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King James' Daemonologie and Scottish Witchcraft Trials

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KING JAMES' *DAEMONOLOGIE*
AND SCOTTISH WITCHCRAFT TRIALS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

History

by

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CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

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AND SCOTTISH WITCHCRAFT TRIALS

by

Kelsee Lee Shearer

May 2016

This study examines the impacts of King James' *Daemonologie* on how witches were identified, prosecuted, and executed in Scotland during the early modern period. It is an analytical look at how the intervention of King James during the North Berwick trials influenced the writing of *Daemonologie* and how *Daemonologie* set a framework for future witchcraft prosecutions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Thou shall not suffer a witch to live.” - Exodus 22: 18

Witches, fairies, demons, and spirits have not always been mythical creatures that modern societies often depict. Based on theological and intellectual ideas that the brightest minds of the time supported, the supernatural was intrinsically connected to the very reality in which early modern people lived. Scholars published numerous works to educate the masses in hopes of saving them from falling victim to the devious nature of demons and fairies. Preachers gathered their flocks of parishioners and lectured on the importance of not giving into baser desires and making bargains with supernatural beings that would only end in damnation. To any early modern society, the supernatural was neither something to be taken lightly nor tested.

For much, if not all, of the Continent, witchcraft and its uses was not an unfamiliar concept, nor was it kept in any form of secrecy. Since the second century, the label of witchcraft, or paganism as it was better known during that time, was attached to small sects of Christian communities within the Greco-Roman world that refused to follow traditional religious practices. Accused of holding secret meetings in which babies or small children were ritually slaughtered to their “pagan” god and later their remains devoured at lavish feasts while unthinkable acts of sexual deviance happened around the dinner table, these unfortunate Christians found themselves the forefathers of the birth of

early modern witchcraft. As the minority, regardless of the actual practices Christians partook in during their religious meetings, their acts were seen as a threat against the dominant religion, a theme that would be repeated over and over again throughout the history of witchcraft.¹

In the medieval era, Christians found themselves members of the leading religion of the land, no longer regulated to minority status. Much like the Romans and Greeks, Christians were quick to label outside religions, as well as offshoots of their own, as pagan and heretical. Unlike their counterparts, however, the Christians made a direct connection between witchcraft and Satan, or the Devil. With increasing fears that the end of the world was fast approaching, the Devil, depicted as an animal-like being that sometimes resembled a goat or human-esque goat with horns, hooves, and a tail, became the most prominent being in ushering in the end of days. His loyal followers, demons known as the incubi and succubi, stood at the ready to entice greedy and materialistic humans who quested for power beyond their means. Those who did not follow the true Christian religion were swiftly thrown into league with the Devil, and the Devil became a mainstay in both the Christian religion as well as within witchcraft.

During the centuries following the introduction of the Devil, witchcraft began to play a more prominent role in the daily lives of the average citizen. Many early modern communities housed professional and semi-professional practitioners of folk magic in

¹ Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 5-15.

order to cure disease, foretell the future, locate lost property, create serums and tonics, and provide a variety of other services. Many of these folk healers and magic practitioners traveled to neighboring villages and towns, peddling their services for a small, but manageable, fee. Both versions of witchcraft—the malevolent as well as the benevolent—were nothing outside of ordinary for Continental society, but some believed witchcraft required immediate response.

There was abundant literature depicting witches and witchcraft in medieval Europe, and the literature would have been commonplace in both public and private life. With the development of the printing press, literature depicting demonic witchcraft became much more accessible, allowing for wider circulation within the literate sectors of European society. Famous stories, such as Homer's *Odyssey*, a treasured classic for the upper echelon of society, and fairy tales illustrated the power and range of witches, warning the public against wronging those in possession of magic. The image of the witch was further supported by the publishing of *Malleus Maleficarum* by German Catholic clergyman Heinrich Kramer in 1487. Organized into three parts, the *Malleus* sought to prove the existence of witchcraft, the harm that was inflicted due to those practicing witchcraft, and the proper steps in prosecuting, convicting, and executing a witch. Even though the *Malleus* was condemned by the Catholic Church three years after its publication for its unethical procedures and contradiction of Catholic theology, the *Malleus* became one of the regularly cited handbooks for the secular Continental courts

during the early sixteenth century.² Published over twenty-nine times in the course of a century, the *Malleus* became one of the leading books on witchcraft.³

Becoming a more prominent issue in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, witchcraft on the Continent took center stage as the Christian Church, bent on eradicating pagan and popular beliefs within its congregation, shifted its attention to strengthening religious connections between witchcraft and Satan.⁴ At a time when the earliest forms of the Continental Protestant Reformation were taking hold, the Church became the main battleground to obtain power. Through the Reformation, Protestantism became the dominant religion in many countries. Protestant churches became centralized within states and came into direct contest with Catholic countries that did not reform to Protestantism. For each religion, the “need to discipline members who failed to meet confessional norms created a climate in which overt repression of religious deviance increased.”⁵ Regardless of the church or religion, witchcraft was a religious deviance that could not be tolerated. Folk healers who had seen financial gains from selling their services were instantly targeted as witches, as well as those who fell outside of the religious norm. Labeled as Devil-worshippers who had eagerly renounced God, these

² Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 54-55.

³ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 54-55.

⁴ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 109-111.

⁵ William Monter, “Witch Trials in Continental Europe: 1560-1660,” in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 11.

perceived Satanists and pagans no longer received their powers from God or the natural world, but had received magic from the darkest of forms. Through this connection, the Church was able to establish a foothold in trying accused witches for the act of heresy and maleficium (harm committed by magic), and effectively secured the authority to try the accused outside of secular courts due to it being classified as a religious matter rather than a political one.⁶

This shift would be front and center during the peak of Continental witch hunts during the sixteenth century. Many of the Continental outbreaks were fueled by the peasants and further driven by the support of local powers (namely, the local Church). Germany, more specifically central and southern Germany, became the epicenter for some of the largest witch hunts and prosecutions that history had ever seen, followed closely by France and Switzerland. Following the Church's adamant advice that no witch should live, these countries quickly set about finding, trying, and executing anyone who could have possibly been a witch. Denmark, following the same pattern as its southern counterparts, also began convicting witches, and burning them at the stake when they had been found guilty. Over the course of 300 years, more than sixteen Continental states took part in mass witch hunts and trials with over 36,000 witches executed.⁷

⁶ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 88-89.

⁷ Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 123-124.

Scotland & Witchcraft

For Scottish residents in the late sixteenth to late seventeenth century, the supernatural, especially the relationship between witches and demons, played a dominant role in every aspect of their lives. For decades prior, however, Scotland had been content to watch its Continental neighbors descend into mass witch panics while the Scots dealt with their own political turmoil that had been playing out, very publicly, for a hundred years prior. With a constant shifting of both religious affiliations and political figureheads, Scotland had other problems more pressing than the supernatural, let alone witches, who were thought to be a vast minority in comparison with the more prominent Fae. Regardless of the shifting of monarchs, the Scottish church was satisfied with its status amongst the common people and rulers—after all, it was a comfortably Catholic country in the early 1500s and even with proposed Protestant reforms becoming more frequent every year, the monarch staunchly avoided public conversion. This mood of complacency initially did not foster the religious zeal to which the Continent had fallen victim.

Scottish hierarchy and its structure also seemed to play a pivotal factor in the lack of early witch hunts in Scotland. Scottish society revolved around an upper class that was severely lacking in numbers. At its core, the King, nobles, lairds, bishops and abbots numbered only in the dozens; below, the bailies, chamberlains and other estate officials, personal servants and followers, and low-level church officials were more numerous, but

were not considered a part of the upper hierarchy.⁸ Those in control of state policy, the select few of the elite, were segregated, often not coming in contact with the common people unless absolutely necessary. Without this connection between the common peasantry and the elite, the peasantry did not have the political support or the power to prosecute witches, unlike on the Continent.

In the sixteenth century, however, Scotland underwent a massive overhaul of its societal and religious structure. Known as the Scottish Reformation, Scotland made a dramatic switch of religion—from Catholic to Protestant—through constant invasions and influential pressures from its English neighbors. Prior to the Reformation, Scotland was a primarily Catholic country; however, even though the Scots had deep connections to Catholicism, religious beliefs rarely played into the qualifications or appointments of church leaders.⁹ For many of the aristocratic class, appointment to a church position was based on personal, powerful connections rather than religious zeal and was used as a way to gain political and social power instead of promoting Catholic practices. Furthermore, the monarchy, particularly Kings James IV and James V, often appointed their illegitimate children (regardless of their religious education) or court favorites to high positions within the Scottish church.¹⁰ Even though nepotism would not have been an unheard of practice for any occupation during the sixteenth century, the Scottish church

⁸ Julian Goodare, introduction to *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context*, ed. Julian Goodare (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 3-4.

⁹ Jenny Wormald, *Court, Kirk, and Community: Scotland 1470-1625* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 76.

¹⁰ Wormald, 79-80.

became a prevalent field into which to send uneducated and disinterested aristocratic children.

The pre-Reformation church also gained the reputation of corruption, gluttony, and non-Catholic practices. Monasteries and nunneries came under siege by numerous influential people, particularly popular herald and author Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount. Calling attention to how these religious institutions had replaced spiritual practices with “unashamed enjoyment of the things of the world, and even worse, financial and sexual corruptions,” these often Protestant-influenced religious reformers brought attention to the lack of “holiness” and religious indifference to anyone who would listen.¹¹ With this outlook, the pre-Reformation Catholic church was seen as not only a place to send elite children who had no affinity for preaching Catholicism, but also as a morally corrupt institution that needed radical alterations.

Politically, the Scottish monarchy experienced similar fluctuation. Starting after the death of King James V, Scotland became “a country in a state of drift, her fortunes wholly at the mercy of pressure from England and France.”¹² Originally allied with Catholic France, Scotland faced decades-long internal struggle about not only who had the right to act as regent of Scotland, but which foreign power, France or England, would be Scotland’s main ally. Believing the Catholic French were still the best partner, Mary, Queen of Scots, married the Dauphin of France in hopes of not only securing an alliance with a strong country, but also potentially securing her right to the English, French, and

¹¹ Wormald, 83.

¹² Wormald, 100.

Scottish crowns.¹³ However, Scottish dreams of becoming a European power were dashed when the Dauphin died of an ear infection in 1560.¹⁴ After her return to Scotland and fruitless bids to gain English support in validating her possible ascension to the English throne through marriage, Mary agreed to an unhappy marriage to Lord Darnley, Master of Lennox, which would not only result in the birth of Prince James, but Lord Darnley's murder.¹⁵

Spread throughout Queen Mary's bungling personal affairs was an inability to firmly declare support for Catholicism or Protestantism. Worried about alienating the Catholic French or losing her claim to the Protestant English throne, Mary did everything in her power not to declare Scotland a pro-Catholic or pro-Protestant country, and in return, created not only animosity amongst both parties, but also religious discontent. Moving from court favorite to court favorite with abandon, Mary did little to ease religious tensions and only further reinforced the belief that religious change was needed.¹⁶

Seizing the opportunity of not only growing religious discontent, but also an indecisive monarch, Protestant supporters urged religious reform. Needing to consolidate their growing power, Protestants focused on the simplest methods of conversion. As the

¹³ Jane E. A. Dawson, *Scotland Re-Formed: 1488-1587* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 215.

¹⁴ Dawson, 215.

¹⁵ Dawson, 260-262.

¹⁶ Dawson, 256-257.

Protestants sought other monetary and political resources to extend their power, the kirk became a main source for both. Adopting the pre-Reformation church's already established "parish units," the Protestant reformers created a framework in which local churches became the center of their community, allowing for easier transition for the peasantry with minimal interruption of religious services.¹⁷ This was further magnified by King James VI who had to have regents rule the country until he came of age. Many of these regents tended to lean more towards Protestantism than Catholicism due to their own political aspirations and connections in pro-Protestant countries, such as England. The regents fully supported the conversion of the court, local governing officials and elites also favored Protestantism to gain better support from those higher up. This was further supported by Scotland breaking away, officially, from the Papacy, and cementing Protestantism as the Scottish religion. "Corrupted" Catholic clergy were ousted in favor of Protestant, moralistic bishops that would oversee the kirk and Catholicism became synonymous with superstition.

Local government also underwent massive changes under the Scottish Reformation. The Protestant church became intimately linked to local governments and the kirk sought to gain more independence from the floundering monarchy. These local governments believed that they had the right to oversee their own court proceedings, laws, and congregational matters. The newly reformed kirk proceeded to give considerable power to Protestant local lairds and small time officials who were once seen as average citizens, but were devoted Protestants, elevating their status within their

¹⁷ Dawson, 217.

communities and giving them power with which to oversee and lead the area. Confronted daily with the peasants' inability to conform to a godlier and decent behavior, these lairds saw it as their godly right to assist their lessers in becoming more devoted Protestants.

It was during this time that King James VI assumed the throne of Scotland. Since his birth, James had been sequestered away as his mother, Mary, attempted to rule over Scotland. After her forced abdication, James and Scotland faced a difficult transition: James had been named King, but the previous monarch still lived, albeit in exile. This only added to the fact that James still was not legally old enough to rule a country on his own. Taught as a "major scholar" and seen as "the most intellectual king to grace the Scottish or British throne," James grew up an avid learner of classical literature and studies, finding it an "integral part of the business of kingship."¹⁸ As he transitioned out of having to rely on regents to oversee political affairs, many of his court volleyed for his attention and support, or outright attempted to control the King himself. Much like his mother, King James lacked the ability to reign without having a favored companion at his side, directing the opinion of the King.¹⁹ Through this favoritism, King James appointed men who were not in the best interest of Scotland or the Crown, but also created deep political rivalries that resulted in violent skirmishes, feuds, and kidnappings.²⁰ This instability did little in rectifying the popular image (one of bumbling aristocrats that knew nothing of ruling, let alone reigning, over a country) of the Scottish monarchy, nor did it

¹⁸ Dawson, 303.

¹⁹ Dawson, 306.

²⁰ Dawson, 306-307.

dampen down the fervor of spreading Protestantism or the need to eliminate Catholicism. Coupled with the strains of religious fervor coming from both England and France, James' earlier years were marred with political and religious turmoil.

James inherited a government that had already begun the motions of outlawing witchcraft in any form. The Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563 had already been passed by Queen Mary shortly before the King's birth, condemning any and all forms of witchcraft under the penalty of death:

Forsamekill as the Quenis Majestie and thre Estatis in this present Parliament being informit, that the havy and abominabill susperstitioun usit be divers of the legie of this Realme, be using Witchcraftis, Sorsarie and Necromancie, and credence gevin thairto in tymes bygane against the Law of God: And for avoiding and away putting of all sic vane superstition in tymes tocum: It is a statue and ordanit be the Quenis Majestie, and that no maner of person nor persounis, of quhastsumever estate, degree or conditioun thay be of, tak upone hand in ony tymes heirefter, to use ony maner of Witchcraftis, Sorsarie or Necromancie, no gif thame selfie furth to have only sic craft or knowledge thairof, thairthrow abusand the pepill: Nor that na person seik only help, response, or consultatioun at only sic usaris or abusaris foirsaidis of Witchcraftis, Sorareis or Nercomancie, under the pane of deid, alsweill to be execute aganis the usar, abuser, as the seikar of the response or consultatioun. And this to be put to executioun be the Justice, Schrieffis, Sewartis, Ballies, Lordis of Regaliteis and Rialteis, their Deputis, and uthers Ordinar Jugeis competent with this Realme, with all rigour, having powar to execute the saim.²¹

Through this Act, the Crown effectively gave the right to hunt, prosecute, and execute witches, as well as those who consulted them, to locals as long as the people overseeing the trial were of knowledgeable, Protestant mind. The Witchcraft Act did not define witches or witchcraft in any specific terms nor did it give any advice on how to actively

²¹ Scottish Witchcraft Act 1563, 20 Mary 1, c.73.

hunt and identify would-be witches. In essence, the Act allowed the “knowledgeable” members of society to identify, convict, and execute accused witches at their leisure—including, but not limited, to the folk healers. Coupled with the Reformation, the kirk became the authority for identifying witches: it was through local leaders’ knowledge of local tensions and reputations that witches were to be identified. However, without a sound, universal framework established, the identification of witches within the local community would be difficult and in need of guidance.

As Scotland collided headlong with the Reformation and the shifting political and religious issues that came along with it, King James VI became an active participant in the shaping of how witches would be treated under his reign. With a mixture of skepticism, curiosity, and pre-disposed superstition, James found himself situated on the cusp of the first Scottish witch outbreak in 1590. Eager to prove his intellect and find acceptance in the budding science community that was steadily building on the Continent, James took his firsthand experiences with witchcraft and enthusiastically wrote his own witchcraft treatise, *Daemonologie*, that would rival the *Malleus Maleficarum* in terms of detail and scope. It is through this document that I demonstrate how King James VI shaped early modern Scottish witchcraft prosecution, making it an issue of not only the Church, like its Continental counterparts, but also an act against the Crown, something that was wholly original for the witchcraft field.

Historiography

The study of witchcraft trials and prosecutions in Scotland is often overlooked by witchcraft historians. Prominent witchcraft historians, such as Norman Cohn and Stuart Clark, have written extensively on witchcraft, but have failed to include a well-rounded chapter on Scottish witchcraft. English witchcraft studies and historians, such as Alan MacFarlane and Malcolm Gaskill, have examined the English panics extensively, but neglect to make connections with the rest of the British Isles. It seems, outside of a select few historians, the study of witchcraft is divided into Continental and Colonial witchcraft with England clinging to the edges. Most often relegated to a small chapter or brief mention in the most general of witchcraft books, Scottish witchcraft often plays second fiddle to the more prominent Colonial and Continental prosecutions. Several historians have published case studies and histories about Scottish witchcraft, but none have focused directly on the role in which King James VI and *Daemonologie* played in shaping witchcraft trials.

For the historians who have published works about the Scottish witch trials, the key arguments are boiled down to three main factors: social distress, economic turmoil, and religious upheaval. Christina Larner's *Enemies of God: The Witchhunt in Scotland* is by far the most important work to grace the historiography of Scottish witchcraft and looks at the variety of ways in which these three factors, particularly social distress, impacted Scottish witchcraft. Published in 1981 shortly before Larner's death in 1983, *Enemies of God* is a comprehensive general survey of Scottish witch hunts with a

sociological framework. Larner argues that many witch trials were used as a way for the elite to keep the peasant class in check while enforcing Calvinist ideology in order to secure their own elevated status.²² By establishing the mechanisms that allowed local ruling elites to actively pursue witches without hesitation, and in turn allowing the peasants to be active participants in the machinery, the ruling class encouraged the peasant class to “supply an almost unlimited number of suspects” in order to assert control.²³

Larner also stresses the fact that many, if not all, in Scotland would have been aware of the term “witch,” even though no set legal definition of one had been established in Scotland prior to King James’ *Daemonologie*. This allowed for earlier witch prosecutions to define a witch as they saw fit. It is through this loose definition that Larner argues that witch hunting quickly shifted into women hunting.²⁴ The instability of the political and religious world of Scotland left many with questions on where women fit into the new social and religious order. Women also found little help from the Protestant patriarchy, marking many women with the belief of their inferior and weak status compared to men. Furthering this, women who did not fit within societal norms—those

²² Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witchhunt in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Redwood Books, 2000), 55.

²³ Larner, 2.

²⁴ Larner, 100-101.

who spoke out of turn, cursed, and were confrontational to neighbors—quickly and easily fit into the mold of being, potentially, a witch.²⁵

Under Larner's interpretation of Scottish witchcraft, witches followed similar guidelines as their Continental familiars, but were not completely synonymous. Even though witches were seen as "enemies of God," they were only portrayed that way due to the radicalization of social constraints and not necessarily as a result of Church direction. In order to keep the lower levels of society in line, the elite used Protestantism as a tool with which to control the masses without having to physically seek out those who did not follow the set rules. By establishing the machinery that laid out what the elite were seeking, the peasant class eagerly filled in the blanks and constructed their own ideas of a witch.

In contrast to Christina Larner and her sociological construction, P. G. Maxwell-Stuart approaches Scottish witchcraft from a religious point of view in *Satan's Conspiracy: Magic and Witchcraft in Sixteenth-Century Scotland*. Primarily focused on the relationship between anti-Catholicism and witchcraft, Maxwell-Stuart asserts that witch hunts were only triggered due to the Protestant attempt to erase Catholicism from Scotland.²⁶ With a new dominant religion, according to Maxwell-Stuart, Catholicism needed to be done away with in order for Protestantism to take a firmer hold on the

²⁵ Larner, 97.

²⁶ P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Satan's Conspiracy: Magic and Witchcraft in Sixteenth Century Scotland* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2001) 37.

population. By establishing a tie between witchcraft—an already heinous offense prior to the rise of Protestantism—and Catholicism, the general population would shift towards the “godlier” religion. It is through this, he argues, that King James published *Daemonologie*—not to present himself as an authority on the subject of witchcraft, but as a way to destroy Catholicism.

Satan’s Conspiracy also looks at the types of confessions submitted in witch trials in order to understand the mindset of those actively involved in these trials. Using a handful of testimonials taken by kirk officials during or shortly after several witches’ trials, Maxwell-Stuart argues that these confessions should be taken as truth—if a witch (or the writer of the testimonial) said something happened, it probably did. Using examples of witches who confessed to meeting the Devil in abandoned fields or near the sea, Maxwell-Stuart asserts that meetings of some kind took place. With the removal of the more fanciful elements of the narrative—the appearance of the actual Devil or teleportation hundreds of miles—the possibility, according to Maxwell-Stuart, of a witch meeting taking place was very real. Noting that it was not uncommon for people to travel some distance with little fanfare, Maxwell-Stuart claims that even though large covenants of witches may not have existed exactly as the sources state, smaller groups led by the gentry or noble classes could have been easily manageable.²⁷ Through this assumption, Maxwell-Stuart attempts to support the idea that witches were more organized than other historians had originally thought.

²⁷ Maxwell-Stuart, 152.

Similarly, Julian Goodare, author of “The Scottish Witchcraft Act,” argues that religion played an important part in the spread of witchcraft prosecutions. By examining laws passed by the Scottish government, Goodare asserts that the fervor found in hunting and executing witches tied directly into the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism. Much like Maxwell-Stuart, Goodare believed it is through this conflict that the government issued the Scottish Witchcraft Act as a way to politically unite Protestantism with the Crown in order to effectively prosecute Catholics for their superstitious ways.²⁸ For Protestants, the Catholics who refused to convert to Protestantism were “idolaters because they were adoring something that was not God.”²⁹ Following through with this line of thought, Goodare argues that Protestants linked Catholicism with acts of witchcraft through the Devil: because the religion they followed was wrong, it must be demonic, and since witchcraft was demonic, the two must be either closely related or the same.³⁰ Furthering this, Goodare believes that being a social outcast or a woman had nothing to do with the accusations of being a witch, but the fact that these fringe peoples had not converted to Protestantism was the driving force behind the many accusations.

Other works, such as *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, published by Margaret Murray in the 1920s, takes a more radical approach in proclaiming that religion had

²⁸ Julian Goodare, “The Scottish Witchcraft Act,” *Church History*, vol. 74, No. 1 (Mar. 2005): 52.

²⁹ Goodare, 52.

³⁰ Goodare, 52.

everything to do with the prosecution of witches. Supported by many historians for decades after it was published, *Witch-Cult* is still considered to be one of the more controversial works on witchcraft. For nearly forty years (1929-1968), Murray—as the leading expert in witchcraft—wrote the article on witchcraft for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which mimicked her larger thesis about witch cults. Further supported by the Oxford University Press, the original publishers of Murray’s work, *Witch-Cult in Western Europe* was reprinted numerous times, most recently in the 1960s. For some scholars, however, Murray’s work was a point of contention. In 1962, a scholar noted that “the Murrayites seem to hold... an undisputed sway at the higher intellectual levels. There is, amongst educated people, a very widespread impression that Professor Margaret Murray has discovered the true answer to the problem of the history of European witchcraft and has proven her theory.”³¹ Moreover, Sir Steven Runciman, a prominent medievalist, praised her work for being truthful and well thought-out.³²

Stating that witches were, in fact, hidden within every European society, practicing within a secret fertility cult since the rise of the Roman Empire, Murray believed witches were hunted down by Christians under the belief that the cult was Satanic. Worshipping a two-faced horned God, this ancient secret society, according to Murray, believed that their God controlled the cycle of the seasons and the harvest and without annual sacrifice, the world would cease to exist. Selecting a chosen few—William

³¹ Cohn, 152.

³² Cohn, 152.

Rufus, Thomas Becket, Joan of Arc, and Gilles de Rais, for example—the horned God called upon their deaths as a ritual sacrifice to help with his resurrection and to renew the Earth.³³ As Christianity became more popular and a dominant religion in Europe, this cult became labeled as heathen and needed to be removed. Since Christians did not understand the cult’s horned-god, the Christians, according to Murray, put the god into their own terms: instead of recognizing the horned-god as a separate deity, they turned the horned-god into the Christian version, the Devil. From there, the Christians established the cult as a cult of witches, completely disregarding the ancient society as heathen and Satanic.

Chalking the witch hunts up to simple religious misunderstanding and demonization of witches by Christians, Murray relies heavily on the belief that religion was the only reason why witches were hunted down and put on trial. Since the cult had been so engrained into society since the Greeks and Romans, the “witches” could only be brought down when Christian fervor peaked during the Reformation.

After further investigation into her sources, historians have criticized Murray for her lack of documentation and cherry picking of evidence. Between the 1920s to the 1970s, numerous scholars—Cecil L’Estrange Ewen, Elliot Rose, and Hugh Trevor-Roper, to name a few—have criticized and analyzed Murray’s argument and have found it wanting. Even though many now believe that a global cult did not exist, Murray’s

³³ Margaret Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), 8.

assertions still play a role in Scottish witchcraft and general witchcraft research studies. According to Norman Cohn, author of *Europe's Inner Demons*, there might be some larger truths behind her assumptions. Religion, regardless of its form, did play a role in the shaping of witchcraft trials and prosecutions. Both Goodare's and Maxwell-Stuart's works bring up valid points about witchcraft's connections to religion. The Protestant Church was very concerned about the morality of the Scottish people, but to assert that religion was the key factor in the development of the witch hunts seems a bit narrow. Neither work touches on the high rate at which women were accused of being a witch, nor how Protestantism or Catholicism could lead the kirk to actively seek out women-witches. From that perspective, Goodare's and Maxwell-Stuart's religious argument—that the kirk was more concerned with devising a way to eliminate the Catholic threat than an actual threat of witches—is not completely supported.

Witch-hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion by Brian Levack is a collection of essays that compares the treatment of witches in both England and Scotland. Looking at how both nations handled the prosecution of witches, Levack emphasizes the importance of the local elite as well as the role of central government, especially in the witchcraft cases in Scotland, and how religious, political, and judicial differences explain the different reactions to witchcraft in both countries. Focusing on both regional and local studies, Levack argues that a weak central government allowed for local governments and elites to gain power, resulting in the explosion of witch trials within Scotland. In contrast, he uses England as a foil, arguing that it was because of England's strong

central government that so few people were tried for witchcraft. Through this, Levack argues against Christina Lerner's and Julian Goodare's opinions. Moreover, even though Levack argues that elites played a pivotal role in the spread of witchcraft trials, he does not look at how *Daemonologie* influenced and directed this spread.

Sources

As the focal point of this study, King James' *Daemonologie* is an essential and critical piece of this thesis. Written during the first outbreak of Scottish witch trials and published during the rise of the second, *Daemonologie* gives a rare glimpse into the thoughts of a ruling monarch during a witch crisis. *Daemonologie* also allows historians the ability to see how King James wove the early modern ideas of knowledge, science, and religion into nationwide epidemics that would affect Scotland for centuries to come. It is through *Daemonologie* that the standard of early Scottish witch trials was shaped and conducted, as well as the process through which witches were executed. By using this as the primary source for this thesis, the impacts of *Daemonologie* are made clear in the investigation of witch trials.

Witch trials and the reports generated from the local and central officials that oversaw witch accusations also play a pivotal role in this study. For many witches accused and executed in early modern Scotland, these records are the only glimpse into their existence, but they illuminate the ways in which the local and central governments

handled each case. Depending on locality and level of political and public awareness, the content of each record varies, but still can provide information about the witch and how his or her trial was managed. For these records, the database *The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft*,³⁴ provided by the University of Edinburgh and authors Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, Joyce Miller, and Louise Yeoman, provided the vast majority of cases used in this study. Often overlooked personal information, trial notes and outcomes, and the accused's charges help shape and give insight into the spread of witchcraft and the direct relationship trials had with the monarchy.

The Newes from Scotland, a written bulletin article published supposedly in Scotland and republished in England during the peak of the 1598 witch hunt by an unknown author, also is key in the depiction of witch hunts and trials in sixteenth century Scotland.³⁵ For the literate public, this bulletin would be a main source of information for those not close to a local witch trial or who were unfamiliar with the ways in which Scotland was handling the outbreak. It also demonstrates and reiterates popular notions of identification, prosecution, and execution of witches found in King James' *Daemonologie*, further promoting King James' methods of extinguishing the witch epidemic. Since most, if not all, of the governing officials overseeing witch trials were most likely literate due to their social standing within Scottish society, the chances of

³⁴ "The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft," Last modified on January 2003, <http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/Research/witches/>

³⁵ *Newes from Scotland* (London, 1591).

them reading or at least having a basic knowledge of *The Newes from Scotland*, or some other written bulletin about witchcraft, would be high. With this potential influence within local and central Scottish government, it is important to analyze and understand the messages it conveys to the reading public.

Purpose & Organization

The purpose of this study is to highlight the importance of King James and his *Daemonologie* in the identification, prosecution, and execution of witches in early modern Scotland, as well as to add to the field of Scottish witchcraft studies. Since many studies focus on individual case studies or overlook Scotland entirely for more robust Continental and American witchcraft cases, the field of Scottish witchcraft is regularly neglected. Through this study I hope to show that the direct intervention and active participation of the Scottish monarchy gives Scottish witchcraft a distinctive aspect that should not be overlooked by historians.

In pursuit of this goal, Chapter II introduces the background under which King James began to write *Daemonologie*. The North Berwick Trials, the first major case of witch panic seen on Scottish soil, directly influenced James in writing *Daemonologie*. Radically introduced to witchcraft when several witches attempted to conjure a storm that would sink his and his new bride's ship, King James had firsthand experience in the dangers of witches and the power they possessed. Chapter II looks at the witches placed

on trial for this treasonous attempt on the monarch's life and how this shaped the way in which James approached writing *Daemonologie*; furthermore, this chapter looks at the introduction of witch's pacts with the Devil, Devil's marks, and the use of torture to garner confessions that played a fundamental role in Scottish witch trials.

Chapter III gives an in-depth reading of *Daemonologie* for those unfamiliar with the work and the importance of *Daemonologie* for both King James and society at large. Broken down into three Books, *Daemonologie* does not limit itself to just witchcraft, but looks at the supernatural as a whole, as well as analyzing supernatural beings—spirits and demons, for example—and their masters—necromancers and sorcerers—that were causing havoc in Scottish society. James' mindset is also analyzed in this chapter in an effort to understand his motivations, both personal and political, for publishing *Daemonologie* and why the witch threat was of such importance to the monarch.

Unlike other chapters, Chapter IV is a hybrid chapter, implementing a web-created map as well as brief case studies for several witches who were directly impacted by the readings and interpretations of *Daemonologie*. Looking at the start of witch trials in Scotland (The North Berwick Trials of 1592) to the third Great Witch Hunt in the 1630s, Chapter IV's map digitally highlights over 900 witches and their cases, showing a wide range of information from location, occupation, trial dates, accusations, evidence, prosecutors, co-defendants, and outcomes. It is through this mapping that a larger picture of the actual numbers of witches accused is shown and how the average locality handled

their outbreak of witches. The thesis concludes with a brief summary of the decline of witchcraft in Scotland.

Through this study I hope to effectively demonstrate the importance of Scottish witchcraft within the historiography of witchcraft. By looking at King James and *Daemonologie*, I hope to show how King James VI shaped early modern Scottish witchcraft, making it an issue of not only the Church, like its Continental counterparts, but also an act against the Crown, something that was wholly original for the witchcraft field.

CHAPTER II

KING JAMES & THE NORTH BERWICK TRIALS

Early modern Scottish society was permanently marred by witchcraft and witch-hunting. Prior to 1550, no widespread, let alone local, outbreak of witchcraft hunting or trials had been seen on Scottish ground. This, however, did not mean that the concept of a witch, or magic, was unknown. Folklore and the occasional bedtime story depicted the bad-tempered, malevolent old woman casting evil spells and curses on unsuspecting neighbors or unruly children. The Fae, or *Sithean*, also made the occasional appearance, wielding troublesome, mischievous magic against those who fell for their charms or wandered too far off the beaten path. For the average early modern Scottish dweller, these tales of magic and witches were based in fact, but not something that required the attention of royal authorities. To the pre-1550 Scottish audience, witch hunts and subsequent witch trials that would lead to the deaths of thousands of accused witches only forty years later, would seem absurd.

However, this innocence would come to a resounding halt in the 1590s. With the Reformation still fresh in many minds, witchcraft, throughout all social classes, became a very real danger in the fight for a person's soul as well as a fight for the nation's stability. This would only be amplified with the support of Scotland's reigning monarch, King James, and his direct interaction with the trials that took place in North Berwick. Personally interviewing the suspected witches and analyzing their testimony given to

other third parties, James used this first-hand experience to intrinsically connect the act of witchcraft to not only anti-Protestantism, but also to the very serious act of political treachery. Using these ideas, James crafted his treatise *Daemonologie* to lay the groundwork for future witch trials. Even though King James did not invent witchcraft accusations and trials in Scotland, his direct connection with and intervention in the North Berwick trials contributed to not only the popularization of the idea of witchcraft in Scotland, but also encouraged a framework in which other witch trials could be conducted. By linking both political and religious treachery to the crime of witchcraft, James shaped the way in which Scottish witchcraft would be tried for decades to come.

Background

Prior to the North Berwick trials in 1590, Scotland rarely, if ever, had outbreaks of witch panic; Scotland, did, however, have a long history of folklore relating to both the magical realm (*Fae/Sithean*) and witches of which most of the population would have had knowledge. This familiarity with magical folklore would tie directly into the battle that would rage between the Catholics and the Protestants during the height of the Reformation in Scotland.

As a predominantly Catholic country before the Reformation, Scotland was home to many folklore-beliefs of witches, *Sithean*, and other mystical creatures. As the Reformation took root and Protestant belief became the practiced religion, the Scottish Church criticized these folkloric beliefs, linking them with Catholicism and superstition. This radical shift was further spurred by the changing of monarchs—from Queen Mary, a

devoted Catholic, to King James VI, a youth who had grown up under the influences of Protestantism—and the steady rise of the independent kirk. The once dominant Catholic faith turned into hushed whispers in private households, but the stigma the Protestants had applied to the “pagan” beliefs of witches and *Sithean* remained a very public matter.

Catholicism would further be related to the act of witchcraft, indirectly, through the Witchcraft Act of 1563. As Catholicism became further linked to the supernatural and superstition, the belief that Catholicism was related to witchcraft became more common place. Through the Act of 1563, the Protestant kirk could root out unreformed, “superstitious” Catholics under the guise of eliminating witches. The Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563 no longer portrayed “Witchcraftis, Sorarie and Necromancie” as trivial crimes, but ones that should and would be treated as capital offenses.

¹ It escalated the consulting of witches from a parlor trick meant for popular consumption to an act punishable by death. This act did not give a clear definition of a witch, nor did it lay out a plan with which a witch would be tried in court. Overall, the Witchcraft Act of 1563 was a brief, broad piece of legislation that left the act of witchcraft and those who practiced and participated in witchcraft wholly undefined. It was through these lack of guidelines and definitions that society and the courts gained the ability to begin to shape the definition of a witch.

These religious tensions and possible connections between Catholicism and witchcraft would have been somewhat fresh in King James’ mind in 1589, but more pressing would have been his recent marriage to Princess Anne of Denmark. Long in the

¹ Witchcraft Act of 1563, 1563, 20 Mary 1, c. 73.

works with the regency of Denmark, the marriage between Anne and James came to fruition in 1589 through proxy. Leaving Copenhagen on September 5, the new Queen set sail to Scotland, only to encounter severe storms that nearly sank her fleet. Seeing no other option but to interrupt her journey, Anne had her fleet take shelter at Mardø on the southern coast of Norway. With little communication with the delayed fleet and young bride, James decided to set out for Denmark himself and bring back his new bride. However, much like Anne, James continuously had to postpone his voyage due to severe storms over Leith until October 22 when the weather turned more favorable. Once reaching his Queen, James extended his stay in Norway and Denmark before whisking her back to Scotland on yet another stormy, treacherous trip.²

From the perspective of the Scottish people and from King James, this delay was not something out of the ordinary in 1589. According to James, “contrarious winds” were the sole cause for the postponement of the arrival of the Queen with no mention of possible ill-intent from witches.³ This was not the case in Denmark. Already well aware of the threat witches possessed and their connection to harsh storms, the Danes instantly set about hunting down and prosecuting local witches in April 1590.⁴ It is unknown whether King James was aware of Danish assumptions or if Denmark’s different witch beliefs played any role in James’ foundations of Scottish witch beliefs, but it is known

² Maxwell-Stuart, 108.

³ Maxwell-Stuart, 84.

⁴ Maxwell- Stuart, 109.

that James returned home with his bride without comment about any potential witch intervention. Unbeknownst to the Scottish court, a different, yet strangely related, storm was brewing that would play a fundamental part in the shaping of both King James' ideology and the treatment of future witches.

The Narrative of the North Berwick Trials

The North Berwick trials seemed to have started innocently enough with little to no fanfare outside of the town of Tranent, located in East Lothian, around November 1590, according to the *Newes from Scotland*. David Seaton, a somewhat prominent member of Tranent society and the local deputy bailiff, had begun to hear startling rumors about his maid servant, Geillis Duncan, and her odd ability to cure the sick and injured through magical means. Keeping a watchful eye on his maid servant, Seaton found that she also seemed to be taking late night strolls and was continuously absent from her duties. Following the rumors that had been spread around town by supposed clients of Duncan, Seaton was told that Duncan could perform “many matters most miraculous” that she had never been able to do before.⁵ Suspicion and trepidation mounting, Seaton began to suspect that his maid had not been gifted by God in her healing powers, but had been touched by the Devil. Growing even more alarmed each passing day, Seaton set about examining and questioning Duncan about her magic, only

⁵ *Newes from Scotland*, 88.

to be evaded. Seeing no other recourse and firmly believing that his maid was a witch, Seaton enlisted the help of other townsfolk and had Duncan confined in the local tollbooth until a trial could be held. From there, Seaton and his helpers proceeded to “torment her with the torture of the Pilliwinckes⁶ vpon her fingers, which is a greeuous torture, and binding or wrinching her head with a corde or roape, which is a most cruell torment also.”⁷ Refusing to confess even under torture, Duncan was then subjugated to a rigorous search of her body in order to find the Devil’s Mark. Once the Mark was found upon her throat and an undisclosed area around her genitals, she confessed that “all her dooings was done by the wicked allurements and inticements of the Dieuell, and that she did them by witchcraft.”⁸ Gaining the confession that he wanted, Seaton had Duncan committed to prison where she would languish in not only difficult conditions, but where she was to be continuously tortured for approximately three to four months.⁹

Since Duncan was the first case Scotland had seen, Seaton and his supporters had no experience in trying an accused witch. According to standard trial practices, “all prosecutions... were technically private, in the sense that all trials were initiated by a

⁶ Pilliwinckes, or thumbscrew torture, is a vice with protruding studs that are placed on the thumbs or fingers of the victim. When tightened, the vice clamps down onto the appendages, slowly crushing them. The crushing bars were often times lined with sharp metal points to puncture the fingers, inflicting injury into the nail beds of the victims.

⁷ *Newes from Scotland*, 88.

⁸ *Newes from Scotland*, 88.

⁹ *Newes from Scotland*, 89.

personal complaint or accusation by one person or his kin against another. The person who presented the charge in court was known as the pursuer, which meant that he was the actual prosecutor of the crime.”¹⁰ Since Seaton had already established testimonies from witnesses, the basic beginning of the trial had already been put in motion. Knowing that a confession was important to establishing guilt, Seaton obviously made securing one his top priority. The use of torture to gain confessions for other crimes was technically illegal, but this was often blatantly overlooked by both local and royal courts in order to achieve a confession. With no set guidelines to follow, Seaton and his followers cobbled together the best version of a witchcraft trial they could—torture and all—in order to facilitate the necessary outcome.

If Geillis Duncan had lived on the Continent, her story might have ended here or with a timely execution that would have rid the town of Tranent of its witch problem for good. However, she named accomplices during her stay in the town’s jail. From that confession, Scottish witchcraft trials would follow that precedent for the next five major outbreaks of witch panic. Stating that she was not the only one to consort with the Devil during her nightly visits, Duncan accused Agnes Sampson of Haddington, Agnes Thompson of Edenborough, and Doctor Fian (or his alias John Cunningham, depending on the records) of Saltpans as being malicious witches. She further confessed that Ewphame Meealrean had cursed her Godfather to death, and that Barbara Napier had cursed Archibald, the last Earl of Angus, with an incurable disease that led to his

¹⁰Levack, *Witch-Hunting in Scotland: Law, Politics, and Religion*, 20.

untimely death.¹¹ Additional probing led her to confess that Robert Grierson, George Mott's wife, and Janet Sandilands were also witches who practiced malicious magic. Most of those accused of witchcraft seemed to have led ordinary, lower-class lives: Sampson was a middle-aged woman, John Fian was the schoolmaster for his town, and Robert Grierson was a skipper of a fishing boat.¹² Each were acquainted with one another in some form, so it came as no surprise that these accusations could be at least plausible. Alarmed at the spread of witchcraft and convinced that a witch epidemic may very well be upon them, Seaton and his associates hunted down and jailed the accused.

News of the witch incident in Tranent soon spread to the ears of King James. Not initially alarmed by the idea of witches, James seemed to be merely curious about the witch phenomenon that had sprung up near the capital city. This curiosity could have stemmed from his drive to obtain knowledge that would help elevate his place in scholastic society or it could have simply been curiosity for curiosity's sake. Regardless of the motives behind the initial contact with the North Berwick witches, King James directed his attention towards Agnes Sampson of Haddington, the eldest of the accused witches, and summoned her to appear before himself and the royal court. Finding her uninterested and unwilling to confess to being a witch, James sent Sampson back to her jail cell where, much like Duncan, she was repeatedly tortured and searched for the

¹¹ *Newes from Scotland*, 90.

¹² Maxwell-Stuart, 144.

Devil's Mark. Shaving off all Sampson's body hair, the interrogators not only searched her body for the Mark, but "thrawen with a rope" until the Mark was found "vpon her priuities."¹³ Much like Duncan before her, Sampson confessed to being a witch and that all previously named were "notorious witches."¹⁴

Intrigued by what he had heard, King James summoned Agnes Thompson before himself and the royal court in order to hear her side of the witch tale. Her testimony seemed to come more freely than Sampson's, for she readily confessed to being a witch in league with the Devil. According to Thompson, on the previous All Hallow's Eve, she and over two hundred witches (including the ones already named in the North Berwick trials) met near the ocean. Once everyone had been assembled and accounted for, the witches proceeded to drink wine, dance, and sing:

*Commer goe ye before, comer go ye,
If y will no goe before, comer let me.*¹⁵

During this parade of debauchery, Geillis Duncan produced a lute that she had allegedly used in order to bewitch people into doing her bidding. To much of the court's surprise but reassured by James that no harm would come to them due to their immunity given to

¹³ *Newes from Scotland*, 92.

¹⁴ *Newes from Scotland*, 92.

¹⁵ *Newes from Scotland*, 93.

them by the grace of God, James summoned Duncan to perform her magical music, and, according to the accounts, found “great delight to bee present at their examinations.”¹⁶

Unfortunately for the witches involved, the “entertainment” they provided for the King would end abruptly. Agnes Sampson, either in hopes of ending her continuous torture or for some other unknown reason, came before the King in late autumn of 1590 and confessed to many “miraculous and strange” things that she and her group of witches had performed. Calling her and those associated with her “extreame lyars,” James, at this point, seemed completely convinced that the witches of North Berwick were fleeting entertainment that had outlived his curiosity and held no potential to expand his scholarly knowledge.¹⁷

However, it is at this point in the narrative that King James radically shifts from being a curious and mildly entertained King to a monarch deeply invested in the reality of witches. Desperate to prove her powers, Agnes Sampson took the King aside and spoke “the verye words which passed betweene the Kings Maiestie and his Queene at Vpslo in Norway the first night of their marriage, with their answere each to other.”¹⁸ Completely aghast, James “swore by the living God, that he beleued that all the Diuels in hell could not haue discovered the same: acknowledging her words to be most true, and therefore

¹⁶ *Newes from Scotland*, 93.

¹⁷ *Newes from Scotland*, 94.

¹⁸ *Newes from Scotland*, 94.

gaue the more credit to the rest which is before declared.”¹⁹ No more was the business of witches to be a playful matter entertained by the King and his court, but a serious matter which needed to be swiftly dealt with. For if witches were able to spy on intimate details between a King and a Queen, the possibilities for future sabotage were not as remote as he once thought.

The case against the North Berwick witches would only strengthen with further testimony, and would forever link the act of witchcraft to an act of treason against not only God, but against the King of Scotland. Hell-bent on finding the depth of treason against him, James continued to interrogate, most vigorously, the North Berwick witches. Finding no more useful information forthcoming from Agnes Sampson, James turned to Agnes Thompson for further information. Much like Sampson, Thompson continued to solidify in James’ mind the reality of witches as well as the danger they possessed to crown and country. Most probably due to the extensive torture and leading questions Thompson faced after her initial interview, she laid out a riveting confession of a plot to kill the King prior to him leaving to fetch his bride:

She confessed that she tooke a blacke Toade, and did hang the same vp by the heeles, three daies, and collected and gathered he venome as it dropped and fell from it in an Oister shell, and kept the same venome close couered, vntil she should obtaine any parte or pecce of foule linen cloth, that hand appertained to the Kings Maiestie, as shirt, handkercher, napkin or any other thing which she practiced to obtaine by meanes of one Iohn Kers, who being attendant in his Maiesties Chamber, desired him for olde acquaintance between them, to helpe her to one or a pecce of such a cloth as is foresaide, which thing the said Iohn Kers denied to helpe her too, saying he could not help her to it... If she had obtained any one pecce of linen cloth which the King had worne and fouled, she had

¹⁹ *Newes from Scotland*, 94.

bewitched him to death, and put him to such extraordinary paines, as if he had beene lying vpon sharp thornes and endes of needles.²⁰

Finding that she could not obtain any materials that had been worn or used by the King, Thompson abandoned this plan to kill the King. However, she was not, according to her, dissuaded from future attempts. Further pressured by the Devil to eliminate the one person who could stand against him, Thompson hatched another scheme. Learning that the King would be setting sail to fetch his stranded Queen, Thompson gathered her witch companions (those who had already been named to be witches) and plotted to sink the ship of the King:

She being accompanied with the parties before specially named, tooke a Cat and christened it, and afterward bound to each parte of that Cat, the cheefest partes of a dead man, and seuerall ioynts of his bodie, and that in the night following the saide Cat was conueied into the midst of the sea by all these witches sayling in their riddles or Ciues as is aforesaidre, and so left the saide Cat right before the Towne of Lieth in Scotland: this done, there did arise such a temptest in the Sea, as a greater hath not beene seene...and further the aide witche declared, that his Maiestic had neuer come safelye from the Sea if his fath had not preuailed aboue their ententions.²¹

Fully convinced that these witches spoke the truth about his and his bride's possible assassination, James ordered the rest of the accused witches brought forth to testify about their treason.

²⁰ *Newes from Scotland*, 95.

²¹ *Newes from Scotland*, 96.

The most important of the witches summoned was Doctor John Fian, alias John Cunningham,²² the school teacher from Saltpans. Other than being a man, Fian exhibited all the characteristics which a witch would be defined in James' *Daemonologie* only a few short years later: he was materialistic, greedy, and selfish. Having been accused by Geillis Duncan as the only male witch in the company of the Devil, John Fian was named as the Register for each meeting. Much like the others, Fian encountered severe torture in order to garner a confession of guilt; however, even after having his leg placed into a boot,²³ Fian refused to confess his guilt. Interviewing the other witches, the interrogators were told to search under his tongue for charmed needles that kept John Fian from confessing his guilt. Once the needles were removed, Fian was brought before the King where he readily supplied his confession, both verbally and in writing.²⁴ There is no stated reason why the investigators focused on eliciting a confession out of Fian, nor why or how the needles were placed in his mouth. But as a key pawn within the witches' meeting, Fian and his confession would strengthen the claim the throne had in rooting out

²² An alias was a common practice in early modern Scotland as well as in records/dittay of witch trials. Seeing that many people had similar names, especially in families, many people took about using an alias, or an alternative name, so they would be able to be distinguished from others.

²³ The Boot refers to a torture instrument used during the early modern age. Constructed out of four pieces of wood board nailed together, the boot would enclose the victim's leg tightly. Once secured, wedges would be hammered between the boards, creating pressure on the leg until either the victim confessed, or the boot completely dislocated and shattered the victim's leg.

²⁴ *Newes from Scotland*, 98.

treasonous witches with his testimony. The crown would now have the word of a man, more credible than a woman's word, who participated and recorded every meeting, witch, and utterance that took place.

In his testimony, John Fian laid bare all the crimes he had committed with the aid of witchcraft. First, he confirmed the other witches' testimony about his role as Register for the Devil. Noting that his job was multi-faceted, Fian not only kept a current list of all those in the Devil's service, but also took their oaths upon arrival and documented important information that the Devil dictated to him. As Register, it was his duty to make sure that everyone was present for each of the meetings and that all rules were followed and met under the watchful eye of the Devil.²⁵

Secondly, John Fian used his magic for his own personal gain. Smitten with a gentlewoman in his town of Saltpans, Fian was furious when he came to find out that the object of his affections had little to no interest in him. Spotting another man who was making headway in winning over said gentlewoman, Fian used his witchcraft to curse the man, driving him into lunacy. Wary of the claim, James ordered the man before the Court, only to find that Fian's statement was true:

He caused the Gentleman to be brought before the Kinges Maiestie, which was vpon the xxiiij. Day of December last, and being in his Maiesties Chamber, suddenly he gaue a great scratch andf fell into a madness, sometime bending himselfe, and sometime capring so directly vp, that his head did touch the seeling of the Chamber, to the great admiration of his Maiestie and others then present: so that all the Gentlemen in the Chamber were not able to holde him...he within an

²⁵ *Newes from Scotland*, 98.

hower came againe to himself, when being demaunded of the King Maiestie what he saw or did all that while, answered that he had been in a sound sleepe.²⁶

It was through this bewitching that, according to Fian, he was able to eliminate his rival for the gentlewoman's affections.

However, unfortunately for John Fian, the young gentlewoman remained uninterested in Fian's pursuits. Using his connections to the gentlewoman's brother (he was a pupil at Fian's school), Fian promised the young boy that if he helped Fian in obtaining certain items from the young woman to create a love potion, Fian would teach him the ways of witchcraft. Giving him a piece of enchanted paper, Fian ordered the boy to obtain three hairs from his sister's privates, wrap them in the paper, and bring them back to Fian so he may conjure up a love potion.²⁷

Hastily returning home, the young boy clambered into bed with his sister in hopes of catching her asleep. However, due to her natural purity and God's oversight, the young girl woke to find her brother attempting to steal her hairs and screamed for her mother to come save her. Her mother, a witch herself and well versed in the magic Fian was attempting to perform, rushed to her daughter's rescue and beat her son until he confessed to Fian's involvement. Taking the paper from the boy, the mother-witch "went to a young Heyfer which neuer had orne Calfe nor gone to the Bull, and with a paire of sheeres, clipped off three haire from the vdder of the Cow, and wrapt them in the same

²⁶ *Newes from Scotland*, 101.

²⁷ *Newes from Scotland*, 101.

paper, which she again delivered to the boy, then willing him to giue same to his saide Maister, which he immediately did.²⁸ Believing he had received the hairs of his gentlewoman, Fian conducted the love spell, to disastrous results:

But the Doctor had no sooner done his intent to them, but presently the Hayfer Cow whose haire they were indeed, came vnto the doore of the Church wherein the Schoolmaister was, into the which the Hayfer went, and made towards the Schoolmaister, leaping and dauncing vpon him, and following him foorth of the church and to what places so euer he went, to the great admiration of all the townes men of Saltpan, and many other who did beholde the same...The reporte whereof made all men imagine that hee did woorke it by the Diuell, without whom it could neuer haue beene so sufficiently effected.²⁹

Finding the evidence truthful and Fian unwilling to renounce his malicious ways, King James sentenced him to death.

However, the death of a witch was an interesting dilemma for the King, one that would reappear continuously throughout the North Berwick trials and would not be solved completely until *Daemonologie*. Since the witch had committed treason against the King by going against the law of the land (not to mention attempting to kill him), she (or in this case, he) would need to be strangled first since that was the punishment for treason at the time; however, the witch would afterwards need to be burned at the stake due to being a heretic in the face of God. John Fian, being one of the first of the witches to be found guilty for his crimes, was executed in this manner. Although the *Newes from Scotland*, one of the main sources for this account, ends with the death of John Fian and

²⁸ *Newes from Scotland*, 102.

²⁹ *Newes from Scotland*, 102-103.

only mentions that the remaining witches were awaiting further trial, other sources indicate that many of the accused witches (Agnes Sampson and Geillis Duncan) faced similar ends.

The *Newes from Scotland* offers remarkable insight into witches and witchcraft. The witches that were accused and tried during the North Berwick Trials were the first in Scotland to be brought before the king; however, through these trials, a precedent began to form for all other trials that would take place in Scotland. The witches of old Scottish fairytales became a very harsh reality and could and would infest even the most unassuming communities. Through examination, witches took on distinct characteristics: they were predominately female, fairly uneducated, and were controlled by their baser desires. The moral corruption instigated by the Devil was the driving force behind their attacks. Anyone within any community could fall under the sway of the Devil, and in order to protect the morality and future monarchical line of Scotland, it was the King's duty to eradicate the witch threat.

Conclusion

Even though it was not entirely unheard of for a monarch to be interested in the witchcraft cases brought before him and his court, it was entirely unfamiliar for the early modern audience to have a King named as one of the primary victims of malicious witchcraft. Wholly unique to the Scottish witchcraft movement, the act of attempted assassination of not only a King, but also his Queen, through witchcraft was unheard of.

No other accounts, whether Continental or Colonial, make any reference to a monarch's potential assassination by witchcraft. Also completely unique to Scotland was the readiness ("readiness" is used loosely here, for many, if not all, witches from North Berwick confessed under extreme torture) of confession and collaboration from multiple witches which lends an interesting perspective to Scottish witchcraft.

King James, both as a victim of malicious magic and as an active participant in obtaining testimony, played a pivotal role in the North Berwick trials. Prior to the North Berwick incident, King James had little to no concern with witchcraft—his life revolved around political movements and securing a wife to further his line. This was not to say that he had no knowledge of ongoing witch trials on the Continent, but the impact they had on the way he conducted law in Scotland was minuscule at best. The Witchcraft Act of 1563 had already been set into motion, but an actual outbreak like the ones happening on the Continent had not yet taken place. Witchcraft was something that plagued other countries, not Scotland.

Even at the beginning of the North Berwick trials, James was more a concerned skeptic than an actual believer in the reality of witchcraft. To him, witchcraft was another realm of knowledge in which he had limited expertise, and with the budding science that had begun to spread across the Continent, knowledge was a mark of a highly civilized intellectual, and James desperately wanted to be known as an intellectual monarch. This did not mean that he was fully invested in the actual *belief* of witchcraft, but he would humor his court and his curiosity in interviewing potential witches.

It is through this royal intervention that the Scottish definition of witchcraft really began to take shape. Because Scotland had not participated in a great witch-hunt prior to the North Berwick trials, the definition of a witch was unformed. Information about Continental witchcraft had more than likely trickled in through overseas trade and interaction, but a fully fleshed out definition of a Scottish witch never had come to any fruition. It is through James and later his work *Daemonologie* that both the early modern and modern reader see a formation of what a witch was in Scotland. James made the distinct connection between the Devil and a witch both through the pact/oath they had to swear and by the Devil branding his servant with the Devil's Mark. It is also through James that many came to see witchcraft as not only an act against God, but also an act of treason against the King. Nowhere else in the entirety of witchcraft is this distinction of treason against a King made. His support for flushing out the numerous witches that plagued North Berwick added a catalyst to witch hunting in Scotland the likes the country had never seen.

CHAPTER II

DAEMONOLOGIE

Published seven years after the conclusion of the North Berwick trials in 1590, *Daemonologie*, by King James, is a rare insight for historians into not only the thoughts of a monarch, but also a glimpse into popular belief in early modern Scotland. Even though there is very little evidence to date when James began writing *Daemonologie*, we can assume that with the inclusion of both the North Berwick trials and the surge of witch trials from 1597, James began writing sometime after the conclusion of North Berwick and had it published shortly after the end of the first wave of witch trials in 1597.

However, James' primary concern upon releasing *Daemonologie* was to guide the early modern reader in a rational and intellectual discourse about the supernatural, the reality of witches, and the proper procedures with which to protect against and prosecute accused witches. It was not a direct attack against Catholicism like Maxwell-Stuart asserts in *Satan's Conspiracy*. Looking to sway the scholarly minds of both the Continent and the British Isles, James united political and religious ideals under the scientific umbrella. By establishing set scientific rules for witchcraft, James was the first to connect politics, science, and witchcraft. As the printing press became more common and published materials found circulation amongst the literate elite, *Daemonologie* entered into publishing world amongst religious, political, and newly forming scientific discourses. *Daemonologie* also acted as a way in which James could present himself as an intellectual to the budding world of science and theory. Wanting to be seen as a

forward-thinking monarch, James composed *Daemonologie* not only as a way in which to rid his country of the escalating witch-crisis, but also as a way to present himself as an individual who could speak on the issues of the time through the use of science and logic, and would separate popular superstition from scientific fact.

Written as a classical Socratic dialogue between two characters, the skeptical Philomathes and the believer Epistemon, *Daemonologie* explores a myriad of questions about the existence of witchcraft in attempt to woo non-believers and skeptics. By using the form of a Socratic dialogue, King James not only follows the prevalent literary structure that he was taught in the schoolroom as a child, but also the dominant written form found amongst the educated European elite. By using this literary method, James places *Daemonologie*, a work about the mystical and supernatural, within the framework of well-established and recognized *scientific* literary works. Much like any scientific work, witchcraft, in the eyes of James, could be studied and categorized and subject to determined laws and rules. It was also not an unknowable force, and with the proper application of thought, could be documented thoroughly. However, because he inserts both religious and moral issues within his observations, James limits *Daemonologie*'s complete inclusion into the science field.

Furthermore, by posing the discussion as a dialogue, James hopes to “proue two things, as I haue already said: the one, that such dieulish artes haue bene and are. The other, what exact trial and seure punishment they merite.”¹ Outside of proving that witchcraft and witches existed, and proving the proper steps of eliminating the

¹ James Stuart, *Daemonologie in Forme of a Dialogue* (Edinburgh, 1597), xii.

supernatural threat, James' motives for investigating and writing about witchcraft is unclear. However, as he was personally involved in the North Berwick Trials and came under a direct attack that could have not only cost him his life, but also the life of Princess Anne, James probably was establishing a reasonable explanation for his supernatural beliefs. As a highly educated man and monarch, James could not simply claim witchcraft a reality without providing logical evidence. By composing *Daemonologie* in the format he did, James not only validates his supernatural beliefs (as well as stemming potential criticism from skeptical intellectuals), but also allows himself to speak with authority on an issue that was plaguing much of Europe.

By examining *Daemonologie*, we, as readers and historians, can not only get a glimpse within the mind of a prominent Scottish figure at the height of a rising witch epidemic, but also see the beginnings of framework for Scottish witch trials. It is through this in-depth examination of King James' *Daemonologie* that historians are able to see the importance that was placed on the Devil and the linking of treason against God and the treason against a King. Scottish witch trials were not only a religious issue, but also a very serious political one.

Daemonologie, much like *Malleus Maleficarum* before it, is divided into three parts, or "books" as James calls them, and is further sub-divided into short chapters that discuss specific topics and arguments dealing with the supernatural and witchcraft. Defining the different types of magic users, comparing and contrasting the varying usages of magic, and describing different magical properties, James shows the diverse spectrum of witchcraft and magic as well as how the Devil operates within each.

Broadly, the first book deals with defining the difference between “magic” and “necromancie,” while positioning both within the general category of witchcraft. James states that witches “ar servants onlie, and slaues to the Devil,” while Necromancers, or those who harness the power to communicate, resurrect, or summon the dead, on the other hand, are “his [the Devils’] maisters and commanders.”² From this distinction, James also asserts, through Philomathes and extensive examples pulled from the Bible, the lawfulness of magic, or magicians, and how they are more concerned with the knowledge of magic instead of the practice.³ It is from these distinctions that James creates two forms of magic: harmful, malicious magic and academic, lawful magic.

The second book continues the thread of harmful magic and looks predominantly at sorcery and witchcraft. Seen as the lowest forms of magic, sorcery and witchcraft were directly linked to the services of the Devil. Dividing the actions of witches into two parts, James creates a broad definition of the “ideal” witch and sorcerer. The first part, James claims, is the actions of the witches themselves—the renouncing of their ties to God and the worshipping of the Devil as their true master. The second part is the actions of the witches towards other people—the malicious magic that left livestock and neighbors dead and the cursing of entire families. From these two definitions, James builds the foundation of what he believed to be the archetypal witch.

The third book of *Daemonologie* looks at the supernatural and concludes by prescribing the best course of dealing with suspected witches. Dedicating much of the

² Stuart, 9.

³ Stuart, 10.

third book to spirits and specters that haunt people, James categorizes spirits into four different classifications:

The first is, where spirities troubles some houses or solitarie places: The second, where spirities followes vpon certaine persones, and at diuers houres troubles them: The thirde, when they enter within them and possesse them: The fourth is these kinde of spirities that are called vulgarlie the Fayrie.⁴

For any of these spirits, they could be summoned by a malicious witch or occur naturally by themselves. Finishing the definitions of what he sees as the direst forms of malicious magic, James concludes the third book with a discussion of the trial and punishment of harmful magic users. Through this discourse, James gives general guidance and advice on the proper punishment of witches: death.

First Book

The First Book of *Daemonologie* provides the groundwork for defining the different varieties of magic King James saw in the early modern world. As a man of science, James structured his dialogue into a form that would be familiar to those who were educated: a classic Socratic dialogue. With this connection to a famous philosopher, *Daemonologie*'s argument is rooted in proposed questions and logical answers. Introducing his characters, Philomathes and Epistemon, as the gateway through which he would discuss magic, James constructs a friendly, intellectual dialogue between the two in hopes of persuading not only the skeptical Philomathes of the reality of malicious witchcraft and witches and the danger they pose, but also the early modern

⁴ Stuart, 57.

readers. For every question Philomathes presents to his colleague, Epistemon has a structured, evidence-laden argument attesting to soundness (or not) of a witch's and/or the Devil's powers. It is through this structure of question and answer that James places *Daemonologie* into a scientific discourse.

To start his argument, James has Philomathes and Epistemon begin their discourse with Philomathes inquiring after the validity of witches and the supernatural. Fundamental to the entirety of *Daemonologie*, James uses his personal experience of North Berwick to craft characters that logically interweave these experiences within not only a scientific framework, but also a Protestant one. By using Scripture and “dailie experience and confessions,” James argues, he (or in this case, Epistemon) can prove that “witchcraft, and Witches haue bene, and are,” since the beginning of humanity.⁵ Epistemon follows this statement up by distinguishing the various types of harmful, forbidden magic that were being practiced during the early modern era. Primarily concerned with those who practiced the various forms of divination (necromancers and magicians) and those who practiced witchcraft, James establishes the differences between the two while linking the common sources—the Devil and the pacts sworn to the Devil—of all practices of magic. By establishing this link, James makes the Devil a key feature in Scottish witch belief and a central figure in witchcraft trials.

Necromancy, as Epistemon tells it, is one of the fundamental and foulest forms of harmful magic, breaking every rule established by God. Greek in origin, necromancy, or “Necromancie” as James writes it, is the act of possessing, raising, using, and/or

⁵ Stuart, 53.

summoning the dead in order to perform divinations and quench the necromancer's curiosity.⁶ However, in order to perform necromancy, one must be willing to part with some "fruition of their body & soule" to the Devil, for it is "the onlie thing huntet for."⁷ In return, the necromancer would be considered the Devil's master and be able to summon and control him at will, as long as he fulfilled his end of the bargain. Through this contract, the necromancer and the Devil would be interconnected, allowing the necromancer access to a "black & vnlawfull science" that went against the teachings and expectations of God.⁸ Through this mingling of science and religion, James attempts to bridge the distinction between the two. To James, these necromancers often came from the upper echelon of society, were highly educated, and often mingled and held patronage from well-known aristocrats. Through this patronage, necromancers were able to obtain powerful political arrangements that would further their ambitions that may not have been afforded to them if they had not entered into a pact with the Devil.

In contrast, the role of the "magi" or magician has a more fluid definition to King James. Stating that at the beginning of humanity, being a magician (or a "contemplator or Interpretour of Divine and heavenlie sciences"⁹) was often seen as an honorable, reputable title and occupation, something that would later be supported by the Greeks, James disagrees with the elevated status of magicians. Coming at a time where the

⁶ Stuart, 9.

⁷ Stuart, 9.

⁸ Stuart, 9.

⁹ Stuart, 8.

budding scientific field often overlapped with the mystical, and vice versa, the definition of being a magician was in constant flux in the early modern period. Although the act of practicing magic was seen as unlawful in the eyes of the Crown, knowledge of magic was not. An elite person who sought knowledge for the sake of knowledge was not to be dissuaded from seeking information—after all, that was the initial motivation for King James in the North Berwick Trials, as well as a basic tenet of science. Knowledge of the mystical, without implementation, did no harm; however, the thin line between knowledge and practice of said knowledge, according to James, should never be crossed. One such as King James, a devoted man of God, could run experiments and examine accused witches, such as in the North Berwick Trials, but should never cross into actual practice. To practice magic, even in the hands of the educated elite, would go against the basic principles of Protestantism, as well as going against the mandate of the King. For James, at the time of publication of *Daemonologie*, the distinction between unlawful and immoral, in regard to magical practice, had little variance: to possess magical powers was to be in league with the Devil and was in direct defiance of the monarchy.

Unlike necromancy, being a magician was often seen as a slippery slope to navigate. Kept mostly to the learned elite class, magicians could be simply those who quested for knowledge—like astrologers—but did not partake in casting spells or charms. This form of magic, according to *Daemonologie*, was frowned upon, but not unlawful. However, the quest for knowledge, according to James, often led even the most intellectual astray and down the path of practicing and teaching forbidden magic. Once this transition had been made and a pact forged with the Devil signed, magicians and their practice of magic became illegal and punishable by death, regardless of the

intention. This punishment could also be applied to the unlearned—those who considered themselves magicians even though they had not achieved great social standing or only had a simple understanding of charms—as well as those who frequented or gave patronage to magicians.¹⁰

It is through these distinctions between necromancers and magicians that King James lays the groundwork for the Devil's Pact that plays a pivotal role in defining a witch in later *Daemonologie* books. Looking predominantly at the bond between a magician and the Devil, James arranges the latter half of First Book as a guide on how a magician gains favor with the Devil. Depending on the “skil and art of the Magician,” the Devil chooses an appropriate form in which to take when presenting himself to the magician.¹¹ Ranging from the “likenes of a dog, a Catte, an Ape, or such-like other beast; or else to answer by a voice onlie,” the Devil tailors himself to fit the needs of his summoner.¹² In the case of a more educated magician, the Devil could enter a corpse in order to enter battles, converse and answer questions, or attend to the magician.¹³ Regardless of the form, the Devil thrives on the curiosity of the magician and uses that curiosity to persuade the magician into forming a permanent pact. Once the Devil presents himself, the magician chooses whether to enter the pact through the spilling of his own blood in order to write the contract or choosing to have the Devil touch some

¹⁰ Stuart, 9-10.

¹¹ Stuart, 19.

¹² Stuart, 19.

¹³ Stuart 19-20.

part of the magician, leaving a mark (which is the standard for witches that will be discussed later on) that cannot be removed.

Even though the First Book does not go into great detail about witchcraft, James does have a robust discussion about related harmful magic that will impact how witchcraft is treated in later books. Both necromancers and magicians forged pacts with the Devil in order to satisfy intellectual curiosities, and, because of their societal level and education, were able to control the Devil. Through this pact, the Devil permanently marked his subordinates, something that will be a recurring theme in not only the witchcraft discussions within Second and Third Book, but also in the practices of witch trials throughout Scotland. Magic, in any of its forms or in any hands, was dangerous and unlawful, according to King James. By granting the Devil access, regardless of the relationship between Devil and summoner, the Devil would always corrupt the magic-user and allow them the ability to perpetrate harm. Through setting this framework of pacts and relationships with the Devil, James is able to easily link witches to pre-established and undisputed notions of malicious magic.

It is also through this distinction between the different levels of magic that King James introduced how varying types of magic were related to certain stratifications of class in early modern Scotland. Often seen as the elite form of magic, necromancy was regulated to the upper tier of male society—the aristocrats—who had the ability and the time to garner knowledge that was out of reach for the lower classes. Necromancy placed the user above the demands of the Devil and the user had the ability to control the Devil where other magic users could not. Furthermore, much like the necromancer, the magician was the able-bodied and determined master of knowledge, but had fallen victim

to the allure of ultimate knowledge. Again, like the necromancer, the magician was from the upper classes and was afforded the luxury of time that many others could not have obtained. For both the necromancer and the magician, knowledge was the key component to their downfall into practicing magic. The elite, unlike their lower class counterparts, had the ability to gather information and the time to master magic through inquiry and practice, allowing them to harness and control the Devil. Through their control of the Devil, magicians and necromancers were able to harness more powerful magic and use the Devil to do their bidding. In sharp contrast, the lower classes—the witches—did not have the education nor the time, allowing themselves to become servants to the Devil.

To James, it was important to make this distinction of the higher levels of magic at the forefront of his argument rather than leaving it out completely or as a side note. At a time when magic was being used as both as a science and as entertainment in higher class society, James needed to define the various types of magic in order to present himself as an intellectual well-versed in all forms of magic; leaving out any form of magic, even ones that related to the elite, would go against scientific inquiry. Defining both necromancers and magicians as an upper class pursuit that should not be overlooked, James effectively encompasses these higher class pursuits in the same overall category as the lower class, malicious magic of a witch, even though magicians and necromancers sought magic for differing reasons than lower class witches. By categorizing all practices of magic into one group—witchcraft—James did away with potential discrepancies (such as varying treatments or prosecution options for differing social classes) by placing all magic under the same category, malicious magic, and united magic under the single scope of witchcraft.

Second Book

The Second Book of *Daemonologie* continues the thread of harmful magic, but focuses on the malicious magic found in witches. Much like the magic found in magicians and necromancers, witch magic and the witches who used it were only concerned with doing malevolent and immoral acts. However, unlike First Book and its breakdown of elite practices of malicious magic through necromancy and magic, the Second Book of *Daemonologie* functions as a scientific analysis of the definition of a witch and her powers. As previously mentioned, witchcraft was not a foreign concept for Scottish society, but a definitive definition had not been formed. It is through this discourse the modern reader is able to grasp how James advised the Scottish population, most importantly those in judicial positions who would be conducting witch trials, to identify, view, and treat witches.

James begins the Second Book much like the First Book with the definition of the harmful magic practitioner: the witch. Largely female in gender, the female witch was “frailer” than man, easily “intrapped in these grosse snares of the Deuill,” much like Eve.¹⁴ Even though a male witch, a warlock, could be tempted into a contract with the Devil, many, if not most, witches, were female. In comparison to the magician, who was “allured by curiosity” and sought to “winne to themselues a popular honoure and estimation,” the witch worked with only the most primal of human emotions. Seen as someone who sought “desire of reuenge, or of worldly riches,” witches only wanted to

¹⁴ Stuart, 44.

“hurte men and their gudes, or what they possesse, for satisfying of their cruell minds,” and “to satisfie their greedie desires.”¹⁵ Where the magician only used magic to obtain greater knowledge, the witch was materialistic and greedy, doing whatever possible to obtain primitive desires.

It is from this greed and thirst for revenge that the Devil was able to convince potential witches into his servitude. Considered a part of the middle to lower spectrum of society, witches were seen as people who would readily give up the grace of God, enjoyed an “euill life,” and were ignorant.¹⁶ Much like the beliefs behind the Reformation, James believed that education could hamper the allure of witchcraft. However, once the Devil found his perfect “ignorant” candidate, he further enhanced their despair, “feeding them craftely in their humour” until they had nowhere else to turn except to him.¹⁷ From there, the Devil worked his way into their company and convinced the potential witch to consider his pact:

Always without the company of any other, he [the Devil] either by a voice, or in likenesse of a man inquire of them, what troubles them: and promiseth them, a suddaine and certaine waie of remedie, vpon condition on the other parte, that they follow his advise; and do such thinges as he wil require of them: their minds being prepared before hand, as I haue already spoken, they easelie agreed vnto that demande of his: and syne settes an other tryist, where they may meete againe.¹⁸

¹⁵ Stuart, 35.

¹⁶ Stuart, 32.

¹⁷ Stuart, 32.

¹⁸ Stuart, 32-33.

During this first meeting, the Devil proceeds to persuade the witch into his service, having the witch renounce God and her baptism, and places the Devil's Mark somewhere upon her body, forever marking her as his. However, unlike the magician, the witch's mark is tender and sore until her next meeting with the Devil, where he re-marks her, making the mark insensitive to pricking or touch. The Mark also acts as a continuous reminder, both in feeling and physically, of the bond between the witch and the Devil, forcing the witch to never forget the permanent bond they shared. Once the Devil finished marking the witch, he teaches the witch how she may gain her revenge against those who have wronged her through the art of malicious magic.¹⁹

The witch's actions, according to *Daemonologie*, can be divided into two parts: the actions towards themselves and the actions against others. The actions towards themselves is a simple concept, James believes. Focusing on the witch's act of renouncing her baptism, James argues that the witch is completely and utterly damning herself to Hell. To prove this, James uses the example of a church service. No longer attending God's church, the witch attends the Devil's church—a mockery of the original. Instead of listening to sermons from an ordained minister, the witch listens to the Devil from the Pulpit, where he explains better, more efficient ways of gaining revenge and material things. For every witch that attends, the Devil asks him/her to prove his/her malicious deeds, and when satisfied, has them conduct experiments on corpses that lead to the creation of powders and potions.²⁰ James further notes that the Devil often acted as

¹⁹ Stuart, 33.

²⁰ Stuart, 40-41.

God himself, quoting Scripture and skewing it in favor of himself. To conclude the fake service, the Devil allows his followers to kiss his “hinder partes” in order to show their adoration and devotion to him.²¹ This act of attending the Devil’s church was only detrimental to the witch, causing harm to her soul and negating any form of redemption God may have afforded her if she had not chosen to align herself with the Devil. Through the participation in the fake mass, the witch makes a mockery of the Church, her faith, and the religion that ordained her monarch. To participate was the ultimate betrayal to Crown and religion. By presenting the fake service this way, James shows the connection between the real and fake service, and how the Devil played on already established notions of religion in order to strengthen his connection to the witches.

In tandem with the acts against themselves, witches act maliciously towards others, creating mayhem and death whenever possible for personal gain. For witches who sought the death of a person who had wronged them, the Devil taught them the art of creating clay or wax idols, naming the idol after the wrong-doer, and roasting them slowly over open flame until the idol melted or was removed from the fire. From this, the witch was believed to have control over the wrong-doer’s health, allowing them to slowly kill their victim through sickness. When this did not satisfy a witch, the Devil taught the witch the art of poison making, showing the witch poisons that no doctor could cure.²² Since the Devil was seen as a vessel through which malicious knowledge was passed, the witch was in charge of following through with the death of the victim.

²¹ Stuart, 37.

²² Stuart, 43.

However, James makes special note that witches were not only capable of causing death, but could also tamper with natural events, such as storms, and with the spirit world. Having believed he had been on the receiving end of a tempest conjured by witches prior to the writing of *Daemonologie*, James had firsthand experience of the power witches had over the natural world. Noting that some witches could raise a storm either upon the sea or the land, James argues that not all witches could control the elements, and those who could control the natural world only could control it within prescribed boundaries placed there by God and with the help of the Devil. He also makes note that witch-summoned storms are easily discernable from the natural ones as long as the viewer pays special attention to his surroundings. Meteorites, in this regard, are not to be considered an element the witch can control, and James further limits witch-controlled elements down to those associated with wind.²³ By limiting the witch's hold on nature—a realm in which God has complete control according to Protestantism—James presents himself as a reasonable, scientific man, without disavowing his religious beliefs. In James' eyes and within Protestantism, God is all powerful and controls the natural world, but witches also could tamper with it; James had experience with that. In order for witchcraft to make sense within the bounds of scientific method, James applied weather magic within the framework he already knew: God had dominion over nature, and through extension, the Devil did as well. Through the connection of God to Devil and Devil to witch, witches were given limited power over nature.

²³ Stuart, 38.

The transportation and assembling of mass meetings of witches (Sabbaths) was a primary concern for James within *Daemonologie*. For many, the idea of a mass meeting of dozens of witches seemed improbable, especially in a time where many suspected witches lived many miles apart. However, as the testimony from North Berwick showed, witches did seem to be meeting not only with the Devil, but with other witches from outlying areas while going largely unnoticed by the general populaces of their communities. James takes five of the more popular theories—that of physically riding or sailing to the meeting area, that of being carried by the Devil to the meeting, that of transfiguration, that of soul travel, and that of dream travel—and attempts to weed out the improbable and support the most likely.

According to *Daemonologie*, the most probable mode of transportation for the witch is that of physically stealing away in the night, riding or sailing to the meeting, and returning before anyone was the wiser; however, James does ascribe validity to the Devil fetching the witch to attend meetings. Due to the meetings being relatively large and numerous witches needing to be fetched, James believed that the Devil took on his spirit/angel form in order to make quick trips. Moreover, these trips could not be over great distances due to the “violent” nature of the spirit form, often leaving the witch breathless; if the Devil travelled too far of a distance, the witch would perish from suffocation.²⁴ This would also give an explanation of the witch’s knowledge of the surrounding community’s witches, but not of those that lay beyond the acceptable transportation area.

²⁴ Stuart, 39-40.

James also argues for the idea of dream travel. Looking at past classical literature, predominantly that of the Greeks, James asserts that like Morpheus, the Devil holds the ability to conjure and subjugate witches to very vivid, lucid dreams. As a witch sleeps, the Devil creates the notion of attending a gathering of witches, placing the images of other witches in his service within this dream, and conducts a meeting that is perceived as real. From there, the Devil goes to other witches and conjures the same dream, giving the illusion that all witches travelled a great distance to attend a meeting that never really happened, except in their minds. When they awake from their dream, the Devil leaves a token of the meeting, leading them to believe that a physical meeting had taken place.²⁵

Finally, James found himself skeptical when it came to the theories of transfiguration and soul travel. Both, he believed, are highly unlikely seeing as transfiguration defies the human anatomy and soul travel is completely in the realm of God. For transfiguration, many believed that the witch, with assistance from the Devil, was able to transform herself into a small creature or fowl and cover the great distances required for a late night meeting. It also allowed her the ability to sneak into tiny areas that otherwise were off limits to people, giving her the ability to meet other witches in nooks and crannies only rodents or birds could enter. The Devil, according to James, was not able to shrink the human body into such a tiny space with little to no pain, but also was not able to do so due to it having no relation to the abilities of God.²⁶ Again, James used his established beliefs of the powers of God (and by extension, the Devil) to shape a

²⁵ Stuart, 39-40.

²⁶ Stuart, 40.

scientific theory that supported his knowledge of witchcraft. If God did not have the power to shrink a person's body, the Devil, and most certainly his witch, would not. Both the Devil and the witch were no way equal to God and if God could not perform an action, there was no possibility that either of them could. James wove his religious beliefs into a logical, scientific view, allowing his work to not discredit religion, but still present himself as learned in science.

Moreover, James argues against the belief that witches were able to release their souls from their bodies and travel to gatherings miles away, only returning to their physical form when the meeting was done. Comparing it to death, James believed that soul travel was not possible due to God having control over the realm of the dead; if the Devil was able to release and return souls to their bodies, it would be a trespass on God. Although the Devil is seen as the antithesis of God, the Devil does not hold power over death.²⁷

Throughout the Second Book, James looks at a myriad of different aspects of the creation and actions of a witch. Unlike other harmful magic users, the witch is often controlled by greed and materialistic desires for which the upper class magician or necromancer had no need. Through her desire, the Devil could easily corrupt the witch, enslaving her to do his bidding under the guise of helping her achieve her material wants. By enlisting into his services, the witch renounced her bond with God and pledged complete and utter allegiance to the Devil. Through this pact with the Devil, the witch was able to control things (the weather, sickness, etc.) that other humans could not.

²⁷ Stuart, 40-41.

However, James does refute many claims, especially in the case of witch transportation, that some might have deemed true. By doing so, James presents himself as a learned man—both in the realms of religion and science. Using Protestantism as his basic framework, James builds the witchcraft identity around known facts: the abilities of God. Anything outside these facts, according to his scientific inquiry, would be highly improbable. Working logically through each claim, James supports or denies each individually, taking special care to provide evidence in each case. Through this process, James lends credibility to his logic, as well as adding his own personal experiences—such as citing the use of witches using storms/weather modification and the Devil’s Mark—to strengthen his case against witches. By demonstrating that he is able to distinguish between the fanciful and factual, James asserts himself as an expert in identifying witches.

Third Book

The Third Book of *Daemonologie*, unlike the previous two, looks at a broad spectrum of the supernatural. Not limiting himself to witches and magicians, James introduced his theories on the four differing types of spirits that could occur naturally or by summoning: Spectra, possessive Spirits, Incubi/Succubi, and Fairies. More concerned with the natural occurrence of these spirits, James did not dismiss the fact that many of these types of spirits could be summoned by a witch. The heart of his conclusion, however, is his detailed analysis of the trial and punishment of witches. Reading like an

instruction manual on who to punish and how, the conclusion of *Daemonologie* laid the groundwork for many witch trials to come.

The Spectra, or the haunting spirit, was seen as the least offensive of the four spirits. Attaching themselves to a solitary place, the Spectra very rarely made appearances in crowded areas or to more than a handful of people at a time due to the limitations God has placed upon them. Due to their affiliation with the Devil, Spectra could inhabit a dead body for short spans of time or enter into an airy, spirit form that granted them access to any and all houses. For inhabiting a body, the Spectra, or Wraith, could select any body that it deems satisfactory, even those that had no association with the Devil. From there, the Wraith approached “ignorant Christians”²⁸ and attempted to convince them that they were a good spirit coming to warn them of an impending death. Once convinced, the Wraith used their trust to corrupt their religious beliefs and sway them in favor of the Devil.

As a spirit, the Spectra’s sole purpose was to create turmoil within the household and bring chaos to the person or people it was haunting. Much like stereotypical ghosts seen in modern day movies and television shows, the Spectra was primarily concerned with frightening and tormenting. Taking the shape of “horrible formes,” Spectra did not have to be linked to a particular place or person; in fact, the Spectra could have no personal tie to the place or person they were haunting.²⁹ To banish the Spectra and the Wraith, James is adamant that “ardent prayer to God” both in the location in which the

²⁸ Stuart, 61.

²⁹ Stuart, 57.

spirit is haunting them and at church and “purging of themselves by amendment of life from such sinnes, as haue procured that extraordinarie plague” is the only courses by which to get rid of Spectra.³⁰

The second of *Daemonologie*'s spirits were the ones that actively possess a person; however, unlike the other spirits, this spirit, with the help and control of the Devil, is sent by God. Used as a means to either punish a person for “greeuous offences” or to test the most righteous of their faith, the possessive spirit, considered both wicked and damned, sets about its task by either outwardly stalking its victim or internally possessing them.³¹ Regardless of its method, the possessive spirit situated itself within a person's life and attempted to corrupt his/her belief in God by tormenting them through incurable sickness or other egregious means.³² Unlike the Spectra or Wraith, the possessive spirit's main goal was not to turn its victim towards the Devil, but to send its victim further into the embrace of God. It is through these means that God tests his creations, weeding out the unworthy and elevating those who have true faith in him.

James' third category of spirits deals with the sexual relationships between spirits and mortals. Stating that the gender of spirits is fluid, James divides these spirits into categories: Incubi (male) and Succubi (female). Depending on the gender of the human, the spirit takes the opposite form, becoming flesh and blood in order to interact with the victim. Regardless of the spirit's gender choice, its main goal is to have intercourse with

³⁰ Stuart, 60.

³¹ Stuart, 63.

³² Stuart, 63.

its quarry in hopes of corrupting the mortal's soul and forcing him/her from God's grace. Much of this interaction is while the human is asleep, but often times the spirit would interact socially with its target prior to intercourse. Noting that most spirits choose to harass or abuse females due to women being "more frailer then man in, so it is easier to be intrapped in their grosse snares,"³³ much of James' discourse is directed at the relationships between mortal women and Incubi. As Incubi, the spirit has two options with which to sexually abuse his victim: through the commandeering of a dead body or by commandeering "cold" sperm from a dead body.³⁴ In both cases, women are often unaware until they begin to show pregnancy. Using the example of a nunnery—already established as a morally corrupt institution during the Reformation—that had been infiltrated by Incubi, James notes that many of the nuns did not know that they had relationships with Incubi until they began to show a pregnancy bump. At this time, James notes that since the spirit has no real form, gender, or living body, pregnancy by spirit was impossible; it was, however, possible for the spirit to plant "stockes, stones, or some monstrous barne brought from some other place" into a woman to give birth to.³⁵ Moreover, witches were not excluded from relationships with spirits, James notes. Many witches, in order to prove their loyalty to the Devil, entered into sexual relationships with Incubi, while others were given to Incubi as punishment for disobeying the Devil. James attempts to dissuade his readers from completely fearing Incubi and Succubi, however,

³³ Stuart, 44.

³⁴ Stuart, 67.

³⁵ Stuart, 68.

by noting that many Incubi and Succubi were limited to the areas of “Lap-land, and Finland, or in our North Iles of Orkney and Schet-and” where the “greatest ignorance and barbaritie” could be found.³⁶

Through this, James illustrates not only the gender biases against women, but also the biases against the people of the North. For both, stereotypes played heavily in James’ assessment of the potential of Incubi/Succubi involvement. Furthering this, James makes a connection with knowledge and social class: those of lower status or without the ability or time to properly learn were more susceptible to the Devil’s charms. Necromancers and magicians would not fall under the sway of Incubi/Succubi because they were learned *men*. Women and uncivilized Northerners, on the other hand, were ignorant and could easily be fooled or ordered into having sex with demons and giving birth to monstrosities.

The fourth and final spirit *Daemonologie* analyzes is the “Phairie” or Fay/Fairies, in modern English spellings. Fairies were not an uncommon spirit in Scotland, as James notes, but their relationships with witches proved especially vexing for James. Taken from their homes to a mystical, utopian land ruled over by a King or Queen of Fairies, the witch would be introduced to a bright, colorful world where there was unlimited food, drink, and merriment. While there, the Fairy court told the witch secrets their Earthen community members held and who amongst the community would soon perish. Once finished with the court, the witch would be sent home with a token, most likely a pebble or other small trinket, that would forever remind them of their time at the Fairy court.³⁷

³⁶ Stuart, 69.

³⁷ Stuart, 74-75.

For many witches placed upon trial, their interaction with the Fairy court is a dominant theme in their confessions; however, James questions the validity of whether or not these interactions ever took place. Referring the reader back to his assessment of witch transportation—especially the theory that the Devil implanted thoughts of mass meetings while the witch was asleep, James argues that the Fairy world was simply a deceiving illusion that the Devil purposefully placed within a witch’s mind.³⁸ Any other discussion about the fae outside of their interactions with witches, James believes, is best suited for other works outside of *Daemonologie* due to the fae being more prone to inhabit the countryside where uneducated people lived. Through this, James limits the importance of the fae (and the people of the countryside), and continues to stress the dangers witches posed towards populated communities.

Finally, in conclusion to *Daemonologie*, James proposes the ideal ways in which to discover, try, and punish suspected witches. Using the last chapter as almost a step-by-step manual, James argues that no witch should be allowed to live and, by following his advice, no witch *would* live. Using the “law of God” as the primary reasoning behind finding and punishing witches, James and *Daemonologie* establish the groundwork for the practices used in later witch trials.

The discovery and trial of witches, to James, seems to have been an open process in which anyone could partake. The act of malicious, harmful witchcraft was often times detected by those closest to the witch or those who had received her ire in the past. Not limited to age, class, or gender, witches could be anyone within a community and no

³⁸ Stuart, 74-75.

exception could be made when they had been discovered. This “no-exception” policy also went for those who frequented witches, the “consulters, trusters in, ouer-seers, interteiners or sturrers vp of these craftes-folkes,” for they too were just as guilty of witchcraft as those who practiced it.³⁹ Seen as not only treason against God, but also “a mater of treason against the Prince [King],” those who supported witches, witchcraft, witches deserved harsh punishment.⁴⁰

Once found, the witch, according to James, could not be swiftly executed without evidence and a trial proclaiming her guilt. The evidence against a witch was both collected from those around her—her community—as well as from her own testimony and actions. Witness statements and proofs were to be considered the most reliable in court for the witnesses had no reason to lie about a witch. Furthermore, the Devil could never borrow the likeness of a person who was indeed innocent because he would not have had consent to do so and God would never permit the usage of an innocent’s image:

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 the vile defection.⁴¹

Only those guilty of witchcraft would have individuals to make witness remarks, and only those who were guilty would have evidence against them.

³⁹ Stuart, 78.

⁴⁰ Stuart, 79.

⁴¹ Stuart, 79.

Even though witness statements were damning to witches, James also proposes to find physical evidence on the witch. The Devil's Mark, which he had previously introduced in an earlier book, was key in providing evidence towards a witch's guilt. Invasive searches for the Mark would be required and, once found, extensive testing would have to be done to prove it insensitive to pricking or touch.⁴² If a Mark could not be found or further evidence needed, James suggests for the witch to handle the dead corpse of the person she supposedly cursed to death. Noting that water had been appointed by God as a secret sign of a witch's guilt, James explains that if water or blood gushed from the dead body while the witch was handling it, God was providing evidence of the witch's guilt because the witch had "shaken off the sacred Water of Baptisme and wilfullie refused the benefite thereof."⁴³ Furthering this, during the interrogation process (in which James recommends threats and torture), if a witch was to shed tears, that it was to be ignored because women "shed teares at every light occasion when they will" and, much like a crocodile, it was fake.⁴⁴

Once the evidence was collected, James recommended a swift and harsh trial against the accused witch. Although James warns judges against unjust punishments, he also states that any witch that went untried and unpunishment was an act against God:

The Prince or Magistrate... may continue the punishing of them such a certaine space as he thinks conuvenient: But in the end to spare the life, and not to strike

⁴² Stuart, 81.

⁴³ Stuart, 81.

⁴⁴ Stuart, 81.

when God bids strikem, and so seuerelie punish in so odious a fault & treason against God, it is not only vnlawful, but doubtlesses no less sinne...⁴⁵

Found guilty of her crimes, the witch, according to James, was to be sentenced to death.

Here too James has recommendations on how a witch should be executed. Agreeing with the law of God, a witch not only acted out treason against God, but also against the King.

For this, the punishment would be two-fold: strangulation for the high treason against the King and burning at the stake for being a heretic.⁴⁶

In practice, local trials followed closely to James' prescribed model. For most of the witches tried at the local level, the trial consisted of several stages. First, she was identified by her fellow peers. Much like the recommendations of James, the community brought forth the accused witch based on her past misdeeds or rumored magical practices. Once arrested, the witch was placed in a secure location—most likely the tollbooth since jail cells were uncommon in smaller townships—to await her trial. Unfortunately, the time between initial arrest and trial often was drawn out as the town leaders attempted to gain the needed funding from the kirk to try the witch. During this time, the witch would be subject to numerous forms of torture in order to garner a confession. For some, confession was the immediate solution in ending the torture; for others, however, months would go by until they confessed. Regardless, once funding and approval came from the kirk, remaining evidence would be gathered—statements from witnesses, mostly—and the witch would be brought before the local authorities for sentencing. These trials lasted as little as a day. If found guilty, the witch was scheduled for execution. For mass outbreaks,

⁴⁵ Stuart, 78.

⁴⁶ Stuart, 78-81.

witches for the same locality shared both trial and execution dates. Brought to the local hill, the witch was strangled to death and her body promptly tied to a stake and burnt.

Through *Daemonologie*, King James presents himself as a man who is not only highly educated on the subject of witchcraft, but also of a man of faith. Navigating the thin line of religion and science, James portrays himself as someone who can, and is, a master of both. Without discrediting religion, James provides a scientific argument and reasoned evidence for the reality of witches. At a time where it was important for a monarch to show an awareness of social and political aptitude, James wanted to come across as a well-versed, educated king.

Conclusion

For those who participated in the Scottish witch trials, witchcraft was a serious matter and was only further supported and disseminated by King James and *Daemonologie*. In a time where the idea of a Scottish witch was unfamiliar, *Daemonologie* filled a void. Giving detailed instructions on most things, *Daemonologie* was the authoritative writing on Scottish witchcraft—both in its scope as well as its class status of its author. For local authorities who were concerned with the witch epidemic, *Daemonologie* would have been the treatise to turn to for guidance.

Daemonologie is, by far, one of the most insightful and illuminating pieces of literature to come from not only a monarch, but also from a time when Scottish witch trials had begun to take hold. Using his first-hand experience, James wrote a document that looked at almost every angle in which the supernatural, and especially witches, could

impact the lives of everyone in Scotland. Through *Daemonologie*, James separated harmful magic into various categories, and defined each category based on the relationship they had with the Devil. Making the Devil, his Mark and his Pact, central to malicious magic usage, James created a standardized Scottish ideal of witchcraft that would become popular amongst all social classes. By presenting himself as the leading authority on witches, James puts himself at the forefront of any witch discussion that would have been happening in Scotland.

It is through *Daemonologie* that early modern readers were able to have a clear definition of the witch. Looking at how a witch fit into society, the effects a witch had on a community, the ways in which she interacted with God and the Devil, how she interacted with other supernatural forces, and how she could be punished for her misdeeds, James left no question about the heinousness of a witch. He also cements his notions previously introduced in North Berwick of the interconnectedness a witch has both with the treason against God and the treason against Crown. It is through *Daemonologie* that the early modern readers were advised by their King to do whatever was necessary to protect their community, their country, and their religion from not only witches, but also from the very Devil himself.

CHAPTER IV

INTERACTIVE MAP (<http://zombie-bunnies.net/thesis/>)

Between 1590 to 1635, over 900 named persons were accused and placed on trial for witchcraft. Throughout these 45 years, three major witch panics spread across Scotland: the 1590-1591 North Berwick trials that entered Scotland into the global hunting craze, the 1597 panic that was triggered almost directly by the publishing of King James' *Daemonologie*, and the 1630s witch panic that was one of the largest witch hunts Scotland had ever seen. The interactive map that accompanies this thesis looks into the details of each accused witch and how her trial is reflective of the procedures laid out in *Daemonologie*.

Interactive Map

Each node on the map represents a settlement/town that had documented one or more accused witch. If more than one witch was found within a town, the pop-up viewer that accompanies each node will display the various records for that settlement. The information used in this map is provided mainly by the "Survey of Scottish Witchcraft Database" sponsored by The University of Edinburgh and created by Julian Goodare, Louise Yeoman, Lauren Martin, and Joyce Miller. Collecting over 4,000 records of accused witches from 1563 to 1736, the database provides extensive documentation for each of the five major witch hunts, plus many of the smaller outbreaks that happened in-

between. To authenticate records and provide additional details, *A Source-Book of Scottish Witchcraft* by Christina Larner supplied supplementary material in the way of brief accounts and basic information (name, dates, locations, etc.) about the accused witches.

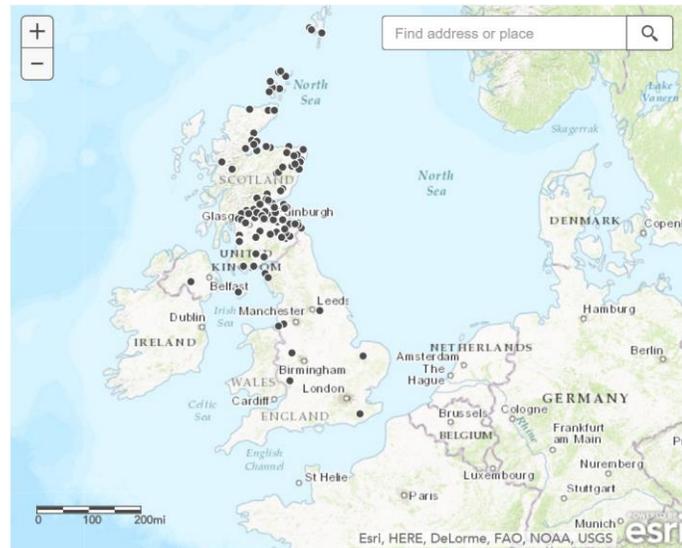


Figure 1: Map of Scottish Witch Trials

Through these two sources, I was able to create a database in Microsoft Excel that could operate a digital map. In order for the map to read the information, I constructed eighteen categories (start date of trial, end date of trial, settlement, county, commissioning body, prosecutors, witches' meetings, folk notes, ritual objects, calendar customs, characterizations, non-natural beings, demonic pacts, diseases/illnesses, other witches, other charges, sentence, and trial notes) based on witch trial information that I wanted to highlight within the map; however, not every witch had available information for each category. Since there were over 900 witches tried throughout the three witch

hunts this study examines, each witch was assigned a unique identification number to keep them separate from one another. Witches listed within the sources without a name were removed from the database due to the inability to double check references.

It is through this map that we are able to see the potential influences King James and *Daemonologie* had on witchcraft trials. Prior to the publishing of *Daemonologie*, during the North Berwick Trials, eighty-five known witches were tried. Mostly Central trials, these eighty-five witches were more than likely prosecuted under the supervision of the King. The five years preceding the North Berwick Trials were relatively quiet with only seventeen witches tried; however, within the year in which *Daemonologie* was published (1597), over a hundred witches were tried in local courts. From there, witch trials rapidly spread throughout Scotland and account for the bulk of both trials and executions listed within the map.

Categories

The **start and end date of trials** were interesting and important aspects in constructing the database. Since local and court judicial bodies did not have a set method in recording trials, dates for beginnings of trials are a bit problematic. For many witches, the start date of their trial is an unknown. In contrast, some witches have dates listed months previous to the end of their trials, which could be the date they were arrested and imprisoned, or start dates that are the same day as the end of their trial. Some records, however, are difficult to discern when an official trial began, even though they have a

listed date. In cases of some local courts, the listed start date of the trial was the beginning of when a witch first came to the attention of her community and not of an official inquiry. For example, Marion McAlester of Tain's local trial supposedly began in 1577 and ended in 1590; however, this could be the start date of her career as a witch, and not the beginning of her trial. Since holding a witch under arrest was a pricey affair, it is unlikely that the village of Tain could afford to hold her for thirteen years while a trial was conducted.

Regardless of how a court recorded the beginning of a trial, the end date of a trial spoke volumes of how witches were tried. For some, the start and end date of their trial were identical, demonstrating the brevity with which trials were conducted. The process of gathering incriminating evidence against a witch (waiting for funding, torture, interviewing witnesses and witches) may take weeks or months to conclude, but the actual trial process of convicting a witch was a quick event, especially when multiple witches were being tried. With over 300 witches convicted on the same day listed as their trial start date, we can assume the trial consisted of little more than a presentation of evidence and a sentence for the accused.

The **settlement and county** that a witch resided in often was the area in which the witch was tried. As the main method of documenting witches within this study, the location of each witch is the most important aspect for the map. The records of every witch had some sort of defined location, either at the local level or at the county, allowing for easy groupings and trend analysis. If the witch was to be tried by a local court, the

settlement category shows the location of where the trial took place, more often than not in the very town or village that she lived. More prolific trials—those involving nobles or notables—often were elevated to a higher local/county courts or to the royal court. The location of the witch or witches gives the sense to isolated outbreaks, like the eleven witches that were tried in Cousland in 1630, or recurring panics, like forty-two witches that were tried throughout 1597 and the 1630s in Aberdeen. It also provides the ability to physically see the clusters of where witches were the most prominent over the forty-five years. Even though the tracking of witch outbreaks is not the main purpose of this study, the visual representation location of witches shows is interesting, nonetheless.

The **commissioning body** category and the prosecutors' category notes the judicial body, often times with given names, that oversaw the arraignment of the witch or witches. In most cases, where information was present, I have placed each witch into one of three categories: church, local, or central. The church courts, which consisted of the minister acting as judge, were not as popular as the local or central courts—with only two documented cases of trying accused witches (Alisoun Baillie and Marion Anderson)—and seemed to be less “efficient” in obtaining a conviction: in both cases, the accused witches' verdicts were dismissed with a warning. Neither of these cases seemed to be of high profile (both women were of semi-low social status) and their alleged crimes were minor in comparison to other witch crimes. The unpopularity of church courts could be tied to King James' insistence of limiting church authority within governmental issues, or

it could be for some other unknown reason. Regardless, church courts saw very little in the way of trying accused witches.

Local commissioning bodies were the most prominent method in trying a witch, with over 650 of the witches being tried by local courts. Consisting of the town's council, wealthy citizens, or prominent members of the town's society, the local courts were the lowest judicial form, but most active, of prosecuting witches. It is through the local courts that all evidence was submitted and weighed, and it was through the local courts that witches found either freedom or execution.

It was also through the local courts that King James' belief for identifying, trying and executing witches was spread. Even though many of the local trials were not well documented, those that do show James' witch ideology. In the 1597 case of Margret Reauch of Woodfeidhill, Reauch was accused of maleficium, unorthodox religious practices, sexual misconduct, and associating with the Devil. Much like how *Daemonologie* lays out, Reauch confessed (under presumed torture) that the Devil had appeared in her bed, had sexual intercourse with her, and had gifted her the ability to perform witchcraft in order to achieve materialistic gains. Through this possession of power, Reauch went to the house of the man who had slighted her, and hugged the corners of the man's house at dawn; he later took ill and died. Reauch's narrative fits the definition of a witch set forth by *Daemonologie*: a woman falls into the entrapment of the Devil, has sex with him to bind herself to him as his servant in order to obtain magical power, and uses said power for materialistic advantages and to punish those who had

supposedly slighted her. It is only through the watchful diligence of those around her did Reauch's witchcraft was brought forth to the court and she was "justly" tried.¹

Moreover, the central courts followed the tenets that *Daemonologie* laid out. Overseen by those who had been given royal authority, central court cases are often times highly documented with prominent victims or accused witches. Brought before the royal court either by recommendation from local court officials or by the prolific nature of the case, central court cases made up nearly 20%, or 180 cases, of the total 900 looked at in this study. Much like local trials, central trials revolved around accusations, testimony, and a sentence. In the case of against widow Margaret Burges, age fifty, of Cramond, the definition of a witch provided by *Daemonologie* and the steps with which to try her are abundantly apparent. Originally accused at the local level of being a witch and bewitching others, Burges countered the suit with a one of her own, accusing those against her of slander. Convinced they (the slanderers) were not wrong, they petitioned the central court to hear their case, which the central court accepted. Throughout the central trial, the interrogators, through the use of pricking, gained a confession of guilt not only for witchcraft, but also for sexual deviance (Burges had allegedly seduced her thirteen-year-old servant girl in numerous ways) and for having an allegiance with the Devil (she was found with a Devil's Mark on her leg, following *Daemonologie's* instructions on finding one). Finding her guilty of her crimes, Burges was taken to Castle

¹ "The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft."

Hill, just outside of Edinburgh Castle, strangled for treason against the King, and burnt for heresy. Many others (William Coke—accused of raising storms, Janet Boyd—accused of receiving healing powers from the Devil, and Jon Neill—accused of attempting to murder Sir George Home by using an enchanted dead bird and a dead man’s hand, to name a few) followed similar patterns in central court trials.² Without the aid of King James and *Daemonologie*, none of the witches would have been strangled before their burning, nor would the witch be subject to torture or linkage to the Devil.

The **characterization** and **other charges** categories look at the overarching themes of witch trials. Some trials had similar attributes to other trials, even though they may be separated by hundreds of miles or several years. I created sixteen categories for characterization—Local Panic, Demonic, Maleficium, Folk Healing, Implicated by Another Witch, Unorthodox Religious Practices, Treason, Consulting a Known Witch, Neighborhood Dispute, Charming, Enchantment/Bewitchment, Political Motive, Midwifery, White Magic, Fairies, and Property Motive—and placed each witch within one or more category, depending on the known facts presented by the court. If not enough information was given to discern what category to place the witch in, I left it blank. Combined with the “other charges” category—charges that were not related to witchcraft/charges that were minor in comparison to witchcraft—Scottish witches were more often than not implicated by another witch (approximately 225 times) and accused of working with the Devil (approximately 125 times).

² “The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft.”

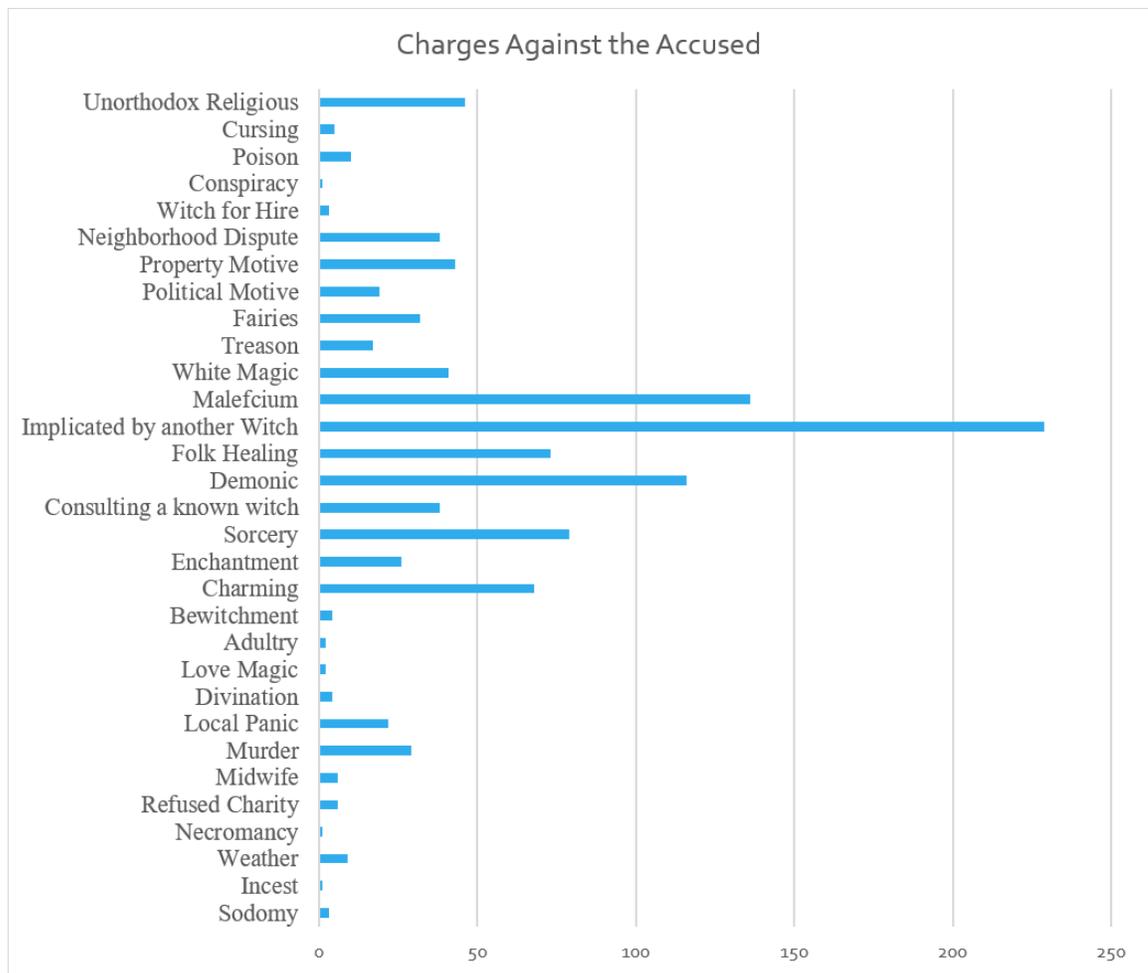


Figure 2: Charges Against the Accused

The categories related to assorted witchcraft practices –witches’ meetings, ritual objects, calendar customs, and diseases/illnesses–look at how a witch conducted her business of witchcraft. For **witches’ meeting**, 120 witches confessed to meeting others at various locations, but for many, it was in a neighbor’s yard or near some body of water. Many of the recorded witches’ meetings had either the Devil or some semblance of the Devil present, and many, like the cases against Issobell Richie or Alexander Hammiltoun,

involved illicit dancing or sex. Other meetings revolved around casting group spells in order to destroy or obtain goods. In the case of Marion Hardie and six other witches, witch meetings were used in order to destroy boats (or one particular boat, the sources are not necessarily clear on the number) and their crew before they could anchor in the harbor.

In the case of Marion Hardie, the use of **ritual objects** was key to successful witchcraft spells. For many witches, the use of an inanimate object, such as twine, stones, corpses, salt, or blood, or living cats, was fundamental in enacting specific curses or spells. Not all witches used ritual objects, but those who did used them under the assumption that they needed the objects in order to secure a certain outcome. For the North Berwick witches, the use of a cat and a corpse's finger joints was the most important part of summoning a storm to sink the royal ships. For Marion Hardie, the use of stones found along the shoreline was how her group was able to raise a storm to stop a ship(s) from anchoring. Each witch or grouping of witches put special emphasis on certain objects, and through those objects, they were able to cast certain spells. However, much like in *Daemonologie*, witches, regardless of the objects they used, were limited in the power, particularly harnessing natural power, in the spells they could cast.

Calendar customs were not as important as what I had originally thought when I initially started the database, but interesting nonetheless. Out of the forty-five years that this study looks at, only fifty-six of the trials mention an important date or holiday that was associated with witchcraft practices. Of those fifty-six, thirty-seven of the trials list

Halloween, or All Hallows' Eve, as the main holiday. Because Halloween had direct belief ties to demons, spirits, and the Devil, it seems only natural that Halloween would be the main holiday in which witches conducted spells and met other witches as well as the Devil.

The **diseases/illnesses** category is a broad category that looks at the various ways in which a witch cast, spread, or used disease/illness to further her gains. Human illness and death and animal illness and death were amongst the most popular method, while attempting to remove curses that caused illness was one the other side of the spectrum. Each of these methods usually provided the witch with some monetary funds or personal gain. Poisoning was a popular way in which a witch "cast" an illness or disease, reflecting back on King James' belief that poisoning was taught to witches by the Devil as a basic practice. Christen Michell's case illustrates that: After attending a meeting with the Devil who was depicted as a little, crippled man and being branded by the Devil's Mark on the back of her right hand, Michell was able to create lethal poisons. Going back to her family, Michell laced her son's and daughter-in-law's drinks with poison, and killed them. Through her obtained poison-making knowledge granted to her by the Devil, Michell fit the definition of a witch that King James constructed in *Daemonologie*.

The **non-natural beings** and **demonic pacts** sections look at the interactions made between a witch and a supernatural being, most likely a demon or the Devil. Since many cases either have some sort of supernatural being (a crippled old man, a black man, an animal devil, the Devil, or Fairies, to name a select few) linked to how a witch gained

her powers, it was important to include the types of supernatural beings and their relationship to a demonic pact. The demonic pact, however, seemed to follow several set guidelines, ones that were remarkably familiar to what *Daemonologie* had set. It was a common refrain amongst all cases that cite demonic pacts that the Devil (or some form of him) appeared, had the witch renounce her baptism and pledge her body and soul to the Devil's services. Some witches were granted the Devil's Mark (most commonly, it seems, on the back of their hands) while others were granted a new name, or an alias. Most witches made reference to some sort of sexual act they or another witch had to perform in order to seal the pact. *Daemonologie* takes great pains to show the connection between the Devil and a witch—the fake mass, renouncing of God, selling her soul and body into servitude, etc.—and it seems that many witches, within their confessions, follow similar patterns.

The **folk notes**, if applicable, present a more narrative style of information about the witch. Since many court cases have abundant detail about the accusations of a witch that do not fit into any other category or tell more of a story that the other categories do not necessarily allow, these narratives are placed in the folk notes. More often than not, the folk notes depict how the witch conducted business and usually the reason she was brought before authorities for questioning. For example, other categories tell of the ritual objects Jonat Leisk used (feathers from a goose, wax likenesses, and thread) and had committed murder, but the folk notes flush out the story a bit more: Jonat Leisk, set on revenge against a social slight by both her neighbors and her sister, cursed her sister's

geese to death by plucking 3 feathers from each and blowing the feathers out of her hand, causing the geese to instantly die. She also crafted a wax picture of one of her neighbors and hung the picture over a fire to slowly melt; the neighbor took violently ill with a burning fever and cold sweats that nobody could cure.³ The folk notes put into context the motivations and stories behind the other categories' entries.

Scottish witches had a tendency to accuse others of witchcraft within their confessions, creating a vast web of interlinking accusations and numerous witches spread across several villages and towns. If another witch or witches were mentioned in a trial, I added them to the **other witches** category in hopes of showing how arresting/accusing one witch led to a plethora of other witches being arrested and tried. It also shows the connectedness of social interactions amongst neighbors and townships, and how readily (with the right amount of torture) witches were in naming others.

³ "The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft."

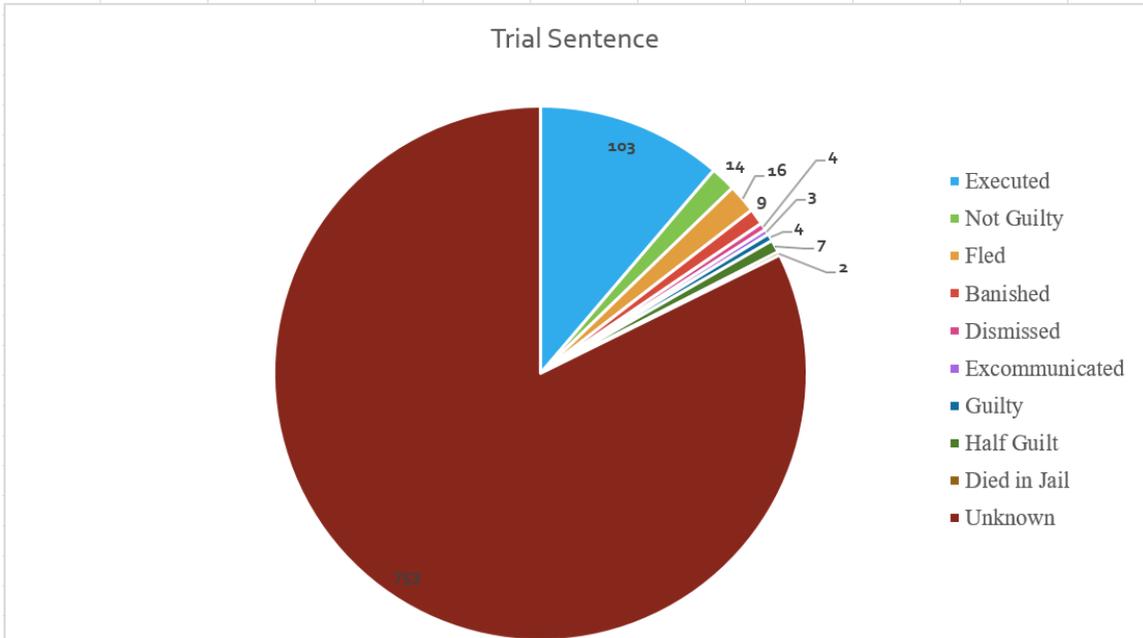


Figure 3: Trial Sentence

Finally, the **sentencing** category looks at the final steps took by the courts to prosecute a witch. For many named witches, the outcomes of their trials remain unknown. This could be for a variety of reasons: some were lucky enough to escape, others were transferred to other courts or were executed without notation of their fates, but for those with more complete records, their final verdict for the charge of witchcraft was not a pleasant one. Many convicted witches were brought to the town center or hill top, presented to the crowd of spectators, and strangled/hung until dead for their crimes against the Crown. Once dead, the witch's body would, like many graphic medieval images depict, be either tossed unceremoniously into a raging fire, or strapped to a large pike in the middle of a bonfire where it would be burned to ashes for its treason against God.

A few witches were able to escape the death penalty at the conclusion of their trial. The lucky few were found not guilty (thanks to having the money to support a defense or enough communal support to battle witchcraft accusations) or only "half guilty" (the jury found the witch guilty of her crimes, but did not wish to put her to death, so other punishment was doled out instead). A select few had their cases completely dismissed after insufficient evidence had been provided, while others, seeing that their fates would end swiftly at an end of a rope, escaped their cells and fled from their villages.

Even though none of the trials cite *Daemonologie* as the motivating factor behind trial procedures and outcomes, the uniformity throughout the trials, especially over the expanse of Scotland, is difficult to ignore. The trial and execution process found in the final book of *Daemonologie* matches the procedures found in many of the Central court cases almost perfectly. After the publication of *Daemonologie* in 1597, witch accusations, trials, and executions became rapidly more regular within Scotland, and followed the procedure James proscribed. Witches were brought before the judicial body overseeing their case and were found either guilty or not. For the witches that had complete records, many of them were found guilty. As James recommends, they were strangled because of the treason they had committed against the King and burnt for the heresy they had conducted against the Church. Since many of the witches, mostly tried in local courts, do not have complete records, we can only assume that their trials led to their executions or

fled before their trials could have been completed, if the trend of executions to not guilty verdicts of complete trial records are any indication.

Conclusion

After the conclusion of the 1630s witch hunt, Scotland faced two more large scale witch hunts: the witch hunt of 1649-50 and the witch hunt of 1661-62. Combined together, these two witch hunts had over 1,500 named witches placed on trial for the crime of witchcraft. At the conclusion of the witch panics, more than 2,400 witches were accused and tried of malicious witchcraft in Scotland. Much like those witches represented in this thesis as well as on the digital map, later witch hunt witches faced much of the same accusations: pacts with the Devil, treason, maleficium, and unorthodox religious practices. Following closely to the guidelines laid out by King James in *Daemonologie*, local and central courts, throughout the five major witch outbreaks, adhered to the process of identifying, trying, and convicting accused Scottish witches.

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