick trials, social class was one of the things that characterised a witch, as already explained in chapter two. Now, instead, there is barely a distinction between a scholar and a practitioner of magic. A witch is now defined as follows:

being intised ether for the desire of reuenge, or of worldly riches, their whole practises are either to hurte men and their gudes, or what they possesse, for satisfying of their cruell mindes in the former, or else by the wracke in whatsoeuer sorte, of anie whome God will permitte them to haue power off, to satisfie their greedie desire in the last poynt.⁵⁸

Curiosity, thirst for revenge and greed were the same emotions that drove magicians to necromancy, the same aspects that drove Saul and Solomon to disgrace. Here, there is a parallel between the first and the second book. Class does not matter, not the kind of magic, but only the emotions that drive the human mind.

Another important concept that one can see widely expressed throughout the second book of *Daemonologie* — even in this last quote — is the fact that witchcraft and every devilry are made under God’s permission. As it was for Job in the Bible, where the Devil asked God’s permission before doing anything, so it is for witchcraft in general. Witchcraft is a necessary evil for James, its existence derives from God himself. In fact, when Philomates asks how a witch that cures disease can be considered evil, Epistemon answers that it is “no waies lawfull”, because illness can be cured “onelie by earnest prayer to GOD”.⁵⁹ It does not matter if the result is good, what matter is the intention, the very

⁵⁷ Normand and Roberts, 345.

⁵⁸ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 29.

⁵⁹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 39.

beginning. Moreover, God uses illness to punish evil, so it is not good to remove diseases that God gave for a reason. God gives afflictions to punish the wicked, but also to test and discipline the elect — as in the Book of Job.⁶⁰ There can be no cure for the body while at the expenses of the soul, like Hemmingsen says in his *Admonitio de Superstitionibus Magicis Vitandis*.⁶¹ James is never discussing witchcraft's efficacy. Witchcraft comes out somehow deprived of its very essence. Every time James could be discussing efficacy, he makes it so that it would be a useless conversation. For instance, in the last part of the second book James discusses “what sorte of folkes are least or most subiect to receiue harme by Witchcraft” and “what power they haue to harme the Magistrate.”⁶² Even here, James does not talk about witchcraft's efficacy, he does not need to: he thinks that God will not permit “their master to trouble or hinder so a good woorke.”⁶³ So, it does not matter if witches have the power to hurt or not. He merely insists that the witches' power is reduced at the presence of a lawful magistrate, a conviction that he shares with Bodin and other demonologists.⁶⁴ But demonological classics, such as Jean Bodin's *De la Demonomanie des Sorciers*, seem to reveal only an arcane wisdom.⁶⁵ The kind of wisdom James gives on the topic is much different and is mostly based on the Bible alone. Everything appears plainly and logically explained.

The last chapter of the second book is dedicated to discussing the form in which the Devil walks on Earth, because he necessarily does: James affirms that “those that denies the power of the Deuill, denies the power of God.”⁶⁶ Here, James will introduce a concept

⁶⁰ Normand and Roberts, 346.

⁶¹ Normand and Roberts, 346.

⁶² James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 39.

⁶³ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 40.

⁶⁴ Normand and Roberts, 346.

⁶⁵ Clark, Stuart, “Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft”, *Past & Present*, 87 (1980), p. 98.

⁶⁶ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 42.

that will be explained better at the end of his *Daemonologie*. He believes that the presence of so many witches is underlining that the end of the world is coming, as said in the Book of Revelation (Rev 6:17); Epistemon says that “these vnlawfull artes [were] farre rarer at that time: and neuer were so much harde of, nor so rife as they are now.”⁶⁷ This is because “the diuerse nature of our sinnes procures at the Iustice of God, diuerse sortes of punishments answering thereunto.”⁶⁸ The Devil easily walks among those who err and ignore the word of God. Once more, James insists that knowing the Devil is necessary:

For since the Deuill is the verie contrarie opposite to God, there can be no better way to know God, then by the contrarie; as by the ones power (though a creature) to admire the power of the great Creator: by the falshood of the one to consider the trueth of the other, by the injustice of the one, to consider the Iustice of the other: And by the cruelty of the one, to consider the mercifulnesse of the other: And so foorth in all the rest of the essence of God, and qualities of the Deuill.⁶⁹

Again, James takes the reader to a point where he cannot but agree. Because not believing at all in spirits, like the Sadducees in the Bible did (Acts 23:8), means not believing in the presence of the Devil: and not believing in the Devil means sinning against God.

This last passage leads then to the main topic of the third book: “the description of all these kindes of Spirites that troubles men or women” and then “the conclusion of the whole Dialogue.”⁷⁰ In this book, James talks about werewolves, incubi and other miscellaneous topics. The concept of spirit expressed by James is, in fact, simply connected with the essence of evil that is walking the earth, whom James was referring to at the end of the previous book, and his manifestations. The description of “all these kindes of Spirites” becomes, then, the description of all the kind of forms the Devil can assume and

⁶⁷ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 43.

⁶⁸ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 43.

⁶⁹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 44.

⁷⁰ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 44.

in which can act in the human world. This concept is reinforced, some pages later, when Epistemon underlines that “all we that are Christians, ought assuredly to know that since the coming of Christ in the flesh, and establishing of his Church by the Apostles, all miracles, visions, prophecies, & appearances of Angels or good spirits are ceased.”⁷¹ Rest assured that no celestial being, nor celestial intervention, may exist on Earth after “the coming of Christ in the flesh;” all unnatural presences are evidently due to the Devil.⁷² Even if these passages are hard to contemplate,

if the rationale which originally informed the literature of witchcraft is ever to be recovered, we must begin not by assuming some sort of mistake on the part of the authors but by locating individual texts in the linguistic framework, possibly extending far beyond demonology itself, in which they were expected to make sense as utterances of a certain kind.⁷³

Epistemon underlines that the Devil is “euill inough to deceiue simple ignorantes”⁷⁴ so that they could believe that what they see is a miracle from God. In Protestant pneumatology, in fact, all spirits and apparition can be only manifestations of the Devil.⁷⁵ Epistemon distinguishes between four types of spirits: those who hunt places, those who hunt people, those who possess people, and the fairies.

The spirits that hunt places are called Lemures or Spectra. Their description is taken from the Bible: “pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames” (Isaiah 13). In this passage, the Biblical prophet Isaiah had a vision of the fall of the city of Babylon. The city was the capital of the Assyrian empire, a great commercial centre,

⁷¹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 51.

⁷² James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 51.

⁷³ Clark, Stuart, “Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft”, 99.

⁷⁴ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 51.

⁷⁵ Normand and Roberts, 347.

one of the most splendid cities of the ancient world (Ezekiel 17:4; Isaiah 43:14). Once the king Cyrus of Elam sacked and conquered the city and let the Jews go, Babylon was abandoned and lost its prestige. In the Bible, the city came to represent a place of sin, supporter of tyranny and idolatry. After Cyrus, this city and its whole empire were taken by the Macedonians, and then by the Romans, so that Rome succeeded to the power of the old Babylon, and, with it, the title of capital of sin on Earth. The spirits hunt the places, drowning in solitude, the same kind of solitude felt in the destroyed and abandoned city of Babylon; “as in companies wee are not so soone mooued to anie such kinde of feare, as being solitare, which the Deuill knowing well inough, hee will not therefore assaile vs but when we are weake.”⁷⁶ James seems to be calling for the unity of his people here. Nevertheless, once again, what happens needs the permission of God, in fact:

GOD will not permit him so to dishonour the societies and companies of Christians, as in publicke times and places to walke visible amongst them. On the other parte, when he troubles certaine houses that are dwelt in, it is a sure token either of grosse ignorance, or of some grosse and slanderous sinnes amongst the inhabitantes thereof: which God by that extraordinarie rod punishes.

Epistemon explains that a true Christian will not be abandoned by God as long as one behaves as such.⁷⁷

The logic behind Epistemon’s explanations is that every kind of ghost, or spirit, needs a vessel, a body to enter, whether this is a living body, or a place. The first kind of spirit he describes is, in fact, a spirit that dwells inside the physical place it is attached to since it left the world of the living. Once more, the power of the Devil to mimic God’s power shows its flaws. Epistemon explains how the Devil can bring forth the ghosts from

⁷⁶ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 46.

⁷⁷ Normand and Roberts, 347.

their grave, or he can play with their once-mortal vessels, but he can in no way reconstitute their unity by putting a soul back into its body:

the Deuill may vse aswell the ministrie of the bodies of the faithfull in these cases, as of the vn-faithfull, there is no inconvenient; for his haunting with their bodies after they are deade, can no-waies defyle them: In respect of the soules absence.⁷⁸

Once again, to those who deny that such things happen, James explains that “is onelie reserued to the secrete knowledge of God, whom he wil permit to see such thinges, and whome not.”⁷⁹ If one cannot see or experience these things that is due to a lack of faith.

Among those shapes the Devil can assume to torment humans there are werewolves, too: this is because, in the Book of Daniel, the prophet says Nebuchadnezzar was transformed into a wolf by God as a punishment for being too proud (Daniel 4). James explores the possibility that the Devil can then mock this ability, too, by making people resemble a werewolf. But as for the other mockeries, he rejects the hypothesis of a full mimicry. Instead, he sceptically supports the idea that “our war-woolfes” exist just due to “a naturall super-abundance of Melancholie.”⁸⁰ So that they are not real werewolves: they merely “haue counterfeited their actiones in going on their hands and feete, preassing to deuoure women and barnes, fighting and snatching with all the towne dogges, and in vsing such like other brutish actiones, and so to become beastes by a strong apprehension.”⁸¹

Epistemon continues, then, explaining the other two forms of spirits: “either these that outwardlie troubles and followes some persones, or else inwardlie possesses them.”⁸²

⁷⁸ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 47.

⁷⁹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 47.

⁸⁰ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 48.

⁸¹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 48.

⁸² James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 49.

Even if these spirits are two separate types, Epistemon says that he treats them as one “causes ar alike in the persons that they are permitted to trouble.”⁸³ And, they also are the same in the way they are cured. He suggests that these kinds of spirits are used by God to punish the living, reminding them to pray God, and to repent of their sins. Nevertheless, the Devil is free to use them for his deviant purpose, as always, trying to taint the souls of the living like he tried to do with Job (Job 1). Epistemon underlines again how, even if it is true “that God sendes Legions of Angels to garde and watch ouer his elect” (Psalms 34; Genesis 32; 1 Kings 6),⁸⁴ “all Prophecies and visions are nowe ceased, all spirites that appeares in these formes are euill.”⁸⁵ The only spirit that guides mankind is the spirit of God since the “Lawe and Prophets are thought sufficient to serue vs, or make vs inexcusable:”⁸⁶ as Christ thought, one cannot serve the Lord and serve anyone else (Luke 16).

While the discussion follows into the details of demonic possessions, James inserts himself in a theological dispute: like a good Protestant, he rejects Catholic signs of possession like terror of sacramental and sacred symbols.⁸⁷ When in chapter III he mentions those “kinde of abuse is thought to be most common in such wild partes of the worlde, as Lap-land, and Fin-land, or in our North Iles of Orknay and Schet-land,”⁸⁸ he expresses the belief that many are cases of counterfeit possessions. Even so, he admits, as the Bible itself professes, that even Papists can cast out the Devil if following the precepts of Christ (Matthew 17:21):

⁸³ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 49.

⁸⁴ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 50.

⁸⁵ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 49.

⁸⁶ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 51.

⁸⁷ Normand and Roberts, 346.

⁸⁸ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 54.

the Papistes may haue that power. CHRIST gaue a commission and power to his Apostles to cast out Deuilles, which they according thereunto put in execution: The rules he bad them obserue in that action, was fasting and praier: & the action it selfe to be done in his name. This power of theirs proceeded not then of anie vertue in them, but onely in him who directed them.⁸⁹

The power of an exorcism is not given by the act itself, it is, instead, given by the power of the faith in God, the power granted by God Himself. So again, as the Bible teaches, even a false prophet can cast out the Devil (Matthew 7).

The last chapters are then dedicated to witches, as the final purpose of Philomates and Epistemon's journey:

As well I do in that, as I did in all the rest of my discourse. For because the ground of this conference of ours, proceeded of your speering at me at our meeting, if there was such a thing as Witches or spirites: And if they had any power: I therefore haue framed my whole discours, only to proue that such things are and may be, by such number of examples as I show to be possible by reason: & keepes me from dipping any further in playing the part of a Dictionarie, to tell what euer I haue read or harde in that purpose, which both would excede fayth, and rather would seeme to teach such vnlawfull artes, nor to disallow and condemne them, as it is the duetie of all Christians to do.⁹⁰

This passage may well be a summary of the rational of this book: Epistemon declares that the entire journey could demonstrate that witches “are and may be;”⁹¹ he framed all his discourse to prove that witchcraft did exist, without behaving too much like a dictionary, and without seeming to teach such unlawful arts, for all Christians should condemn those arts. All witches should be punished “according to the Law or custome thereof” with “no sexe, age nor ranck to be exempted.”⁹² Witches are not capable of reason, they demonstrate they are not by simply practicing witchcraft, and those who consult witches “are equallie

⁸⁹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 56.

⁹⁰ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 60.

⁹¹ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 60.

⁹² James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 60.

guiltie with themselues that are the practisers.”⁹³ The Prince, or the magistrate, may only decide for how long the tortures go: in the end, he has no power to spare the life of any witch, for that would be a crime against God Himself, being witchcraft the worst kind of idolatry.⁹⁴ Judges need to be wary of those they condemn: “for it is as great a crime (as SALOMON sayeth,) To condemne the innocent, as to let the guiltie escape free; neither ought the report of any one infamous person, be admitted for a sufficient prooffe, which can stand of no law” (Pro. 17).⁹⁵ The assize is used as a warrant for judges not to condemn innocents, but Epistemon then adds that:

since in a mater of treason against the Prince, barnes or wiues, or neuer so diffamed persons, may of our law serue for sufficient witnesses and proofes. I thinke surely that by a far greater reason, such witnesses may be sufficient in matters of high treason against God: For who but Witches can be prooues, and so witnesses of the doings of Witches.⁹⁶

James justifies what happened during the North Berwick trials where witches were used as testimonies of the crimes of other witches, resulting in their deaths. Epistemon explains that it is not possible that witches could incriminate an innocent: if they saw someone in any case — even if the devil made them see someone — that means the devil had something to do with that specific someone. No innocent under the aegis of God would ever be incriminated, nor condemned:

God will not permit Sathan to vse the shapes or similitudes of any innocent persones at such vnlawful times, is that God wil not permit that any innocent persons shalbe slandered with that vile defection: for then the deuil would find waies anew, to caluminate the best.⁹⁷

⁹³ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 61.

⁹⁴ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 61.

⁹⁵ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 61.

⁹⁶ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 62.

⁹⁷ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 62.

The final paragraph of the *Daemonologie* refers to Revelation: it explains how the ‘rife’ proliferation of witchcraft is a result of the fall of the kingdom of Satan in the days when the deliverance is drawing near. James concludes his book by underlining how much this strong presence of witches should draw the people closer to God. Philomates concludes by praying God “to purge this Cuntrie of these diuellishe practises,” as if it was the people of the country blessing the king’s deeds.⁹⁸ If, as said in the beginning, the king seems to be fighting to be acknowledged by his people, this final sentence seems to imply that, at the end of this journey, the king made his way through that.

⁹⁸ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 63.

CHAPTER V: God, the king, and the people in the game of authority

At the beginning of this chapter, I wrote that one of the ambiguities this book displays is the interdependence between the two characters, Epistemon and Philomates, in the roles they represent as king and ideal listener. This interdependence is a problem under many counts: there is a distance between James, the king, and James, the author. The king and the author are, in fact, two roles that conceptually collide: when one is strengthened, the other is weakened. The king exerts his power and authority over things and folks, while the other, the author or writer, draws authority from someone or something.

Daemonologie is possibly a moment of transition between James's old political poetry and his future treatises on politics. In the book, the expressions of James's persona are limited to almost nothing explicit. He only gives his literary choices to analyse, and with them we may see James, the author. This James needs to take a different approach than before. James wants his subjects to accept his truth, knowing well that "for a king to admit his capacity to deceive is politically problematic."¹ For this reason, he builds the whole book on facts. As Rickard points out, James seems obsessed with controlling interpretations and meanings: James often "attributes disagreement and criticism to misinterpretation, and misinterpretation to a lack of due care in the reader or listener rather than to fault in him or his work."² He is opposing the damnable opinion of Scot and Weyer, stretching the concept of reality and truth, throughout the entire book. He attempts to

¹ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 17.

² Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 105.

redirect everything away from his persona, to the only authority, the Bible, following the protestant precept of the sola scriptura. Even when he could have dedicated, or reinforced, his arguments with his testimony, he does not do it. James knows that there is a conflict between the power he exerts as a king and the one he is trying to exert as an author. He carefully spends energies and lines to attend to this fact.

Together with the Reformation came a far-reaching change to the conditions of discursive practice. As Thomas Docherty notes, with the Reformation emerged “a conflict between one mode of authority whose source is external, ‘other-directed’ ... and another mode which claims internal, self-directed authority”; and while the former was based on “a power, sanctioned by tradition, to which one submitted,” the latter implied “a power of instigation or innovation on the part of an individual capable of choice.”³

Such reallocation of diverging types of authority must not of course be conceived of schematically; it is not reducible to a binary pattern of opposition between outward power and inward spirituality. However, the Reformation did bring to the fore vast and previously unknown contradictions between the enforceable authority of an ecclesiastical (and state) institution and such different types of authority as accrued to faith, conviction, knowledge, and the competent uses of interpretation, discourse and scripture. These contradictions involved unprecedented gaps (as well as new links) between church and belief, institution and text, political rule and discursive practice.⁴

All this is visible in the book. James repeatedly casts off any other form of authority but the one of the Bible. He puts all his efforts, then, into subtly demonstrating that the same authority grants him speech. In logical terms it is easy to understand that being both author and authority solves his dilemma. If the king is entitled to speak because he is God’s vessel, then all he exerts is the power, will, and authority of God himself: James’s truth would

³ Thomas Docherty, *On Modern Authority: The Theory and Conditioning of Writing, 1500 to the Present Day*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987, p. 49.

⁴ Robert Weimann, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 25.

become reality, and his opinion would become mere fact. In *Daemonologie*, the Devil is called the “author of all deceits:”⁵ and James never chooses a word unwisely. The Devil is an author, a creator of lies, that draws on the authority of God Himself, while, as is known, he mocks His miracles. Thus, the author acquires new qualities: he is fake and deviant, a mere blurred copy of the original, but with essentially no power. In the *True Law* instead, James defends the God-given right of kings: he defends the fact that kings are called Gods in the Bible (Psalm 82:6). Consciously, he puts himself directly in the battle between good and evil, where good is the king, and evil is the author. So kings are called gods, as they exert divine will in their actions; the Devil is an author, as he exerts his malicious will through words and deceptions. And James? Will he be the vessel of God, or the author of the book expressing the will to be listened to by the people?

James knows that in order to build his royal authority he needs to subtly hide his writerly persona, as if it really were his dark side. Theories of resistance to royal authority were developing throughout Europe in the 1570s, and in Scotland the major advocate of that cause was James’s tutor, George Buchanan.⁶ It is not by chance that James’s theory of kingship was also supporting the same opposition to his former tutor: being God’s vessel grants meaning to James’s words and deeds. His defense of kingship in *Daemonologie* is just subtler. The author builds a system, the dialogue between the two characters, where James can be inside and outside at the same time. He is judge and jury once again: he guides the reader’s thoughts through, first, the acknowledgement of the Bible — obviously — and then, the acknowledgement of the king, as anointed by God and warrant of wisdom.

⁵ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 20.

⁶ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 26.

The ‘real’ James is, in *Daemonologie*, like a ghost, hiding in plain sight. He is everywhere, and yet nowhere.

Even the evolution of style in James’s poetry suggests conflict between his desire to exploit poetry and his concern to control representation and interpretation of political matters.⁷ At one point, he needs to decide which side to pick. Not that it is a real choice, in the end: he tries to blur the distinction between his role as a writer and his role as a king, but “James’s royal identity makes politics inseparable from his writings;”⁸ moreover, James implies on various occasions that he depends on his readers.⁹ In *Daemonologie* he just decides to make it only a reason of faith, even if it is obvious how much the power is shared with the reader.

Daemonologie is also a first attempt to represent authority. James practices with the power of the Word: while he pretends that the only authority is the word of God, by quoting the Scriptures, he is the one pulling the strings of the conversations, blurring more and more his presence as the author. The word of God and the word of the King start to mingle, up to a point where none could deny James’s words and topic without denying the word of God Himself. This process will be completed in 1611 with the publication of the King James’s Bible where James will define himself “the principal mover and author of the Worke.”¹⁰ Apparently, the dark side of being an author has been totally eclipsed. The authorized version of the Bible of 1611 clearly associates James, the Bible and the king’s authority, suggesting a proximity between James’s language and God’s language. This

⁷ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 38.

⁸ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 43.

⁹ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 53.

¹⁰ James I and VI, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*, <https://archive.org/details/1611TheAuthorizedKingJamesBible/>.

represents the culmination of what James tries to achieve the years before — poems, books and papers.¹¹ In *Daemonologie* we can see he uses the power of the Word of God to control its meaning and to gain his authority, up to the point his authorship is well shaped and defined. James's will claims for himself the power he once attributed to the Devil: by the end of the book, and by the publication of his authorized version, he will be the one showing himself as an angel of light.

The clearest example of how James controls the meaning, and interpretation, of what he says is in the usage of the word Elohim. In the future King James Bible the words that are translated in the word "God" are three: Elohim, Jehovah/Yahweh and Adonai. While all of these are explicitly interchangeable, only Jehovah/Yahweh is treated as the proper name of God.¹² In order to understand the problem there is with the other two words, one needs first to know that in Hebrew the plural form is also used to build the abstract form of names. In this case, Adonai is the plural of Adona (lord) and it is translated in the King James Bible as "Lord" with the abstract meaning of Lordship and Sovereignty. Elohim is the plural form of Eloah/El. This is a general Hebrew name for the object of all true worship. It is mostly rendered in the King James Bible by the term "God". Elohim in its plural form defines divinity, and it is used as a singular noun following the Hebrew grammar: it is used for both the true God and the false gods. Thus, it mostly refers to every kind of divinity.¹³ When in the *True Law* James says that Kings are called Gods in the Bible (Psalm 62), he seems to suggest one meaning only. He tries to tie the translation to one

¹¹ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 133-137.

¹² Nakdimon Shabbethay Doniach, Ahuvia Kahane, *The Oxford English-Hebrew Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, 1996, Sub Voce "Elohim", "Jehovah/Yahweh" and "Adonai".

¹³ Jack B. Scott, "Elohim," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1980, pp. 1:44.

simple meaning — that of course is quite fitting indeed — in order to avoid misunderstandings. There is a difference between one that incarnates the power and authority of God and one that is as God, or simply is God. Of course, not many could have or would have contrasted that thought under linguistic terms: this is something we can do today.

A few of James's choices of words can be studied even in depth. In the first book of *Daemonologie*, the Devil is called the “author of al deceit” and the “father of all lyes”.¹⁴ “If a piece of writing is powerful and complex enough to affect its reader's perceptions, then is also susceptible to being interpreted in multiple ways, precisely because its power is only realised by the reader.”¹⁵ James's very treatment of the Devil's deceptiveness can be considered an act of deception. But it is an act of deception that is meant to be helpful to the same people he is deceiving. In simple terms, what if it was not James, what if it was the Devil speaking, and deceiving, would it not be worse? James uses, then, a dark power to do good. Even so, James's royal thought cannot be completely isolated within the text and it is never explicitly disconnected from other subjects. Rather, his texts construct the king as much as they reveal him.¹⁶

These royal writing thus reveal instances when power and representation, authorship and authority, literature and politics do not comfortably co-exist but undermine each other. James's royal power does not necessarily enable him to create effective representations, and his self-representations do not simply affirm his power. Rather, his writings (...) at times fail to achieve their aim of reinforcing royal authority, instead exposing the contradictions of the claims that underlie kingship and generating potentially subversive readings. The extent to which James strives to prevent such readings — employing such means as instructive prefaces and marginalia — suggests that power is not in itself enough to guarantee that subversion will be contained, but rather that authority and opposition are in constant and unpredictable struggle, even within the writing of a king.¹⁷

¹⁴ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 18-15.

¹⁵ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 109.

¹⁶ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 3.

¹⁷ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 6.

What James seeks to realise is to blur the etymological link between authorship and authority, where the second one means the power to force obedience.¹⁸

As Fischlin suggests, many are the parallels between James and the Devil.¹⁹ Yet, it is necessary to remember that while James — if one does look at the text only — is the Devil of the situation here, they — James and the Devil — do not draw from that same authority. In *Daemonologie* the power of the Devil is described as “deceauing men, and not by anie inherent vertue in these vaine wordes and freites.”²⁰ James is the king, and he speaks with the authority of a king, blessed and protected by God. Words are then to be judged in accordance with that authority. James does know how much the senses can be deceived, as he even says in one of his poems: “as eyes and earis, and all may be deceaued.”²¹ In *Daemonologie* he refers to same kind of power that makes people “beleue that they saw and harde such things as were nothing so indeed.”²² Senses can be tricked, there is nothing to object to that. Faith is the only force that goes through deception. This is the same reason why James believes that even Catholic priests can practice exorcism: if the message is right, if the message is the one of Christ, it will work. After this research, I believe that even if James seems to be behaving as the Devil, he does it in good faith. Maybe he is just too naïve to do it openly like this, as he does in *Daemonologie*. One can see how much James needed to construct his image and his authority: there is nothing

¹⁸ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 9.

¹⁹ Fischlin, "Counterfeiting God". The author is here expressing in depth every aspect of James's behaviour, underlining the moments where James behaved like the Devil he was trying to blame. All the different examples may be seen on pages 4 and 5, 13, 15.

²⁰ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 12.

²¹ *Essayes*, sig. Bir, lines 13-14, quoted in Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 108.

²² James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, 74.

surprising about James's anxiety and awareness of the power of language. *Daemonologie* is indeed a critical moment in James's literary and political journey. Saul was the first king anointed of Israel: he had to slaughter all his enemies in order to do God's will. Is James's desire for power really to blame?

In 1596, James had already reached an international audience with his poetry.²³ This fact is evident even in the preface of his *Daemonologie*, when the necessity "to make this treatise the more pleasaunt and facill"²⁴ is underlined. Yet, the fact that as soon as he gained the throne of England (1603) he reprinted all his major political works makes me think that James did not reach the same audience the poems did. Even so, there is maybe one more fact to consider: in those years, printing was a problem for authority, and James knew it. James's anxiety for all that concerns his works, and the image that people had of them, is evident in many ways. Even right after the publication of the *News* James seemed to notice that printing gave everyone the power to possess and control thoughts and words:

Writing and printing so extensively was, then, a risky strategy for the King. It enabled him to construct and disseminate his image throughout his realm and beyond, but by its very nature it risked not only reinforcing but also undermining his authority.²⁵

Getting into print is no mark of quality: printing had become so cheap that poets had started to avoid associating themselves with it. This tendency was soon called stigma of print, the tendency during the sixteenth and part of the seventeenth century to avoid printing as a warrant of quality — even if it is just a pose.²⁶ Anyway, printing was evidently attractive

²³ *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London: 1554–1640*, Edward Arber, London, 1875, 38.

²⁴ James I and VI, *Daemonologie*, xi.

²⁵ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 22.

²⁶ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 20.

for James, but with it, James knew he needed to find a way to avoid the stigma, and try to not lose his authority with it. So, following this path it is easy to see that James's need to control his image was soon becoming a priority and a necessity. By understanding that, James understood the limit between his authorial identity and his political identity and started to work around their boundaries. First, he separated his two personae, then he blurred the distinctions between them. And he did it with extreme caution. The presence of a different and up-to-date preface on every reprint started to give back some of the authority that was lost in the process: this is the reason why James reprinted most of his works many times. Every time he added something, corrections, notes that on the one hand assured the correction of possible mistakes, on the other granted control over feedbacks and critics, and in the end over the image people had of him.²⁷

Looking at James's career, some points are evident. He built up a body of his own as a writer: while, at first, he drew on the literary authority of other poets, at some point, he stopped doing that.²⁸ These are the same years in which James's persona is not quite defined in Scotland's political situation: he "was alane, without fader or moder, brither or sister,"²⁹ with no support from the lords, nor from the Kirk, while trying to find gratification and recognition as a writer. Then, the political situation changed: he managed to get a grip on the things around him, he started to understand that being a writer would give him limited power, and that, maybe, he needed to push it a bit further. He discovered he needed more and started to work for it. In the meantime, then, he started to construct his authority as a Protestant leader and as a king.³⁰ But he soon found out that being both a writer and a

²⁷ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 36-46.

²⁸ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 36-46.

²⁹ Aikin, 20.

³⁰ Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, 36-46.

king had its limits. While he kept working at his personality as a writer, he built up his personality as a king. Maybe destiny helped him: being a survivor of an attempt of murder, by use of witchcraft, reinforced the idea that James was, indeed, protected by God, and the Kirk started to support his role in this play. *Daemonologie* is then a key point. He used his power as a writer as a vehicle of God's power. He drew from God to build his kingly body. The narrators in the book never used any of their authority. The only, incontestable, authority — the Bible — is here used to fuel King James's persona. After this, James was ready to shine on his own. He had, under many circumstances, shortened the gap that separated his authority from the one of God, narrowing it so much that he can now refine even His word. While James made himself into a splendid vessel of divinity, an Elohim, he made a vessel of himself, too. He dressed his role as a writer up to the point that being a writer became an instrument of James's authority: the point when James could, in fact, draw from himself. James's two personae collide: he had destroyed the boundaries that made them something different.

In *Daemonologie*, James seems to be implying a certain amount of dependency on the reader, and, in the end, on all his subjects, by underlining the logical link that connects Epistemon and Philomates: the king cannot give any answer if there are no questions from someone who is willing to listen to them. So, I think there is a little more about the concept of authority that can be added to *Daemonologie*. James draws authority from God, but he knows that the same authority must be shared, and represented, with the people in order to be real authority. He seems to imply what a few decades later Thomas Hobbes will describe in his *Leviathan* (1651): the monarch — even the absolute monarch — is the designated

representative of the subject's will.³¹ Hobbes believes that there is a passage from the mere mimesis of God's power to a mediation of it in the role of a king. Drawing and wearing as his own the power (figuratively speaking) of God is a process of mimesis: the fact itself that kings are called Elohim is a proof to that. Even so, the role that the subjects have on James's authority in his book implies a role of mediation between God and the people. Hobbes explains that "the force of the ruler's "persona" derives not so much from the "power and strength" conferred to him, as from his ability to represent the plural power of the state in an integral form."³² With this aim, James is legitimated to use whatever means is necessary in order to unify and enforce all his powers as a king. The authority of a king is stronger the more is visible.

In James, then, the display of power goes directly from God to the people: the role of the king serves as a warrant of both the will of God and the will of the single subject.³³

As Hobbes writes, the commonwealth is generated when the multitude decide:

to appoint one man, or Assembly of men, to beare their Person; and every one to owne, and acknowledge himself to be Author of whatsoever he that so beareth their Person, shall Act, or cause to be Acted, in those things which concern the Common Peace and Saftie; and therein to submit their Wills, every one to his Will, and their Judgements, to his Judgement.³⁴

But he explains also that the power given to the assembly of men is no real warrant of stability, due to the very nature of mankind. In fact, human nature has an absolute limit: "a Monarch cannot disagree with himself, out of envy, or interest; but an Assembly may; and

³¹ Christopher Pye, "The Sovereign, the Theater, and the Kingdome of Darknesse: Hobbes and the Spectacle of Power", *Representations*, 8 (1984), p. 86.

³² Pye, 89.

³³ Pye, 86.

³⁴ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968, p. 227.

that to such a height, as may produce a Civill Warre."³⁵ James and Hobbes are evidently on the same wavelength: Hobbes's theory explains James's theory of power, in defence of monarchy and absolute power, even if he — James — uses the Bible to authorise that thought. Hobbes goes through the definitions of author and authority, giving some hints to the power James tries to hold as "author and prime mover."³⁶

Of Persons Artificiall, some have their words and actions *Owned* by those whom they represent. And then the Person is the *Actor*; and he that owneth his words and actions is the AUTHOR: In which case the Actor acteth by Authority. For that which in speaking of goods and possessions, is called an Owner, an in latine *Dominus*, in Greeke κύριος; speaking of Actions, is called Author. And as the Right of possession, is called Dominion; so the Right of doing any Action, is called AUTHORITY. So that by Authority, is always understood a Right of doing any act: and *done by Authority*, done by Commission, or License from him whose right it is.³⁷

In the eyes of Hobbes, then, James can be both the actor of God's will, an author while enacting God's power and authoritative while having the right to talk about it, and to act to exert it. The sovereign authority comes out of visible power, that, again, is the representation of the subject's own will. As Christopher Pye suggests, "Hobbes shifts theatrically from an instrument of affective enforcement to a vehicle for abstractly conceptualising the authorisation of power, and, in the process, alters the political subject from the role of spectator and witness to the role of author."³⁸ Under this prospective, *Daemonologie* can be seen as the perfect representation of the role of God, the king and the people into society.

³⁵ Hobbes, 243.

³⁶ James I and VI, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*.

³⁷ Hobbes, 218.

³⁸ Pye, 86.

RIASSUNTO

Questa tesi nasce con l'obiettivo di capire il libro *Daemonologie* di King James VI di Scozia e i concetti ad esso intrinseci. Allo scopo di garantire una visione non superficiale del testo è stata necessaria non solo una lettura, comprensione e analisi del testo in sé, ma anche il conoscere l'autore del testo e il periodo storico e culturale in cui viveva. Infatti, è solo un'attenta analisi del background di riferimento che permette una lettura funzionale e non banale del testo in esame. La stregoneria, tema - si può dire - principale del testo, si è rivelata essere estremamente problematica, non solamente per tutte le materie — quali folklore, teologia, esegesi biblica, etc. — ad essa collegate. Il primo aspetto difficile da affrontare, riguardo a tal soggetto, è il superamento diacronico di un concetto che, quattrocento anni fa, aveva ben altra valenza e peso. Come si può facilmente immaginare, la stregoneria non può essere limitata ad un solo e unico ambiente: comprendere un libro come *Daemonologie* significa, dunque, comprendere l'evoluzione di un concetto, nelle decine di anni precedenti alla stesura del libro. Dopo i primi capitoli dedicati al panorama sociopolitico, culturale, alla storia della Scozia e di King James nella seconda metà del sedicesimo secolo, si è presa in esame l'evoluzione letteraria del tema demonologia, usando come riferimenti gli autori considerati autorevoli dallo stesso King James nella prefazione del suo libro. Tutto questo porterà a capire quante e quali possano essere chiamate vere differenze in ambito letterario e contenutistico dell'opera di James, a scopo di evidenziare una seconda fase di rilettura del testo, meno fuorviati da problemi di parallassi storica. Il testo della *Daemonologie* potrà quindi permetterci di comprendere quanto e come le idee di James lo influiscano e caratterizzino, utilizzando vecchie parole per nuovi concetti.

Per questo motivo il percorso inizia da lontano, cercando l'inserimento di tutte le prospettive necessarie a creare un percorso di analisi completo. La data utilizzata come punto di inizio dell'analisi, il 1563, è stata scelta per convenzione, in quanto significativa per il percorso proposto. Questo è l'anno in cui le leggi sulla stregoneria furono promulgate in Scozia; saranno quelle con cui i processi alle streghe degli anni Novanta si svolgeranno. Queste stesse leggi, inoltre, ci aiutano a creare un ponte concettuale tra la stregoneria descritta da autori passati, come ad esempio i creatori del *Malleus Maleficarum*, e quella conosciuta fino al 1563. L'insieme di stereotipi che sono andati, nel tempo, a creare una certa immagine di strega, e che sono rimasti immutabili nel corso di quasi cent'anni, si mostreranno essere cambiati, anche se solamente in parte, alla pubblicazione di *Daemonologie*, nel 1597.

La ricerca parte dunque con lo stabilire che cosa sia la stregoneria, e colui o colei che ne fa uso, negli anni in cui le leggi sulla stregoneria vengono promulgate: partendo dunque dall'ambiente socioeconomico di riferimento, nella Scozia neo Protestante del 1560. La Scozia è, all'epoca, una nazione principalmente rurale, dove solo un quinto della popolazione vive nelle città. Benché le autorità ecclesiastiche scozzesi abbiano ultimato nel 1560 la conversione dello stato al protestantesimo, la maggior parte della popolazione, più lontana dai centri di potere e dalle città, rimane affezionata e vicina alle vecchie tradizioni e ai vecchi riti. La conversione del popolo viaggia molto lentamente: spesso le famiglie di tradizione cattolica riescono nell'intento di proteggere i propri riti e la propria cultura, e proteggere allo stesso modo tutti coloro che non vogliono cambiare fede religiosa. Ovviamente, questa situazione risulta alquanto scomoda alle classi dominanti, le quali vedono scemare il proprio potere e il proprio controllo sulle masse. Mentre il re e il

clero litigano per definire la propria forma di libertà e autorità nelle proprie materie, la situazione sociale, e la mancanza di una conversione di massa del popolo, fanno notare sia al potere temporale che al potere religioso l'entità del nemico da affrontare, il quale, per molti aspetti, si presenta comune. Quest'ultimo prende la forma e il nome di stregoneria, poiché in essa, negli anni, è stata inglobata tutta quella serie di atteggiamenti che scomodamente uscivano dall'insieme codificato di regole comuni e leggi di stato. La stregoneria viene ad includere, a suo modo, le vecchie tradizioni, cattoliche e non, che ora che lo stato diviene protestante non fanno più parte del sistema codificato e condiviso di leggi. Vengono guardate con disprezzo tutte le attività un tempo legate al cattolicesimo, come il culto dei santi e i pellegrinaggi. In una sorta di paranoia, il clero, facendone una crociata esclusivamente religiosa, rivede nell'atteggiamento di quella parte di civiltà che non vuole convertirsi, un atteggiamento di ostilità nei confronti dell'autorità. La stregoneria si presenta come elitaria, segreta, e devota al proprio dio, il Diavolo, e quindi acquisisce sempre più tratti di offesa nei confronti del sistema di potere, secolare e temporale. Tutti questi tratti fanno capire al clero quanto esso necessiti l'appoggio politico del re. E nel tempo, il clero ha modo di trovarlo. Il decreto del 1563 afferma che chiunque sia trovato non solo a praticare stregoneria, ma anche ad avvicinarsi, cercare l'aiuto, o consultare qualcuno che la pratica, sarà punito a prescindere dalla classe sociale di appartenenza. Ma il testo non fa alcun riferimento a sfumature politiche nella stregoneria, né al concetto di Patto Demoniaco, che diventerà poi il fulcro del dibattito stesso. Nel 1597, la stregoneria non si presenta come reato in sé, ma come mezzo del tentativo di regicidio nei confronti di King James. Essa è dunque una mera arma di un delitto non commesso. Società, riforma e

politica hanno evidentemente lavorato assieme per rimodellare il concetto di stregoneria, in poco più di trent'anni.

King James si inserisce, dunque, in questo contesto. Nasce nel 1566, il 19 giugno, figlio di Mary, regina di Scozia, e del suo secondo marito, Henry Stewart. Fin da subito, James subisce il clima pesante delle lotte politiche di sua madre Mary, che, cattolica, si troverà costretta a scappare e a rifugiarsi in Inghilterra, in cerca di riparo, e ad abbandonare il figlio di pochi mesi alle cure della contessa di Mar. Questa fuga però permette ai Lord della Congregazione — piccolo gruppo di signori scozzesi che si era prefissa, sotto giuramento, di trasformare la Scozia in un regno protestante — di decidere l'istruzione del futuro erede James, e permette loro di crescerlo con un'educazione protestante, plasmando la figura di cui la Scozia ha bisogno. Vengono scelte due persone per la crescita del piccolo James: George Buchanan e Peter Young. Il primo, considerato, all'epoca, il più grande studioso scozzese di tutti i tempi, conosciuto e rinomato in tutta Europa, forgerà la capacità di scrittura di James negli anni a venire. Il secondo invece influenzerà James dal punto di vista religioso: è infatti un teologo istruito da persone vicino a Calvino.

Conseguentemente alla fuga di Mary del 1567, la Scozia viene gestita tramite reggenza, in attesa della maggiore età di James. Ma il clima politico convulso e le vecchie alleanze politiche rendono questi anni a venire un'eterna lotta. In Scozia si sono formate due fazioni: quella in favore di un ritorno di Mary, quindi di tradizione cattolica, e quella in favore di James, che appoggia la riforma. In realtà, dei quattro reggenti che staranno al potere prima di James, solo uno muore per cause naturali (pur essendo probabile un avvelenamento): gli altri vengono assassinati. In questo periodo, i lord in favore di James litigano per contendersi la sua vicinanza e stima; negli anni questi atteggiamenti portano a

non pochi conflitti e ferite, all'interno di un sistema di potere evidentemente non adatto ad un controllo effettivo dello stato. Infine, nel 1577, gli Earl di Argyll e Atholl convincono James a reclamare i propri poteri e chiudere il convulso periodo delle reggenze, ma con l'unico obiettivo di influenzarne le decisioni future. È solo dagli anni Ottanta, infatti, che si nota in James l'impegno e il desiderio di svolgere al meglio il suo ruolo: comincia a rendersi conto dell'influenza che la religione e il clero hanno sulla società e comincia ad opporvisi. Allo stesso tempo James viene introdotto nel panorama internazionale dalla zia, la regina Elisabetta, la quale, rimasta senza eredi, si ritrova a dover fare affidamento sui parenti più stretti, tra i quali James è il primo in linea di successione. La questione assume una ancor maggiore rilevanza quando, nel 1586, Mary viene arrestata, accusata di cospirare con i cattolici per la morte della cugina Elisabetta. A questo punto il re, incastrato tra il proteggere sua madre, la volontà del suo popolo e il difendere i suoi interessi come possibile futuro erede al trono d'Inghilterra, mostra una evidente predisposizione alla diplomazia. Pur mostrando di difendere la madre, mantiene i rapporti in segreto con Elisabetta cercando, nonostante tutto, di non rovinare l'equilibrio che si è creato: infatti sanno entrambi che la situazione va ben oltre il loro controllo, e che nulla può essere fatto. In conclusione, Mary viene inesorabilmente decapitata nel febbraio del 1587.

Nel 1589 iniziano le trattative per il matrimonio di stato: per James viene scelta la principessa Anne di Danimarca. Nel viaggio in Danimarca, James viene a contatto con il problema delle streghe e della stregoneria, problema che nel continente era molto sentito. Al suo ritorno, dopo incidenti e tempeste, e vari tentativi di attraversare il mare che separa Scozia e Danimarca, James troverà già iniziati alcuni processi alle streghe, ai quali si avvicinerà con curioso e dedito interesse. Il motivo principale è che da questi processi si

evinces che le streghe sono organizzate, e tramano un piano diabolico per uccidere il re stesso. Infatti, dalle confessioni emerge che James sia stato definito come il più grande nemico che il diavolo abbia in Terra, e che le tempeste atte a fermare il rientro di Anne e James siano un tentativo fallito di ucciderlo. Il clero scozzese coglie l'occasione per attribuire un significato divino alla situazione, avvicinandosi agli intenti regali. In questo modo, il re e clero cominciano una collaborazione sia nella costruzione dell'immagine del regnante come incarnazione del volere divino, sia nella strutturata caccia alle streghe che si perpetrerà in Scozia per oltre sei anni, con una serie di processi che coinvolgono l'intera popolazione e persone di diverso rango. L'immagine di coloro che fanno uso di stregoneria costituitasi in seguito a questi processi risulterà essere molto diversa da quella presentata nei testi e nelle leggi precedenti. Il re inizia a prendere su di sé il compito di guidare il proprio popolo fuori da questa situazione, come un buon pastore fa con il suo gregge.

Ma com'è concepita la stregoneria fino a quel momento? Per rispondere a questa domanda bisogna tornare indietro di qualche decennio. Al fine di presentare un percorso inerente il tema di questa tesi, si è deciso di dedicare spazio solo agli autori che lo stesso James userà come riferimenti letterari nella prefazione del suo libro, fatta eccezione per l'inizio e la fine del percorso, dove sono stati analizzati due libri non espressamente citati in essa. La storia della stregoneria, nella tradizione cristiana, inizia infatti con la Bibbia e si evolve nei secoli come discussioni su varie tematiche. Tra le molte, nel secolo precedente a James, la stregoneria è considerata come lo strumento del diavolo, il quale ha concretamente creato un esercito di seguaci e con cui interferisce nel mondo, dannando le anime degli innocenti. Quando nel 1487 due frati domenicani pubblicano il *Malleus Maleficarum*, il martello delle streghe, introducono un nuovo concetto che prima era

inesistente: le streghe possono essere riconosciute e identificate, e i due spiegano come. Molte donne, soprattutto quelle che più vivono ai margini della società, cominciano ad essere additate come streghe e ad essere perseguitate. Tra queste vi sono erboriste, ostetriche, vedove e prostitute. Le donne cominciano ad essere viste come moralmente deviate in ogni aspetto in cui non sono iscritte ai codici della società, viste come ribelli, o incontrollate. La stregoneria diventa sempre più un problema sociale. Ma a questo problema, nel tempo, si aggiungono sempre più aspetti. Con la riforma protestante, nei primi decenni del Cinquecento, la stregoneria acquista nuovo valore. Nella lotta tra cattolici e protestanti, le due fazioni vedono nella stregoneria il posto perfetto dove inserire ogni singolo oggetto di critica. L'eretico e lo stregone acquistano pari dignità, poiché il diavolo viene ora visto come un altro dio, e le streghe sono i suoi seguaci. Nella discussione sulla stregoneria si aggiungono diversi autori con prospettive diverse, chi portando scetticismo e/o rigore scientifico, chi portando nuove interpretazioni di vecchi concetti biblici. Tutto questo si inserisce inoltre in un'altra questione sociale, la necessità, cioè, di tradurre la Bibbia nei diversi volgari, al fine di renderla più accessibile ai molti. La pubblicazione e l'accesso a nuove traduzioni della Bibbia stimoleranno nuovi pensieri e nuove reinterpretazioni dei passi biblici.

È in questo contesto che James scrive il suo *Daemonologie*, spinto dalle sue personali avventure a contatto con la stregoneria. Il testo è pubblicato nel 1597, anno che coincide con la chiusura delle commissioni atte a vigilare e giudicare le streghe. Il testo prende forma per risolvere i dubbi di molti riguardo, appunto, alla preoccupante abbondanza di processi alle streghe nel paese: è evidentemente scritto in difesa dei processi e a sostegno dell'esistenza della stregoneria. Negli anni precedenti, alcuni autori, come

Weyer e Scott, hanno infatti provato a screditare e sminuire il problema, e nei primi anni Novanta un piccolo pamphlet girava per la Scozia parlando di torture e descrivendo la difficile situazione scozzese e il ruolo del re nei processi. Il *Daemonologie* è strutturato sotto forma di dialogo tra due soggetti. Questi incarnano vari attributi e danno origine alle diverse chiavi di lettura del testo. Uno di loro infatti, Epistemon, rappresenta il re, che con la sua figura concede la conoscenza dei più svariati e complessi concetti e risolve di guidare il processo di conoscenza per il lettore più attento. Quest'ultimo, il lettore, è incarnato da Philomates, secondo protagonista del dialogo. Di per sé, la maggior parte dei temi citati e delle citazioni bibliche utilizzate, cade a pieno titolo nei cliché della letteratura del genere. Ciò che rende davvero speciale questo testo è infatti la lettura che si può dare di James nel testo. Implicitamente James discute di potere, di controllo sulle masse, del concetto di autorità. Discute le conseguenze della circolazione della stampa, e dell'influenza che essa ha sulla letteratura sua contemporanea.

Il *Daemonologie* si presenta in maniera lineare: è composto da tre capitoli, ognuno dei quali parla di diverse tematiche, tutte però facenti parte del comune concetto di stregoneria. L'autore afferma la necessità di stabilire un limite tra ciò che è legittimo e ciò che non lo è, poiché le menti curiose sono molto spesso portate ad indagare oltre i propri limiti. Detto ciò, nemmeno quando prova a spiegare quale sia il limite, nonostante i vari esempi biblici, riesce ad essere esaustivo. Egli afferma però che il vero nemico è il diavolo che, con la sua capacità di fuorviare le menti e la percezione degli umani, mette in pericolo l'ordine sociale e politico della nazione, e che allo stesso modo fanno le streghe. Nessuno è esente dalla malia del diavolo, perciò l'uomo non può fare altro che abbandonarsi ai precetti divini e seguirli, confidando che in essi egli possa trovare la salvezza. Poiché

dunque solo in Dio esiste la salvezza, e solo nelle sue parole, l'unica forma di autorità riconosciuta in queste pagine è la Bibbia: ogni altra risulta esautorata. A differenza di ciò ci si potrebbe aspettare da un testo simile, l'autore non cita mai eventi o situazioni dalla sua vita privata, nonostante la partecipazione di James ai numerosi processi alle streghe: è evidente in James l'impegno a creare una situazione nella quale non ci sia alcun verso di opporsi a ciò che viene scritto, poiché tutto ciò che viene detto trae autorità dal testo biblico. Egli però guida in qualche modo l'interpretazione del testo, sfruttando questa sua linearità e indubitabile autorità. James, in qualità di regnante, viene affiancato a diverse figure bibliche delle quali condivide i pregi, e utilizza come monito i difetti. Potrà quindi essere come Saul scelto da Dio e benedetto da esso per guidare il suo popolo verso l'unità, ma non cadere nelle invidie e gelosie personali di fronte a scelte di Dio non condivise. Oppure potrà essere saggio come Salomone, ma non cedere alle proprie passioni e soccombere al peso delle proprie conquiste. James sembra sviluppare dunque un forte controllo della lingua e della retorica con le quali esercita il proprio potere di re e sviluppa una propria forma di autorità, sotto l'egida della parola di Dio. Mentre mette in guardia il lettore dall'abilità di inganno del diavolo, James è il primo a sembrar volere circuire il lettore, facendo uso delle parole di Dio a suo piacimento, con una tale disinvoltura da sembrare egli stesso l'autore di ogni inganno, titolo che attribuisce però al diavolo.

Nel fare ciò, James lascia però trasparire un forte senso di necessità, quasi a voler insinuare che, anche se si avvicina a quello che è il "lavoro" del diavolo, è una cosa che va fatta, per il bene del suo popolo. Più volte ci tiene a precisare, in fondo, che nonostante i mezzi possano lasciare adito a dubbi, quello che conta è la fede con cui si compie ogni azione e si segue il precetto di Dio.

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