

# INVERSION, MISRULE AND THE MEANING OF WITCHCRAFT

## I

WE NO LONGER READILY UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE OF EARLY MODERN witchcraft beliefs. Demonological classics like *Malleus maleficarum* (1486-7) or Jean Bodin's *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (1580) seem to reveal only an arcane wisdom. It is not apparent what criteria of rationality are involved, nor how the exegesis of authorities or use of evidence support the required burden of proof. Since individual steps in the argument are difficult to construe, its overall configuration often remains impenetrable. And the accounts given by other authorities like Nicolas Rémy and Pierre De Lancre of the ritual practices of witches and demons, notably those associated with the sabbat, appear sensational and absurd. Faced with such refractory meanings, some past commentators have tried to put Renaissance demonology to the test of empirical verification by asking if it described, albeit in exaggerated or symbolic form, the actual activities of real agents. Agreed (largely) that it did not, that there were no witches in fact, they turned with relief to sceptics like Johan Wier who, even at the height of prosecutions, cast doubt on the reality of witchcraft phenomena by offering non-magical theories of causation. And with intimations of rationalism of this sort historians have continued to feel an intellectual affinity.<sup>1</sup> A second popular approach has been the explanation of learned witchcraft beliefs in terms of social and socio-psychological determinants, especially those thought to be at work in the designation of criminal actions or the persecution of demonized "out-groups". This too has had the advantage of bypassing the problem of their meaning by reducing them to epiphenomena; tracing them, for instance, to the periodic social need to relocate moral and cultural boundaries by means of accusations of deviance,<sup>2</sup> or, again, to the

<sup>1</sup> Two surveys of witchcraft studies are H. C. Erik Midelfort, "Recent Witch Hunting Research, or Where Do We Go from Here?", *Papers Bibliog. Soc. America*, lxii (1968), pp. 373-420; E. W. Monter, "The Historiography of European Witchcraft: Progress and Prospects", *Jl. Interdisciplinary Hist.*, ii (1971-2), pp. 435-51. For a recent trenchant estimation of the intellectual quality of demonological arguments, see S. Anglo, "Melancholia and Witchcraft: The Debate between Wier, Bodin and Scot", in A. Gerlo (ed.), *Folie et déraison à la Renaissance* (Brussels, 1976), pp. 209-22.

<sup>2</sup> Applications of labelling theory to early modern witchcraft include K. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York, 1966); E. P. Currie, "The Control of Witchcraft in Renaissance Europe", in D. Black and M. Mileski (eds.), *The Social Organization of Law* (London, 1973), pp. 344-67.

neuroses which are said to accompany the repression of erotic or irreligious impulses in devout minds.<sup>3</sup>

Yet there is surely *prima facie* reluctance to dismiss Bodin as a victim of obscurantism or delusion, let alone regard a whole tradition of discursive argument, successfully sustained for nearly two hundred years, as essentially irrational.<sup>4</sup> What is at stake are the criteria for interpreting a past world of thought without recourse to anachronism or reductionism, an issue recently debated by historians of ideas in a number of analogous inquiries. In the case of the history of political theory Quentin Skinner has persuasively defended a model of explanation in which the claim (stemming from Collingwood) that meaningful action can be sufficiently accounted for in terms of agents' intentions is complemented by J. L. Austin's stress on the performative quality of utterances. Since its explanatory force depends on seeing the point of a specific textual speech act for the author, Skinner also emphasizes the Wittgensteinian principle that what it makes sense for anyone to say is relative to a linguistic context or "language game". In political theorizing the intention to persuade presupposes such a framework of shared meanings in which certain concepts and rules for applying them in argument have a conventional life. It is these changing conventions of discussion which pre-empt anachronistic readings by limiting the range of possible meanings which a textual utterance can be said to have. Likewise it is the criteria of sense and nonsense which they embody to which appeal must first be made before cases of apparently bizarre rationality are rejected on the grounds of incoherence.<sup>5</sup>

Such a methodology has already rescued Hobbes's *Leviathan* from a series of critical mythologies; others like it have established the internal cogency of styles of thought like those associated with divine right monarchy or millenarian politics where little sense could previously be discerned.<sup>6</sup> The implication is that if the rationale which originally in-

<sup>3</sup> N. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (London, 1975).

<sup>4</sup> A point effectively emphasized by H. R. Trevor-Roper, "The European Witch-craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", in his *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change*, 2nd edn. (London, 1972), pp. 121-2, 183-4.

<sup>5</sup> Q. Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas", *History and Theory*, viii (1969), pp. 3-53; Q. Skinner, "Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts", *New Literary Hist.*, iii (1971), pp. 393-408; Q. Skinner, "Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action", *Polit. Theory*, ii (1974), pp. 277-303.

<sup>6</sup> Q. Skinner, "The Context of Hobbes's Theory of Political Obligation", in M. Cranston and R. Peters (eds.), *Hobbes and Rousseau* (London, 1972), pp. 109-42; Q. Skinner, "Conquest and Consent: Thomas Hobbes and the Engagement Controversy", in G. E. Aylmer (ed.), *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement, 1646-1660* (London, 1972), pp. 79-98. Cf. W. H. Greenleaf, *Order, Empiricism and Politics: Two Traditions of English Political Thought, 1500-1700* (London, 1964), pp. 1-13, 58-67; W. M. Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603-1660* (London, 1969), pp. 13-15, and *passim*. A comparable case in the history of historical thought is the interpretation of Vico's *New Science*; see B. A. Haddock, "Vico: The Problem of Interpretation", *Social Research*, xliii (1976), pp. 535-52.

formed the literature of witchcraft is ever to be recovered, we must begin not by assuming some sort of mistake on the part of the authors but by locating individual texts in the linguistic framework, possibly extending far beyond demonology itself, in which they were expected to make sense as utterances of a certain kind. This would involve establishing what Skinner calls the "range of descriptions" available to writers in a demonological tradition. It might lead us into a world where the criteria for saying that something was possible or impossible or made sense or nonsense were highly idiosyncratic. But Wittgenstein's point is not that these rules may not vary between language games but that their existence is the minimum formal condition for any linguistic engagement.<sup>7</sup> Thus, if it could be shown that it did in fact make sense within such a world for scholars like Bodin and De Lancre both to accept the reality of witchcraft phenomena and attribute witches with certain ritual practices, then initial doubt about the felicity of demonological arguments would simply disappear. There would be no cause to look for an explanation of them other than that they followed recognized linguistic conventions, that they were part of what Peter Winch has called "a coherent universe of discourse".<sup>8</sup>

Doubtless the task of decoding the meaning of witchcraft texts in this way would be an enormous undertaking. In what follows I have chosen only one, albeit characteristic idiom, the stress on contrariness and inverse behaviour in demonism. Part at least of our puzzlement over this particular way of thinking and writing about witchcraft can be successfully removed by filling out the prevailing conventions of discourse, particularly political discourse, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Of central significance are those arguments considered appropriate for identifying and contrasting the key conditions of order and disorder. I want to argue that Renaissance descriptions of the nature of Satan, the character of hell and, above all, the ritual activities of witches shared a vocabulary of misrule, that they were in effect part of a language conventionally employed to establish and condemn the properties of a disorderly world.

## II

That witches did everything backwards was as much a commonplace of scholarly demonology as it has been of romantic fiction since.

<sup>7</sup> P. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy* (London, 1958), pp. 15, 21-33, 40-52, 108.

<sup>8</sup> P. Winch, "Understanding a Primitive Society", *Amer. Phil. Quart.*, i (1964), p. 309. Contrast Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, where it is a reluctance to accept the "manifestly impossible" elements in evidence for the reality of witchcraft events that sustains a view of demonology as an intellectual fantasy and leads to a search for an alternative socio-psychological causation. This appears to raise the same difficulties over an independent reality that Winch finds in the work of E. E. Evans-Pritchard.

But in this respect they were not alone. Throughout the late medieval and Renaissance period ritual inversion was a characteristic element of village folk-rites, religious and educational *ludi*, urban carnivals and court entertainments. Such festive occasions shared a calendrical licence to disorderly behaviour or "misrule" based on the temporary but complete reversal of customary priorities of status and value. One typical recurring idea was the elevation of wise folly over foolish wisdom. Another was the exchange of sex roles involved in the image of the "woman on top" or in transvestism. Clerical parodies of divine service substituted the profane for the sacred, and low for high office. Most pervasive of all were mock political authorities, the *princes des sots* or "abbeyes" or "lords of misrule" who presided over ephemeral commonwealths complete with the paraphernalia of serious kingship but dedicated to satire and clowning.<sup>9</sup> Often these various modes of topsy-turvydom were invoked simultaneously, as in the ecclesiastical Feast of Fools or the activities of the French urban confraternities, the *sociétés joyeuses*. Sometimes one relationship was explored; the street charivari in which partners in unequal or violent marriages were ridiculed by the symbolic ride backwards focused on the dangerous social and moral inversions implied when familial disorder threatened patriarchal rule.<sup>10</sup> Similarly "barring out" the master in English grammar schools has been shown to depend on assumptions about the limits of pedagogic government over pupils, especially with the onset of the vacation.<sup>11</sup> Whatever the case, however, seasonal misrule involved not simply riot or confusion but conventional styles of ritual and symbol associated with inversion — recognized forms of "uncivil rule".

It would be remarkable if no links could be established between these forms of inverted behaviour and descriptions of demonic practices, flourishing and declining as they did in the same period. Certainly there were borrowings from accounts of sabbat rituals where the world upside-down was an important theme of festival occasions at court.<sup>12</sup> Conversely the demonologist Pierre Crespet located the witches' dance in a tradition including the bacchanalian revel, early

<sup>9</sup> E. Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (London, 1935), pp. 197-217; N. Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (London, 1975), pp. 97-123, "The Reasons of Misrule", and pp. 124-51, "Women on Top"; P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978), pp. 182-91; R. Muchembled, *Culture populaire et culture des élites dans la France moderne* (Paris, 1978), pp. 173-7.

<sup>10</sup> Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, pp. 105-7, 116-21, 139; E. P. Thompson, "'Rough Music': le charivari anglais", *Annales. E.S.C.*, xxvii (1972), pp. 285-312; R. Mellinkoff, "Riding Backwards: Theme of Humiliation and Symbol of Evil", *Viator*, iv (1973), pp. 163-4; J.-C. Margolin, "Charivari et mariage ridicule au temps de la Renaissance", in J. Jacquot and E. Konigson (eds.), *Les fêtes de la Renaissance*, iii (Paris, 1975), pp. 579-601.

<sup>11</sup> K. V. Thomas, *Rule and Misrule in the Schools of Early Modern England* (Reading, 1976).

<sup>12</sup> See pp. 123-5 below.

Christian transvestism and the masquerades of the *Maschecroutte* of contemporary Lyon.<sup>13</sup> The inferior clergy of late medieval France celebrated Christmas and the New Year with burlesques which were readily attributable to God's ape — singing in dissonances, braying like asses, making indecent grimaces and contortions, repeating prayers in gibberish, censuring with puddings or smelly shoes and, above all, mocking the sermon and the mass with fatuous imitations. As late as 1645 the lay brothers of Antibes marked Innocents' Day by wearing vestments inside out, holding liturgical books upside-down and using spectacles with orange-peel in them instead of glass.<sup>14</sup> According to the social reformer Philip Stubbes, English rural practitioners of misrule encouraged in their soliciting for bread and ale what was in effect a propitiatory sacrifice to Satan as well as a profanation of the sabbath.<sup>15</sup> In France attempts were made by Jean Savaron and Claude Noiroto to link the history and etymology of popular entertainment with those of witchcraft; Savaron thought that masquerading was a form of demonic sabbat (*la feste de Satan*).<sup>16</sup> Moreover carnival devil-figures could be seen taking an important part in processions and even organizing festivities.<sup>17</sup>

But even if they shared no specific types of inversion, both festive behaviour and learned demonology were dependent on inversion itself as a formal principle. And this allows us to apply to witchcraft studies some of the questions currently being asked by historians and anthropologists about the meaning of misrule. To some extent attention has concentrated on the practical benefits accruing to a community from what is actually done at times of ritual licence. For instance it is argued that traditional institutions and values are reaffirmed by the mockery of offenders against social codes, the deflation of pretentious wisdom and overweening authority or simply the open expression of grudges borne against neighbours. In this fashion, misrule strengthens the community by symbolic or open criticism and its moderating in-

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Crespet, *Deux livres de la hayne de Sathan et malins esprits contre l'homme et de l'homme contre eux* (Paris, 1590), pp. 246-55.

<sup>14</sup> E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1903), i, pp. 317-18, cf. pp. 294, 305, 321, 325-6; Welsford, *The Fool*, pp. 200-1.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (London, 1583, S.T.C. 23376), Sigs. Mi<sup>v</sup>-Miv<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Jean Savaron, *Traité contre les masques* (Paris, 1608), pp. 3-4, 15-16; Claude Noiroto, *L'origine des masques, mommerie, bernex, et revennens es jours gras, de carnesme prenant, menex sur l'asne a rebours et charivary* (1609), in *Collection des meilleurs dissertations, notices et traités particuliers relatifs à l'histoire de France*, ed. C. Leber, 20 vols. (Paris, 1826-38), ix, pp. 35-8; cf. Nicolas Barnaud, *Le miroir des françois* (n.p., 1581), pp. 488-93, where an attack on "mascarades" and "mommeries" develops into one on witchcraft; Guillaume Paradin, *Le blason des dances* (Beaujeu, 1556), pp. 81-8.

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Le Loyer, *III livres de spectres* (Paris, 1586), pp. 228-9, quoting Ludwig Lavater, *De spectris, lemuriibus et magis* (Geneva, 1570); Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, p. 195; M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. H. Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 263-8.

fluence.<sup>18</sup> Alternatively the same carnivalesque practices have been associated with innovation and protest because they offer freedom to explore relationships potentially corrosive of existing structures and therefore not normally tolerated.<sup>19</sup> Neither of these readings is particularly helpful when applied to demonology. For although the differing social functions are largely seen as latent in the behaviour, some attribution of intentions to agents is required in each case. In the first, we would therefore be committed to something like Margaret Murray's theory that Renaissance witchcraft consisted of rites of inversion actually performed by folk worshippers of a surviving Dianic fertility cult.<sup>20</sup> And the second would involve accepting the connections which Le Roy Ladurie has claimed existed between conceptions of revolt based on a "fantasy of inversion" shared by rural peasant insurrectionists, festival fools and *witches* in southern France at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Yet the accredited historical evidence for maleficent witchcraft comes very largely from allegations or from stereotyped confessions; we therefore have few grounds for attributing witches with intentions of any kind, whether re-integrative or innovative in character.

This forces us back on a second set of issues relating to misrule, concerning the conditions which must obtain if inverted behaviour is to be seen as having not only various social-functional uses but any meaning at all as an act of inversion. The starting-point here must be the fact, emphasized many years ago by Enid Welsford and recently reiterated by Natalie Davis and Keith Thomas, that misrule necessarily presupposes the rule that it parodies. Thus the fool could only flourish, in fact or in literary imaginations, in societies where the taboos surrounding divine kingship and sacramental worship were especially rigid. The street theatre and cacophonous, "rough" music of the charivari were effective precisely because all other ceremonial occasions were solemn; while turning social or sexual status upside-down, and the laughter it provoked, only began to make sense in a world of simply polarized hierarchies.<sup>22</sup> The degree of meaningfulness of carnival misrule there-

<sup>18</sup> Thomas, *Rule and Misrule in the Schools of Early Modern England*, pp. 33-4; V. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London, 1969), pp. 166-203.

<sup>19</sup> Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, pp. 103, 122-3, 130-51. For a survey of theoretical accounts of inversion, see B. Babcock, "Introduction", in B. Babcock (ed.), *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society* (London, 1978), pp. 13-36.

<sup>20</sup> M. A. Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology* (Oxford, 1921), *passim*, esp. pp. 124-85.

<sup>21</sup> E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Les paysans du Languedoc*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1966), i, pp. 407-14.

<sup>22</sup> Welsford, *The Fool*, p. 193; Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, p. 100; Thompson, " 'Rough Music': le charivari anglais", p. 289; Thomas, *Rule and Misrule in the Schools of Early Modern England*, p. 34; K. V. Thomas, "The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England", *T.L.S.*, 21 Jan. 1977, pp. 77-81.

fore depended on the extent of familiarity with such orthodoxies. And the performance of ritual inversion was only successful if accompanied by possibly complex acts of recognition. An example from modern anthropology is McKim Marriott's failure to comprehend the Indian village festival of Holi as an actor but his subsequent understanding that its apparent disorder was "an order precisely inverse to the social and ritual principles of routine life".<sup>23</sup> Reverting to the language of use, there is the further suggestion that, simply in obliging the spectator to see the conventional world in the guise of its opposite, misrule embodies a cognitive function that, in part at least, must be essentially conservative — a restatement of the normal from a "ritual viewpoint". Stronger still is the claim that only by exploring this contrary perspective can men make themselves conceptually at home in a world of unchanging polarities.<sup>24</sup>

With these considerations in mind we can sketch the sort of linguistic context in which Renaissance accounts of the contrariness of witchcraft rituals were intended to make sense. For it is certain that what was required of both the spectator of festive misrule and the reader of demonological textbooks was formally, and perhaps even substantively, the same. The full force of an account of the sabbat such as De Lancré's, and indeed the cogency of demonological argument as a whole, depended on what might be called the sufficient conditions of the intelligibility of inverse behaviour being met. What was demanded was an act of recognition with three distinguishable elements: first, a general awareness of the logical relation of opposition, without which inversion could not even be entertained;<sup>25</sup> secondly, a familiarity with the relevant linguistic and symbolic conventions under which a specific action might be seen as one of inversion, the most important of these being the "world upside-down"; and thirdly, the grasping of just what positive rule or order was implied by any individual act of ritual witchcraft. By re-invoking these criteria we would in effect determine the range of descriptions governing the meaning of learned witchcraft beliefs.

### III

Misrule involved the exchanging of roles or qualities which were themselves opposites or could be reduced to opposites; in the first instance, therefore, its impact was relative to an understanding of what it was for (say) wisdom to be opposite to folly, male to female, or authority to subjection. To some degree, of course, such dual classifications have no *history*. Discussions of the formal oppositions holding between terms or propositions have not changed since Aristotle's *De*

<sup>23</sup> Cited by Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp. 185-6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 176, 200-1.

<sup>25</sup> Babcock (ed.), *The Reversible World*, p. 27.



*interpretatione*, and there is an obvious sense in which all thinking and acting depend on the analytical relationship between judgements of opposition. Nevertheless some intellectual movements have positively encouraged this sort of cognition and the utterances and actions appropriate to it. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a predisposition to see things in terms of binary opposition was a distinctive aspect of a prevailing mentality. What is remarkable, however, is the extraordinary pervasiveness of the language of "contrariety", the most extreme of the relations of opposition. To a great extent this reflected the dominance of an inherited metaphysic. But it was also associated with two features peculiar to that period: a linguistic preference for standardized forms of argument and expression based on antithesis, and a preoccupation with the extreme poles of the religious and moral universe. Thus it becomes possible to attribute the era of witchcraft beliefs with an especial sensitivity to the idea of opposition and a consequently heightened appreciation of what was involved when the orthodox world was reversed or inverted.<sup>26</sup>

In the system of ideas which informed early Greek religion and natural philosophy, material flux and moral variety were traced to the interplay of contrary entities in the world.<sup>27</sup> Of particular importance was the Pythagorean view that such primal disorder could be transcended by obedience to laws of proportion; hence the existence of analogous processes of *concordia discors* in mathematical reasoning, musical harmony, physical health, moral improvement and ultimately the universal structure of things. Both Plato and Aristotle endorsed a theory of the generation of opposites from opposites, the former in the course of the argument for immortality in the *Phaedo*, and the latter as essential for the explanation of all process. Aristotle argued that the categories in respect of which things were capable of changing were always one of two contraries and that change was therefore matter moving between the contrary poles represented by the possession or privation of some form or forms.<sup>28</sup> In the case of Christian metaphysics the need was to give a dualistic account of the imperfections which marred the Creation without extending this to first principles; to stress, that is, both the contrasting and correlative aspects of good and

<sup>26</sup> For parallel instances in non-European cultures, see R. Needham (ed.), *Right and Left: Essays on Dual Symbolic Classification* (London, 1973), esp. pp. 76-7, 294-8, 307, 327, 351, 358-62 (inversions associated with death), and pp. 369-90 (disorder, inversion and witchcraft among the Lugbara of Uganda).

<sup>27</sup> H. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums* (New York, 1951), p. 77, on the dominance of a "polar mode of thought" after Homer, and pp. 341, 465; G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 15-171, considers the appeal to pairs of opposites in modes of argument and forms of explanation down to Aristotle.

<sup>28</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 70-2; Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1069b, 1075a, 1087a-b; Aristotle, *Physica*, 188a-91a; and see J. P. Anton, *Aristotle's Theory of Contrariety* (London, 1957), pp. 31-49, 68-83.



evil. Augustine achieved this by comparing the course of world history with the forms of ancient rhetoric. The *civitas dei* and the *civitas terrena* symbolized an absolute dichotomy between the values and fortunes exhibited by communities in time, but this did not mean that they had independent origins or purposes. For God had composed history as the Romans wrote their poetry, gracing it with "antithetic figures". Just as the clash of opposites (*antitheta*) was the most effective form of verbal eloquence, "so is the world's beauty composed of contrarieties, not in figure, but in nature".<sup>29</sup> For Aquinas the problem of evil was solved by recourse to Aristotle's logic. His classification of the whole of human conduct under the opposites of specific virtues and vices was sustained by the rule that contrariety was the relationship of greatest difference. Likewise the key notion of evil as a deficiency of good was simply Aristotle's contrast between a positive condition and its privation. If there was no good in the world we could not speak of its privation; to the extent that we do speak of evil, good is presupposed. Conversely (in Augustine's formulation) "even that which is called evil, being properly ordered and put in its place, sets off the good to better advantage, adding to its attraction and excellence . . .". Without (say) injustice, "neither would avenging justice nor the patience of a sufferer be praised". The simple formal truth embodied in these arguments became the foundation of the Christian intellectual tradition; but the older cosmological doctrines were also readily assimilated both by philosophers like Boethius and later by Renaissance neo-Platonists.<sup>30</sup>

One way of examining the widespread influence of the language of contraries in the early modern period would be to consider its role in individual disciplines like physics, medicine, natural magic, astrology, psychology or ethics.<sup>31</sup> The point, however, is that since contrariety characterized the logic of the Creator's own thinking there was nothing to which it could not in principle be applied. This is illustrated by the extended discussion in the French classical scholar Loys Le Roy's *De la vicissitude ou variété des choses en l'univers* (1576). He begins with a statement of *concordia discors*; nature "desires" contraries

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *De civitate dei*, xi, 18, trans. John Healey as *The City of God* (London, 1610, S.T.C. 916), p. 422.

<sup>30</sup> Augustine, *Enchiridion*, xi, xii-xv, trans. L. A. Arand in *St. Augustine: Faith, Hope and Charity* (Ancient Christian Writers ser., iii, London, 1947), p. 18; Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, i, q. 48, 1-2, in *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. A. C. Pegis, 2 vols. (New York, 1945), i, pp. 464-7; Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae*, iv, carmina 6.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, the medical controversy over the Galenic principle of *contraria curans contrariis*, or the "armies of contraries" in Baconian natural science: L. Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols. (New York, 1923), ii, p. 887, iii, p. 220, vi, p. 231, viii, p. 134; Noah Biggs, *The Vanity of the Craft of Physick* (London, 1651), pp. 214-17; Francis Bacon, *De principiis atque originibus*, in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. J. Spedding, R. L. Ellis and D. D. Heath, 14 vols. (London, 1857-74), v, p. 475.

because it is only in conjunction with its opposite that each entity or quality can survive and contribute to the order and beauty of the whole. The astronomical proximity of Venus and Mars is one instance; the reciprocal action of the four elements in the generation, composition and preservation of sublunary bodies is another. To these Le Roy adds logical, physiological and sociological examples. Painting, music and grammar involve compositions of contrary elements and effects. All sciences consist of the "comparing of contraries", such that physicians must relate health to sickness, and ethical and political philosophers "doe not onelie shew what is honest, just, and profitable; but also that which is dishonest, unjust, and damageable". Thus are good and evil both contrary and conjoined, "that in taking of one, both are tane away". Finally Le Roy elaborates on the mutual antipathies which keep all things within their bounds. These "contrarie affections" include rivalries among animals, plants and minerals, the struggle between reason and passion in human nature, the controversies of the learned and, above all, the historical conflicts between classes and nations. This enmity of peoples and the contrarieties of fortune which result are God's way of recalling the world to a proper sense of moral proportion.<sup>32</sup>

Le Roy's ideas about a substantive contrariety in all natural, intellectual and social phenomena were typical of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century accounts of universal order.<sup>33</sup> But his view that it could best be captured by specific styles of discourse based on contrast reflected not only a patterning believed to be immanent in the Creation itself but also contemporary theory in the arts of communication and its influence on linguistic uniformity via countless school and university curricula. In dialectic textbooks, considering what was contrary to a proposition was one of the *topoi* involved in devising arguments for its defence or refutation. Its special appeal lay in opportunities for striking and compelling antithesis between species at opposite ends of the same genus; hence the aphorism *opposita iuxta se posita magis elucescunt* which in Le Roy became the general principle of knowledge "that contraries when they are put neere, one to the other,

<sup>32</sup> Loys Le Roy, *De la vicissitude ou variété des choses en l'univers* (Paris, 1576), trans. R. A[shley] as *Of the Interchangeable Course, or Variety of Things in the Whole World* (London, 1594, S.T.C. 15488), pp. 5<sup>v</sup>-7.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Lambert Daneau, *Physice christiana*, trans. T[omas] T[wyne] as *The Wonderfull Woorkmanship of the World* (London, 1578, S.T.C. 6231), pp. 84<sup>v</sup>-6; Jean Bodin, *Colloquium heptaplomeres*, trans. M. L. Daniels Kuntz as *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime* (Princeton, 1975), pp. 144-9; Pierre De La Primaudaye, *L'academy françoise*, trans. T.B. as *The French Academie* (London, 1589, S.T.C. 15234), p. 691; John Eliot, *The Monarchie of Man*, ed. A. B. Grosart, 2 vols. (London, 1879), ii, pp. 131-5; Pontus De Tyard, *Deux discours de la nature du monde, et de ses parties* (Paris, 1578), pp. 80<sup>v</sup>-1<sup>v</sup>; Nicolas Caussin, *La cour sainte*, trans. T. H[awkins] as *The Holy Court* (London, 1634, S.T.C. 4874), pt. iii, pp. 30, 198. For other references, see E. Wasserman, *The Subtler Language: Critical Readings of Neoclassic and Romantic Poems* (Baltimore, 1959), pp. 53-66.

they appear the more cleerely".<sup>34</sup> Its popularity was therefore not restricted to the obvious applications in *encomium* or *vituperatio* but reflected the developing sixteenth-century fashion for rhetorical amplification as a strategy of argument. Quite apart from a multitude of occasional uses it sustained the meaning of whole treatises, ranging in size and seriousness from the *Paradossi* of Ortensio Landi to the Puritan William Gouge's thesaurus of family duties, in which each was matched with its contrary aberration.<sup>35</sup> Carried over from logical terminology, the argument *a contrariis* or "by antithesis" became conventional in a very wide range of contexts.

In addition, contrariety was the essence of several of the important figures or tropes for the "colouring" of discourse discussed by textbook rhetoricians under the heading of *elocutio*. The most influential of these was *contentio* (*antitheton*), the balancing of sentences, phrases or individual words with opposed meanings (and the figure chosen by Augustine to represent the character of metahistory). Other related devices were *contrapositum*, *contrarium*, *litotes*, *oxymoron* and *antiphrasis*. It would be impossible to indicate briefly all the literary conventions associated with these figural schemes, or the central importance of contrariety in creating such primary moods as irony or parody. But Henry Peacham thought that "antithesis" was one of the best methods of garnishing orations and said that none was more popular in his time, while George Puttenham agreed on the extent of usage but regarded it as excessive.<sup>36</sup> Among verse traditions alone, the idiom of contrariety was the basis of three forms of enormous influence, the Petrarchan love sonnet, the metaphysical conceit and the neo-classical loco-descriptive poem.<sup>37</sup> At the most general level of all, it

<sup>34</sup> Cicero, *Ad Herennium*, iv. 18, 25; Erasmus, *De duplici copia verborum ac rerum* (Strasbourg, 1516), fos. lxii<sup>r</sup>; Melancthon, *De rhetorica* (Basel, 1519), pp. 26-7; Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (London, 1553, S.T.C. 25799), p. 69<sup>f</sup>; Charles De Saint-Paul, *Tableau de l'éloquence françoise* (Paris, 1632), pp. 234-6.

<sup>35</sup> Ortensio Landi, *Paradossi*, trans. Charles Estienne as *Paradoxe qu'il vaut mieux estre pauvre que rich* (Caen, 1554), "Au lecteur", trans. Anthony Munday as *The Defense of Contraries* (London, 1593), quoted in B. Vickers, "King Lear and Renaissance Paradoxes", *Mod. Lang. Rev.*, lxiii (1968), pp. 308-9; William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622, S.T.C. 12119), "Epistle dedicatory". Examples of other works arranged by contraries are Jean De Marconville, *De la bonté et mauvaistie des femmes* (Paris, 1571); Guillaume De La Perrière, *Le miroir politique*, trans. as *The Mirrour of Policie* (London, 1598, S.T.C. 15228).

<sup>36</sup> Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (London, 1577, S.T.C. 19497), Sigs. R<sup>r</sup>-<sup>v</sup>; George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London, 1589, S.T.C. 20519), ed. G. D. Willcock and A. Walker (Cambridge, 1936), pp. 210-11; cf. Saint-Paul, *Tableau de l'éloquence françoise*, pp. 251-2. Commentary in W. G. Crane, *Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: The Formal Basis of Elizabethan Prose Style* (New York, 1937), *passim*; B. Vickers, *Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry* (London, 1970), pp. 68-121.

<sup>37</sup> L. Forster, *The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 1-60; E. Miner, *The Metaphysical Mode from Donne to Cowley* (Princeton, 1969), pp. 118-58; Wasserman, *The Subtler Language*, pp. 35-168.

is possible to argue that it played a vital part in sustaining that interest in paradox, contradiction and mutability which, it has so often been suggested, marked European literary sensibilities at the turn of the sixteenth century.<sup>38</sup>

Finally there were formative influences on the mentality we are considering which were peculiar to styles of religious discourse in the same period. There is scarcely any need to stress the significance of the Protestant doctrines of original sin and election, both of which demanded judgement by absolute extremes. But of equal importance was the pervasion of denominational polemic by an eschatology which radically altered the shape of Augustinian history.<sup>39</sup> The vision of a continuing struggle between antithetical communities or aspects of human nature was replaced by that of its rapid escalation, imminent climax and permanent resolution, whether millenarian or apocalyptic. The contrariety which marked the logic of all human actions was felt to be currently at its most uncompromising; the language describing the "last days" is accordingly full of images of the violent contrast of opposites. The key to the situation was thought by Protestant and Catholic alike to lie in the identification and analysis of Antichrist, a figure representing not merely enmity with Christ but the complete contradiction of Christianity by antithetical doctrines and false miracles.<sup>40</sup> The last chapters of the Book of Revelation spoke of the binding or destruction of Satan, the abolition of sin, darkness and death, and the reconciliation of Alpha and Omega. This, in effect, was to define the New Jerusalem as a state of affairs *without* privation in order to accentuate its difference in kind from the rest of human experience. It is clear that a new edge and urgency was added to the notion of contrariety by this dramatic foreshortening of historical perspectives and the acute anxiety to locate all things in either the Christian or Antichristian category.<sup>41</sup>

Running through these major influences on the character of early modern thought is the confusion between cosmology and the theory of knowledge common to all theodicy. For Pythagoreans and Platonists to conceive of the world as a musical composition described in terms of

<sup>38</sup> R. L. Colie, *Paradoxia epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton, 1966), *passim*; J. Rousset, *La littérature de l'âge baroque en France* (Paris, 1954), *passim*; I. Buffum, *Studies in the Baroque from Montaigne to Rotrou* (New Haven, Conn., 1957), pp. 40-2.

<sup>39</sup> W. Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London, 1963), *passim*; P. Toon (ed.), *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 8-90; B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London, 1972), pp. 13-45.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Lambert Daneau, *Traité de l'antechrist* (Geneva, 1577), pp. 64-5, 224-5; Florimond De Raemond, *L'antichrist* (Lyon, 1597), p. 52; George Pacard, *Description de l'antechrist* (Niort, 1604), pp. 1-10; and for England, C. Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971), *passim*.

<sup>41</sup> For the related theme of contrariety and universal decay, see V. Harris, *All Coherence Gone: A Study of the Seventeenth-Century Controversy over Disorder and Decay in the Universe* (London, 1966), *passim*.

harmonic intervals was evidently to conflate substance and form. In Augustine, history was itself an utterance, literally a figure of God's speech. Contrariety was thus a universal principle of intelligibility as well as a statement about how the world was actually constituted. And men's ability to understand the moral language implanted in the Creation in the form of privations of good was a function of the way they ordered their own language by corresponding modes of antithesis in thinking and communicating. This was not a matter of mere heuristic convenience. For Aquinas it meant reducing all logical opposites to contraries, the juxtaposition of which enabled men to grasp moral, and by extension, all relations. In dialectical and rhetorical training it led to the use of specific forensic and literary strategies with which audiences could feel an especial affinity. In the heat of religious crisis casuists could think only in terms of *contraria immediata*, one of which had to be affirmed, there being no intervening species. Thus we find a manifest function insistently imparted to those contrary perspectives to which anthropologists studying non-European cultures have tended to attach only a latent meaning.<sup>42</sup> Whatever Christian men might meaningfully do or say presupposed the relation of contrariety.

#### IV

In 1604 the essayist William Cornwallis wrote that "man . . . cannot judge singlie, but by coupling contrarieties".<sup>43</sup> We might compare this with an epigraph of 1651 by the Spanish Jesuit Balthasar Gracian: "The things of this world can be truly perceived only by looking at them backwards".<sup>44</sup> For these were twin corollaries of the dominant intellectual assumptions of the age in which both festive misrule and conceptions of ritual witchcraft flourished. If the world was "composed of contraries" it was also a reversible world; indeed this was the only change to which it could conceivably be subject.<sup>45</sup> Moreover if such contrarieties were always relations of quality, that is, forms of privations of good, then to reverse the world was also to invert it, to turn what were in effect moral priorities upside-down. And since inversions were themselves contrary to the normal relations holding between phenomena, they were in turn assimilable to that same cosmological pattern of opposition which was God's way of expressing and men's way of grasping the intelligibility of things. That there was, once again, no limit to the application of this principle can be seen in a

<sup>42</sup> Needham (ed.), *Right and Left*, pp. xxv, xxxi-xxxii.

<sup>43</sup> William Cornwallis, *The Miraculous and Happie Union of England and Scotland* (London, 1604, S.T.C. 5782), Sig. Bi<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted by Rousset, *La littérature de l'âge baroque en France*, p. 24, and in translation by Babcock (ed.), *The Reversible World*, p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas, *Rule and Misrule in the Schools of Early Modern England*, p. 34.

remarkable treatise by Giacomo Affinati D'Acuto, *Il mondo al roversica e sossopra* (1602), where the turning upside-down of the prelapsarian world by sin is illustrated with reference not merely to man but relentlessly and exhaustively to every sublunary phenomenon, to the celestial spheres and to the angels and demons.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, if we wish to go on to indicate the sorts of linguistic and symbolic conventions which governed the recognition of specific actions, including those attributed to witches, as inversions we can do this most effectively in the context of political writings and occasions. On the one hand, since the world of "agreeing discords" survived because it conformed to divine laws of proportion, accounts of universal contrariety were invariably couched in the language of government. In England Bishop Godfrey Goodman traced the origin of all authority to God's insistence, in the cases of the first enmities of Genesis, that the body be subject to the soul, the flesh to the spirit, and women to men.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, at the opening of judicial sessions at Périgueux in 1583 Antoine Loisel suggested that it was a "more political" way of conceiving of concord (in the seasons, the body and the arts) to attribute it to divine command than to the generative power of either contrariety or equality themselves.<sup>48</sup> Inversion in whatever context was thus necessarily a political act. On the other hand, in the life of actual societies and states it was resonant with special meaning; for these were institutions modelled on the divine paradigm, harmonizing contrarieties of status, interest and fortune by patriarchal and princely powers which were either historical derivations from or closely analogous with God's own rule.<sup>49</sup> Here the image of the world upside-down was peculiarly persuasive. By "correspondence" it endowed acts of social disorder with a significance far beyond their immediate character, attributing to them repercussions in every other plane of "government". And by antithesis it offered the opportunity of defending order *a contrariis* in relation to a situation in which all the normal patterns of authority were simply inverted. Like all knowledges, political theory depended for its cogency on the proximity of opposites, on what Le Roy in a work on how to study politics called "the method of teaching by con-

<sup>46</sup> Giacomo Affinati D'Acuto, *Il mondo al roversica e sossopra* (Venice, 1602); the work was translated into French by Gaspard Cornuère, *Le monde renversé san-dessus dessous* (Paris, 1610).

<sup>47</sup> Godfrey Goodman, *The Fall of Man* (London, 1616, S.T.C. 12023), p. 251; cf. La Perrière, *The Mirrour of Policie*, Sigs. Viv<sup>r-v</sup>, on "agreeing discords" in marriage, the family and (by extension) the state.

<sup>48</sup> Antoine Loisel, *Homonoee, ou de l'accord et union des subjects du roy sous son obeissance* (Paris, 1595), pp. 22-32; Loisel's address is a detailed application of Pythagorean and neo-Platonist doctrines of *concordia discors* to the situation of contemporary France.

<sup>49</sup> For a classic statement, see Jean Bodin, *Six livres de la république*, vi. 6, trans. R. Knolles as *The Six Bookes of a Commonweale* (London, 1606, S.T.C. 3193), p. 794; cf. Loisel, *Homonoee*, p. 35.

traries".<sup>50</sup> But in the case of order-disorder, with which, in one guise or another, sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century writers were pre-occupied, they were dealing not with a polarity like any other but with the primary polarity of Christian thought. The characterization of disorder by inversion, even in relatively minor texts or on ephemeral occasions, may therefore be taken to exemplify an entire metaphysic.

One obvious instance is that of comparisons between the prince and the tyrant, where the argument, both in logic and content, was in fact modelled directly on seminal accounts of monarchy given by Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas. The qualities and duties of the prince, deduced from theological and moral postulates, were portrayed in terms of the perfectly virtuous man governing in an ideal situation. This paradigm ruler was to be contrasted with his opposite, whose government was in every respect contrary to the good; hence the emergence of a *speculum principum* tradition in political theory, history-writing and drama in which descriptions of tyranny rested on nothing more than a species of inversion.<sup>51</sup> In a typical discussion in his *Christiani principis institutio* (1516) Erasmus argued that the actions of the true monarch and of the tyrant were at opposite ends of every moral continuum and could not therefore be separately conceived or taught; a tyrant was simply one who turned every rule of political life upside-down.<sup>52</sup> James I too thought that understanding the "trew difference betwixt a lawfull good King, and an usurping Tyran" was a case of invoking the maxim *opposita iuxta se posita magis elucescunt* and setting out the "directly opposita" aims, policies and rewards of each.<sup>53</sup> However, the most sustained attempt to capture in language the inversions thought to constitute the actions of the tyrant is in a "set-piece" of antithetical contrasts repeated by at least three French authors, Jean Bodin, Pierre De La Primaudaye and Nicolas Barnaud, and one Englishman Charles Merbury. In Barnaud's *Le miroir des françois* (1581) this begins:

the king conforms himself to the laws of nature, while the tyrant treads them under-foot; the one maintains religion, justice and faith, the other has neither God, faith nor law; the one does all that he thinks will serve the public good and safety of his subjects, the other does nothing except for his particular profit, revenge or pleasure; the one strives to enrich his subjects by all the means he can think of, the other

<sup>50</sup> Loys Le Roy, *De l'origine, antiquité, progres, excellence et utilité de l'art politique* (Paris, 1597), p. 14.

<sup>51</sup> Aquinas, *De regimine principum*, iii, in *Aquinas: Selected Political Writings*, ed. A. P. D'Entrèves (Oxford, 1948), p. 15; on the tradition in general, see A. H. Gilbert, Machiavelli's "Prince" and Its Forerunners: "The Prince" as a Typical Book "de regimine principum" (Durham, N. C., 1938), *passim*; G. Jondorf, Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 61-2; W. A. Armstrong, "The Elizabethan Conception of the Tyrant", *Rev. Eng. Studies*, xxii (1946), pp. 161-81.

<sup>52</sup> Erasmus, *Christiani principis institutio* (1516), trans. L. K. Born as *The Education of a Christian Prince* (New York, 1936, repr. New York, 1965), pp. 150, 156-65.

<sup>53</sup> James I, *Workes* (London, 1616, S.T.C. 14344), pp. 155-6.



improves his own fortune only at their expense; the one avenges the public injuries and pardons those against himself, the other cruelly avenges his own and pardons those against others; the one spares the honour of chaste women, the other triumphs in their shame . . .

There is scarcely any need to complete what is in fact a much longer passage to grasp the aptness of the rhetorical device and the conceptual language presupposed in writing about politics in this way.<sup>54</sup>

A second example is that of descriptions of disobedience itself. Often these were limited to the citing of commonplace parallels between the resistance of subjects to princes, children to parents, and servants to masters. But that this was a shorthand implying unspoken assumptions about a whole world upside-down can be seen from the elaborate account in which the Marian Catholic John Christopherson condemned the rebelliousness consequent upon liberty of conscience:

dyd [not] children order their parentes, wyves their husbundes, and subjects their magystrates: So that the fete ruled the head and the cart was set before ye horse . . . was not al thinges through it brought so farre out of order, that vice ruled vertue, & folishnes ruled wysdome, lightnesse ruled gravitie, and youth ruled age? So that the olde mens saying was herein verified, that when Antichrist shulde come, the rootes of the trees shulde growe upwarde. Was there not beside, such deadly dissention for our diversitie in opinions, that even amonges those, that were mooste verry deare frendes, arose moste grevous hatred. For the sonne hated hys owne father, the sister her brother, the wyfe her husband, the servaunte hys mayster, the subject the ruler.<sup>55</sup>

James I used the same idiom to describe the misrule which would result from papal claims to obedience; "the world itselfe must be turned upside downe, and the order of Nature inverted (making the left hand to have the place before the right, and the last named to bee first in honour) that this primacie may be maintained".<sup>56</sup> Another argument, typical in its verbal patterning, was Christopher Goodman's claim that when a man confuses obedience with its "playne contrarie", then "in place of justice, he receaveth injustice, for right wronge, for vertue vice, for lawe will, for love hatred, for trueth falshod, for playne dealing dissimulation, for religion superstition, for true worshippe detestable idolatrie: and to be shorte, for God Sathan, for Christ Antichrist".<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Barnaud, *Le miroir des françois*, pp. 69-70; cf. Bodin, *Six livres de la république*, ii. 4, trans. Knolles, pp. 212-13; La Primaudaye, *The French Academie*, p. 601; Charles Merbury, *A Briefe Discourse of Royall Monarchie* (London, 1581, S.T.C. 17823), pp. 13-15. Other less elaborate contrasts are in La Perrière, *The Mirrour of Policie*, Sigs. Eiii<sup>v</sup>-Fi<sup>r</sup>; Jean Helüis De Thillard, *Le miroir du prince chrétien* (Paris, 1566), Dedication; Jean De Marconville, *La maniere de bien policier la république chrestienne* (Paris, 1562), pp. 12<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> John Christopherson, *An Exhortation to All Menne to Take Hede of Rebellion* (London, 1554, S.T.C. 5207), Sigs. Ti<sup>r</sup>-Tii<sup>r</sup>, Tvi<sup>v</sup>-Tvii<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> James I, "A Premonition to All Most Mightie Monarches", in *Workes*, p. 307.

<sup>57</sup> Christopher Goodman, *How Superior Powers Oght to be Obeyed of Their Subjects* (Geneva, 1558, S.T.C. 12020), pp. 9-10; cf. John Cheke, *The Hurt of Sedicion* (London, 1549, S.T.C. 5109), in *Holinshed's Chronicles*, ed. Sir H. Ellis, 6 vols. (London, 1807-8), iii, p. 1003; Anon., *A Remedy for Sedition* (London, 1536, S.T.C. 20877), Sigs. Aii<sup>r-v</sup>.

Similar ways of thinking and writing marked the pamphlet literature of the French wars of religion. Artus Désiré went so far as to attribute all France's ills to a failure of patriarchal discipline which, apart from producing upside-down families, led, via providential punishment, to a society so corrupted:

that today one takes the priest for adventurer and the adventurer for priest, the lord for vilen and the vilen for lord, the magistrate for constable and the constable for magistrate, the good woman for wanton and the wanton for good woman; in short, all is so turned upside-down that one can no longer tell the one from the other.<sup>58</sup>

Antoine Loisel matched Goodman's point exactly when he said that despite compelling reasons for order and obedience there were those "whose judgement is so inverted that they call war peace, disunity unity and discord concord".<sup>59</sup> Similar arguments came from antagonists on both sides. The Parisian magistrate Guillaume Aubert used stylistic antithesis to describe how sectarian militance had turned the principles of Christian pacifism upside-down. Pierre De Belloy, supporter of Henry of Navarre, associated rebellion with a universal overturning symbolized by the inversions which characterized Augustine's *civitas terrena*.<sup>60</sup> In such reactions to the disobedience thought to be inseparable from variety in religious or political allegiances we can distinguish a conventional rhetoric of disorder.

In a third context inversion was used to reinforce the same political point by its realization in the actions of symbolic personae. It no longer seems strange to read Renaissance court festivals for their sometimes esoteric political meanings. For they were conceived by the greatest artists of the period as statements about the power of royal authority to bring order and virtue to men's engagements. It was supposed that princes and courtiers who acted their ideal selves in suitable allegorical situations could, with a proper blending of artistic, poetic, musical and balletic resonances, actually draw down the principles of world harmony into the commonwealth. Thus the "device" would often move from a representation of civil or moral disorder to its transformation, and finally to scenes of homage to or apotheosis of royalty. This simple antithesis gave unity to the spectacle and since it was emphasized by contrasts in speech, dance, costume and even gesture, offered opportunities for extended experimentation with modes of inversion. In the major *ballets* at the French court, kings were seen to rescue the world

<sup>58</sup> Artus Désiré, *L'origine et source de tous les maux de ce monde par l'incorrection des peres et meres envers leurs enfans, et de l'inobedience d'iceux* (Paris, 1571), pp. 27<sup>v</sup>-36<sup>r</sup>; Désiré borrows inversions from Isaiah v. 20. For other biblical sources of the world upside-down, see Francois Le Jay, *De la dignité des rois et princes souverains* (Tours, 1589), pp. 34-56 (wrong pagination).

<sup>59</sup> Loisel, *Homonoee*, pp. 98, 103.

<sup>60</sup> Guillaume Aubert, *Oraison de la paix et les moyens de l'entretenir* (Paris, 1559), p. 11; Pierre De Belloy, *De l'autorité du roy* (Paris, 1587), pp. 6-7, 26<sup>v</sup>; cf. Affinati D'Acuto, *Il mondo al roversica e sossopra*, pp. 487-92.

from uncertainty, ambiguity and illusion and from threats of overturning (*renversement*) by those wielding metamorphic powers. One such figure was Circé, who in the *Balet comique de la Royne* (1581) changed men into beasts, depriving them of their reason, and charmed popular opinion into confusing the benefits of peace with the perils of war. Another was Alcine, who in the *Ballet de Monsieur de Vendosme* (1610) turned men's faculties upside-down by an inordinate desire for pleasure, and their actual shapes into grotesqueries. Victims of such enchantments occur in several other *ballets* where they are also delivered by agents of the counter-magic embodied in royal valour, wisdom and beauty. There are complete entertainments where *le monde renversé* is not resolved; but in the context of the whole genre, a world peopled by figures, as Jean Rousset suggested, "always ready to turn themselves suddenly into their opposite", survived despite the intentions of kings.<sup>61</sup>

In the case of the Jacobean and Caroline masque this antipathy was always quite patent. Ben Jonson and his imitators deliberately emphasized the contrariness of disorder by making it the subject of prefatory "anti-masques" in which the codes of political morality celebrated in the body of the masque were represented in antithesis. The logical mood of the whole entertainment was thus explicitly that of the argument *a contrariis* that virtue was "More seen, more known when vice stands by";<sup>62</sup> while the highly elaborate inversions in anti-masque characterization and situation drew clearly on popular as well as learned conceptions of misrule. In *Time Vindicated to Himself* (1623) figures representing impertinent curiosity demand a saturnalian riot where slaves, servants and subjects "might do and talk all that they list"; "Let's have the giddy world turned the heels upward, And sing a rare black Sanctus, on his head, Of all things out of order".<sup>63</sup> The theme of giddiness is repeated in *Love's Triumph through Callipolis* (1631), a masque which praises perfect love in the guise of the queen but opens with depraved lovers whose lives are "a continued vertigo".<sup>64</sup> This is a world in which people not only act out opposites but also "know things the wrong way".<sup>65</sup> In *Salmacida spolia* (1640) the blessings of civil concord secured by Prince Philogenes cannot be truly perceived in an anti-masque society so corrupt that the nobility no longer protects, the poor no longer serve, and religion has become a

<sup>61</sup> M. M. McGowan, *L'art du ballet de cour en France, 1581-1643* (Paris, 1963), *passim*, esp. pp. 42-7, 69-84, 101-15, 133-53; J. Rousset, "Circé et le monde renversé: fêtes et ballets de cour à l'époque baroque", *Trivium* [Schweizerische Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Stilkritik], iv (1946), pp. 31-53; cf. Rousset, *La littérature de l'âge baroque en France*, pp. 13-31.

<sup>62</sup> S. Orgel and R. Strong (eds.), *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, 2 vols. (London, 1973), i, p. 288.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 350-2.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 406.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366.

vice. Even the dreams of anti-masquers are appropriately disordered; in *The Vision of Delight* (1617) Fant'sy asks:

If a dream should come in now to make you afeard,  
With a windmill on his head and bells at his beard,  
Would you straight wear your spectacles here at your toes,  
And your boots o' your brows, and your spurs o' your nose?<sup>66</sup>

One surviving costume design by Inigo Jones strikingly captures these visions; it depicts a "double woman" who is half a figure of beauty and half a hag.<sup>67</sup>

With such creatures only symbolic confrontation was possible. In *Oberon* (1611) moonlit obscurity, mischievous satyrs, irresponsible hedonism and unchaste language represent an indecorum and unruliness which must vanish before the brilliance, propriety and solemnity of Oberon's homage to the Arthurian king-emperor. And in *Pan's Anniversary* (1620) it is the grossness and presumption of delinquent Boeotians which bears no comparison, except one of antithesis, with the world of the Arcadians, "persons so near deities . . . taught by Pan the rites of true society".<sup>68</sup> Such contrasts were heightened in each case by matching styles of expression in the language of music and dance as well as in scenery and costume. One anti-masque measure in *Coelum Britannicum* (1634) even consisted of "retrograde paces"; others were "distracted", "extravagant", "antic", and accompanied by "contentious music" or "strange music of wild instruments". The elaboration of an upside-down world was in fact complete, pointing up with fullest possible effect a conception of kingship as the only power capable of setting it to right.

However extravagant and stylized these various representations of disorder may seem, it would be mistaken to think of them as less meaningful than those attempted from the vantage of (say) a tradition of empiricism in political debate. For they were entailed by a metaphysical system with its own criteria of what was real. It was precisely the ability of *ballets de cour* and masques (as spectacles inspired by a neo-Platonic conception of art) to bridge the disjunction between the ideal and the actual that made them so popular with their royal and aristocratic patrons. Likewise the apparently purely literary devices of verbal and syntactical antithesis employed in writings on tyranny were those thought to be immanent in the language of all evil acts. These necessarily manifested a divine logic and therefore could be properly

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 390.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318. Especially helpful on the anti-masque are S. Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), *passim*; W. Todd Furniss, "Ben Jonson's Masques", in his *Three Studies in the Renaissance: Sidney, Jonson, Milton* (New Haven, Conn., 1958), pp. 89-179. E. Welsford, *The Court Masque* (Cambridge, 1927), pp. 3-167, and P. Reyher, *Les masques anglais* (Paris, 1909, repr. New York, 1964), pp. 1-107, trace the origins of the court masque in traditions of misrule.

conceived of in no other way. To link disobedience with inversions of natural phenomena or with discordant music is assuredly not our way of talking about disorder in political arrangements; but these were inescapable corollaries of an organic view of a world made coherent not merely by analogous operations at each of its many levels but by actual chains of cause and effect. That trees might grow with their roots in the air, or left-handedness take priority, were not merely images of disorder but states of affairs that a man might expect to encounter. The visual symbolism of the court revel not only suggested moral and political truths, it really effected them in the manner of a talismanic magic.<sup>69</sup> Thus, while the world turned upside-down undoubtedly became a topos with a purely literary or iconographical reference, we should not underestimate its original appeal as a description of real events consequent upon acts of sin.

## V

It was in a world accustomed to think in these ways about contrariety and disorder that the arguments of the demonologists made sense. In the face of Sadducism or qualms merely about publicizing witchcraft their whole intellectual engagement could be defended as an example, perhaps the paradigm case, of the principle that the appreciation of good consisted in the recognition and exploration of its private opposite. In his *Daemonologie* (1597) King James claimed that:

since the Devill is the verie contrarie opposite to God, there can be no better way to know God, then by the contrarie; . . . by the falshood of the one to consider the trueth of the other, by the injustice of the one, to consider the Justice of the other: And by the cruelty of the one, to consider the mercifulnesse of the other: And so forth in all the rest of the essence of God, and qualities of the Devill.

This applied to all specific offices and ordinances of divine origin, indeed to all features of a world imbued with an invertible morality. Thus James's own attempt in 1590-1 to write into the confessions of the North Berwick witches a special antipathy between demonic magic and godly magistracy had been a way of authenticating his own, as yet rather tentative initiatives as ruler of Scotland.<sup>70</sup> Similarly in Pierre De Lancre's *Du sortilège* (1627) it was the very fact that the Devil chose to mimic the Catholic liturgy which was said to be incontro-

<sup>69</sup> These are aspects of symbolism not sufficiently dealt with in M. Walzer, "On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought", *Polit. Science Quart.*, lxxxii (1967), pp. 191-204.

<sup>70</sup> James I, *Daemonologie*, in *Forme of a Dialogue* (Edinburgh, 1597, S.T.C. 14364), p. 55; S. Clark, "King James's *Daemonologie*: Witchcraft and Kingship", in S. Anglo (ed.), *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft* (London, 1977), pp. 156-81. For the same point about the Devil made in a non-demonological context, see Thomas Starkey, *An Exhortation to the People, Instructyng Them to Unitie and Obedience* (London, 1536, S.T.C. 23236), Sigs. Aii<sup>v</sup>-Aiii<sup>r</sup>.

vertible proof of its divinity.<sup>71</sup> The rationale of all such institutions would accordingly be seriously undermined without demonological science. Establishing in exact detail what occurred at a witches' sabbat was not arid pedantry or intellectual voyeurism but a (logically) necessary way of validating each corresponding contrary aspect of the orthodox world. And the full intelligibility of demonological literature was, in the end, dependent on success in reading into each individual facet of demonism an actual or symbolic inversion of a traditional form of life.

In this respect the most appropriate context of meanings was that of conceptions of disorder as a world turned upside-down by disobedience and tyranny. For demonic inversion was inseparable, in the first instance, from notions of archetypal rebellion and pseudo-monarchy. The Devil's original presumption prefigured every subsequent act of resistance, while the style of his rule in hell was, as Erasmus explained, a model for all those whose political and moral intentions were most unlike God's.<sup>72</sup> Although some sort of order could be discerned there, it was therefore fitting that it should comprise the opposite of perfect princely and paterfamilial government. Aquinas had established that demons only co-operated out of common hatred for mankind, not from mutual love or respect for magistracy. Though there were ranks among the fallen angels the criteria involved were those of greatness in malice and, consequently, anguish rather than worth and felicity. These principles became essential to all formal demonology and pneumatology.<sup>73</sup> Their relation to the wider context can be seen in a discussion such as D'Acuto's. Here the fact that demons had inverted the angelic nature is offered as one example, albeit historically prior, of a universal overturning wrought by the rebellion which constitutes sin. The contrarieties involved in the fall of Lucifer (for instance, from prince of heaven to tyrant of hell) and the qualities both of his subject devils and the corresponding moral faction of mankind are expressed in a series of the usual linguistic antitheses.<sup>74</sup> In effect, then, the Devil's regimen was a compendium of the paradoxes of misrule: a hierarchy governed from the lowest point of excellence, a society in which

<sup>71</sup> Pierre De Lancre, *Du sortilège, ou il est traicté s'il est plus expedient de supprimer et tenir sous silence les abominations et maléfices des sorciers que les publier et manifester* (n.p., 1627), pp. 6-7; cf. Henri Boguet, *Discours des sorciers* (1590), in *An Examen of Witches*, ed. M. Summers (London, 1929), p. 61.

<sup>72</sup> Erasmus, *Christiani principis institutio*, trans. Born, p. 174.

<sup>73</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, i, q. 109, ed. Pegis, i, pp. 1012-16; Crespet, *Deux livres de la hayne de Sathan*, pp. 9<sup>r</sup>; Pedro Valderrama, *Histoire générale du monde, et de la nature*, trans. from the Spanish by S<sup>r</sup> De La Richardier, 2nd edn., 2 pts. (Paris, 1619), bk. iii, 1, p. 6; Jean Maldonat, *Traicté des anges et démons*, trans. F. De La Borie (Paris, 1605), pp. 159<sup>r</sup>-69; Thomas Heywood, *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels* (London, 1634, S.T.C. 13327), p. 414. For use in general discourse, see John Pym's speech at the impeachment of the earl of Strafford, 25 November 1640: *Somers Tracts*, 2nd edn., 13 vols. (London, 1809-15), iv, p. 216.

<sup>74</sup> Affinati D'Acuto, *Il mondo al roversica e sossopra*, pp. 447-92.

dishonour was the badge of status and a *speculum* imitable only by the politically vicious. This was worse than simple anarchy.<sup>75</sup>

Moreover there was a specific sense in which demonic allegiance was necessarily associated with disobedience and its consequences. The voluntary contract with the Devil which was thought to be the essence of malevolent witchcraft could be seen, primarily, as spiritual apostasy, symbolized by rebaptism at the sabbat. But the non-sacramental significance of baptism and the insistence on both the physical corporeality of devils and their political organization inevitably brought it as close to an act of literal, if indirect, resistance. English Puritan demonologists argued that the proper spiritual response to the tribulations of Satan was that of Job, while using the language of politics to convey the essential rebelliousness of his agents the witches. William Perkins, for instance, recommended that the natural law enjoining the death penalty for all enemies of the state be extended to "the most notorious traitor and rebell that can be . . . For [the witch] renounceth God himselfe, the King of Kings, she leaves the societie of his Church and people, she bindeth herself in league with the devil".<sup>76</sup> The text occasioning this argument, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (I Samuel xv. 23), could be used to demonstrate the identity in substance as well as in seriousness of the two sins. Hence the sensitivity of French and English writers to the double meaning involved in the word "conjunction"; hence too the overtones in the claim made in the English *Homily against Disobedience* that rebels "most horribly prophane, and pollute the Sabbath day, serving Sathan, and by doing of his work, making it the devils day, instead of the Lords day".<sup>77</sup> While witchcraft was constituted by an act of revolt, rebels effectively promulgated the sabbat. Even the many commonplaces to the effect that civil rebellions could only result from bewitching or sorcery or from "the mixing of heaven and hell" take on an added meaning.

These associations of ideas must have influenced the understanding of *maleficium*. For it was to be expected that witches should intend not only outright confrontation with the godly prince (as Lambert Daneau warned in theory and as was actually alleged in Scotland in 1590-1)<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> A tract which brings together many of the features of the mentality of contrariety in an attack on the Devil's mockery is Artus Désiré, *La singerie des Huguenots, marmots et guenons de la nouvelle derrision Theodobessienne* (Paris, 1574). The Huguenots, inspired by the Devil's desire to turn all things upside-down, have substituted for every true form of worship its exact opposite. This is said to bear witness to the "advancement of Antichrist" and is expressed in a series of linguistic antitheses; it is also called "witchcraft". *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8, 22-4, 40.

<sup>76</sup> William Perkins, *Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, in his *Works*, 3 vols. (London, 1616-18, S.T.C. 19651), iii, p. 651; cf. Henry Holland, *A Treatise against Witchcraft* (Cambridge, 1590, S.T.C. 13590), Sig. Aiii<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> Anon., *The Seconde Tome of Homelyes* (London, 1563, S.T.C. 13663), pp. 292-3.

<sup>78</sup> Lambert Daneau, *Les sorciers*, trans. R.W. as *A Dialogue of Witches* (London, 1575, S.T.C. 6226), Sigs. Bii<sup>r-v</sup>; *Newes from Scotland* (1591), repr. in *Gentleman's Mag.*, xlix (1779), pp. 393-5, 449-52.



but the promotion of those other inversionary phenomena which were thought to be, or to symbolize, disorder. Thus it was widely accepted that they could destroy the marital hierarchy by using ligature to prevent consummation, by sowing dissension or by incitements to promiscuity. Pierre De Lancré and Sébastien Michaelis claimed specifically that witchcraft subverted familial authority by destroying filial love in its devotees and victims.<sup>79</sup> This echoed the earliest charges made against the alleged *maleficium* of the Vaudois by Johann Tinctore: "Friends and neighbours will become evil, children will rise up against the old and the wise, and villeins will engage against the nobles . . .".<sup>80</sup> In the Richard Brome and Thomas Heywood comedy *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634) a well-ordered household is attacked (in a "retrograde and preposterous way") by such sorcery — the father kneels to the son, the wife obeys the daughter, and the children are overawed by the servants. The demonological point is hardly obscure but it is nevertheless underlined; a nephew comments that it is as if the house itself had been turned on its roof, while a neighbour protests that he might as well "stand upon my head, and kick my heels at the skies". Ligature and the symbolism of a charivari reinforce the same theme.<sup>81</sup>

The idea that witches could change themselves and others into animals is another instance of inversion. Although it became usual to argue that the transformations were illusory, the concept of metamorphosis itself, if it was entertained at all, suggested that instinct might replace reason and brutishness virtue. The further example of the natural disorders supposedly wrought by *maleficium* is perhaps the most explicit. Witches, with demonic aid, were assumed to interfere with elements and climate to achieve especially hurtful or unseasonable reversals. Their most powerful magic hardly knew these limits. Henry Holland thought that the notion "that witches have power to turne the world upside down at their pleasure" was mistaken, but only because it suggested that this was not, indirectly, God's work.<sup>82</sup> Nicolas Rémy listed the detailed wonders:

there is nothing to hinder a Demon from raising up mountains to an enormous height in a moment, and then casting them down into the deepest abysses; from stopping the flow of rivers, or even causing them to go backwards; from drying up the very sea (if we may believe Apuleius); from bringing down the skies, holding the

<sup>79</sup> Pierre De Lancré, *Le tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons* (Paris, 1612), p. 4; Sébastien Michaelis, *Histoire admirable de la possession et conversion d'une penitente, seduite par un magicien*, trans. W.B. as *The Admirable Historie* (London, 1613, S.T.C. 17854), p. 254.

<sup>80</sup> Johann Tinctore, *Tractatus de secta Vaudensium*, trans. as *De la secte qui s'appelle des Vaudois*, in J. Hansen (ed.), *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter* (Bonn, 1901), pp. 186-7.

<sup>81</sup> *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood*, ed. R. H. Shepherd, 6 vols. (London, 1874), iv, p. 178 (Act 1, scene 1). I. Donaldson, *The World Upside-Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding* (London, 1970), pp. 1-23, 37-45, 78-98, considers the play in a tradition of comic treatments of disorder as inversion, which drew on forms of ritual misrule and included festive drama such as the Jonsonian masque.

<sup>82</sup> Holland, *A Treatise against Witchcraft*, Sig. Giii<sup>r</sup>.

earth in suspension, making fountains solid, raising the shades of the dead, putting out the stars, lighting up the very darkness of Hell, and turning upside down the whole scheme of this universe.

These were extravagant claims, inspired by Ovid's Medea and Circe as well as Apuleius's Meroë and as popular with poets and dramatists as with demonologists like Rémy.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless we recognize, with him, the familiar lineaments of the *mundus inversus*. Indeed an important part of the meaning of all these various types of *maleficium*, whether in the family, society, the body or the world, was that they were conventional manifestations of disorder.

Once descriptions of the diabolical polity and the alleged intentions of witches are seen in this context, it becomes possible to read related meanings into the symbolic actions of the sabbat itself. Here many contemporaries were forcibly struck by the systematic and detailed inversions of liturgical forms, by what they recognized as a specious religious observance. Yet since religiosity was not confined to church worship, elaborate ceremonies of homage, however perverted, did not preclude other interpretations. In fact they facilitated an understanding of sabbat rituals in terms of the forms of the Renaissance court festival. Thomas Heywood's own account of the induction of witches is couched in part in the language of formal patronage and clientage and tries to evoke a mood suitable to "the pompe of regalitie and state". The rubric is minutely observed, but the (unstated) intentions are there to remind us of the irony of the situation.<sup>84</sup> The most sustained of such descriptions is, however, in Pierre De Lancre's influential demonology *Le tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons* (1612), where it is illustrated by an engraving by Jan Ziarnko. In form at least the occasion is unmistakably that of a court spectacle, organized by a "master of ceremonies and governor of the sabbat" before the thrones of Satan and a designated "queen of the sabbat". A new client is presented, courtiers engage in a feast and various *ballets*, and there is instrumental music. An audience of aristocratic figures includes a group of women "with masks for remaining always covered and disguised". There is the same emblematic quality here as in other court festivals of the period, the same attention to detail in the performance, the same use of symbol and imagery, and the purpose is equally didactic. "For an instant", it has been said, "one catches a glimpse of the magnificences at the late Valois Court".<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Nicolas Rémy, *Daemonolatreiae libri tres* (1595), iii. 1, in *Demonolatry of Nicolas Rémy*, ed. M. Summers (London, 1948), p. 141. For a recent account of the classical sources of literary treatments of witchcraft, see G. J. Roberts, "Magic and Witchcraft in English Drama and Poetry from 1558 to 1634" (Univ. of London Ph.D. thesis, 1976), pp. 31 ff.

<sup>84</sup> Heywood, *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells*, p. 472.

<sup>85</sup> M. M. McGowan, "Pierre De Lancre's *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons*: The Sabbat Sensationalised", in Anglo (ed.), *The Damned Art*, pp. 192-3; De Lancre, *Le tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons*, bk. ii, 4, pp. 124-53. Ziarnko's engraving is found only in the 1613 edition, printed opposite p. 118.

This impression of a festive hell is, of course, confirmed and not weakened by an absolute antithesis of content. In place of godlike monarchy and perfect Platonic love, the sabbat celebrated the most extreme tyranny and the foulest sexual debasement, and its aim was not to bring moral order and civil peace through the acting out of ideal roles but to ensure chaos by dehumanization and atrocities. If Ziarnko's engraving shows a court, it is, then, an anti-court and De Lancre's impresario is not, as it were, a master of revels but a demonic lord of misrule. Certainly the symbolic inversions are not merely those of the world upside-down but specifically those of so many anti-masque *mises en scène*, albeit in more horrendous forms — the elevation of the passions over reason by ritual depravities, physical reversals involving the priority of left-handedness and backwardness and even complete bodily inversions, vertiginous dancing, discordant music and nauseating food. The mood is precisely that which Valois, Bourbon and Stuart court entertainments were intended to transcend, that of physical obscurity and illusion, moral dissimulation, the metamorphosis of shapes and the enchantment of understanding and saturnalian licence. The grotesque world of the sabbat was the logical and symbolic antithesis of the orderly world of *ballet de cour* and masque. According to Heywood, "the Divell doth th'Almighty zany. For in those great works which all wonder aske, he is still present with his Anti-maske".<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Heywood, *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells*, p. 415. For other detailed accounts of the sabbat, see Francesco Maria Guazzo, *Compendium maleficarum* (1608), i. 12, in *Compendium maleficarum*, ed. M. Summers (London, 1929), pp. 33-50; Philip-Ludwig Elich, *Daemonomagia* (Frankfurt, 1607), q. 10, pp. 129-42; Rémy, *Daemonolatry libri tres*, i. 11-20, ed. Summers, pp. 40-66. Especially evocative of the mood of the anti-masque occasion is François Arnoux, *Les merveilles de l'autre monde* (Lyon, 1614), p. 5: "Hell is a palace of darkness, where the scorching fires serve as torches, the glimpses of devils as pictures and the shadows as tapestries". Examples of the many individual inversion-motifs associated with witchcraft are H. Baldung, *Hexenbilder* (Stuttgart, 1961), p. 16 (witch looking at the world upside-down through her legs); Gabriel Martin, *La religion enseignée par les démons aux Vaudois sorciers* (Paris, 1641), confession of Thomas Balbi of 1435 ("He turned a wooden chalice upside-down on the ground, as a sign of total aversion from God"); Thomas Dekker, John Ford and William Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621), Act 1, scene 1, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. F. Bowers, 4 vols. (London, 1953-61), iii, p. 537, and George Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcrafts* (London, 1603, S.T.C. 11851), Sig. Liv (man forced by sorcery to kiss the arse of his cow). These cases recall images of the world upside-down found in popular art and literature: see E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. R. Trask (London, 1953), pp. 94-8; D. Kunzle, "World Upside Down: The Iconography of a European Broadsheet Type", in Babcock (ed.), *The Reversible World*, pp. 39-94. Common to popular, learned and demonological accounts is the image of bodily inversion: Donaldson, *The World Upside-Down*, Plate I (*l'homme renversé*); Affinati D'Acuto, *Il mondo al roversica e sossopra*, p. 235 (those who sin continuously "are without doubt turned upside-down, with the head planted in the earth and the feet standing in the sky"); De Lancre, *Le tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et démons*, p. 75 ("at the sabbat . . . everything is preposterous and done the wrong way; sometimes they worship him [the Devil] with backs towards him, sometimes with feet upwards"); cf. Heywood, *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells*, p. 473.

In these circumstances it is significant to find devisers of entertainments using the theme of the sabbat to reinforce the disorder which was so often their starting-point. The *Ballet de Tancrède* (1619) consisted of a confrontation typical of *ballet de cour* between the hero-warrior Godfrey De Bouillon and his knights and the besieged king of Jerusalem and the magician Ismen. The trees of a protective forest are guarded by demons and monsters summoned from hell by Ismen but the resolution of the Christian Tancred simply in entering its glades is enough to disarm the magic and force its disappearance. This does not sound like a sabbat occasion but the early stanzas in Canto XIII of Tasso's *La Gerusalemme liberata* which inspired the device spoke of the forest as a nocturnal meeting- and feasting-place for witches (*le streghe*) and De Lancre in his chapter on the sabbat singled out the same passage as evidence of a typical gathering.<sup>87</sup> Spectators must have been able to make the required associations, given the popularity of both source and episode. In any case the intentions were made clear in the dedication in the *livret* to the French "Tancred", the duc de Luynes: "It is you, Sire, who by your worth has courageously disarmed the monsters of wars and seditions which civil discord fetched from hell to impede the righteous designs of Louis the Just".<sup>88</sup> In this way the witchcraft of Tasso's sabbat was the symbolic clue to the disorder in the French state, while the magical powers of the depicted heroes and of the performance itself provided the appropriate remedies.

More extensive is Ben Jonson's use of the same theme in his first major excursion into the anti-masque form. In the *Masque of Queens* (1609) twelve ancient queens, among whom Bel-Anna is the quintessence of virtue, are presented to Heroic Virtue, a monarch god, by Good Fame his daughter. They ride in a triumphal procession to pay their homage to him and decide to grace his court with their individual merits. The political allusions were not esoteric; only a truly exemplary prince such as King James could be rewarded with a reputation efficacious enough in itself to make his subjects want to imitate him in every respect. But to establish his point most effectively, that is *a contrariis*, Jonson needed not simply, as W. Todd Furniss suggested,<sup>89</sup> a spectacle

<sup>87</sup> De Lancre, *Le tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons*, pp. 124-5: "In describing the enchantment made by the magician and sorcerer Ismen in the forest of Jerusalem, Tasso seems to speak of the sabbat exactly as our witches depict it to us".

<sup>88</sup> Scipion De Gramont, *Relation du grand ballet du roy, dancé en la salle du Louvre le 12 fevrier 1619 sur l'adventure de Tancrede en la forest enchantee* (Lyon, 1619), pp. 3-4, in P. Lacroix (ed.), *Ballets et mascarades de cour de Henri III à Louis XIV, 1581-1652*, 6 vols. (Geneva, 1868-70), ii, pp. 161-98; McGowan, *L'art du ballet de cour en France*, pp. 117-31. That Godfrey was regarded as an exemplary prince in *speculum principum* literature is also important to the meaning of this *ballet*, setting him in antithetical opposition to the tyrant Aladdin and underlining the antipathy between Christianity and demonic magic: Thillard, *Le miroir du prince chrétien*, pp. 108-9.

<sup>89</sup> W. Todd Furniss, "The Annotation of Jonson's *Masque of Queens*", *Rev. Eng. Studies*, new ser., v (1954), pp. 344-60.

of false religious worship, but an antithetical conception of court life and values (even if this was not entirely secular) expressed in ritual form. He found it in the demonologies of Rémy, Johan Gödelmann, Martin Del Rio, Ludwig Elich, Bodin, Paolo Grillandi and James himself. The resulting anti-masque ("an ougly Hell") depicts in the persons of twelve hags and their minutely detailed witchcraft the "faythfull Opposites" of the "renowned Queenes" and their equally ritualistic but exactly contrary magic. Their homage is to the tyrant Devil-Goat and their aim is to profane the night's proceedings and subvert the royal virtues; as their leader proclaims:

I hate to see these fruicts of a soft peace,  
And curse the piety gives it such increase.  
Let us disturbe it, then; and blast the light;  
Mixe Hell, with Heaven; and make Nature fight  
Within her selfe; loose the whole henge of Things;  
And cause the Endes runne back into theyr Springs.

Jonson explained that these powers of inverting Nature were frequently "ascrib'd to Witches, and challeng'd by them-selves" and that he had found them described in Rémy as well as Ovid, Apuleius and other authorities.<sup>90</sup>

The antithesis at which he aimed is symbolized most expressly in the dance, perhaps the focus of all masque meanings. The witches "vizarded, and masqu'd", accompanied by "a strange and sodayne Musique", fall:

into a magicall Daunce, full of praeposterous change, and gesticulation, but most applying to theyr property: who, at theyr meetings, do all thinges contrary to the custome of Men, dauncing back to back, hip to hip, theyr handes joyn'd, and making theyr circles backward, to the left hand, with strange phantastique motions of theyr heads, and bodies.

The measures of the noble queens, on the other hand, "were so even, & apt, and theyr expression so just; as if Mathematicians had lost proportion, they might there have found it".<sup>91</sup> So fundamental was this notion of proportion in neo-Platonic conceptions of order that we can readily see how Jonson and his audience could conceive of these two sets of dancers as emblems of contrary modes of ethical and political life. The *Masque of Queenes* is about the victory of one of these modes. At the height of the sabbat, the witches, their hell, and above all the

<sup>90</sup> Orgel and Strong (eds.), *Inigo Jones*, i, pp. 132-8; I have used the text of the *Masque of Queenes* with Jonson's annotations in *Ben Jonson* [Works], ed. C. H. Herford and P. and E. Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford, 1925-52), vii, pp. 278-319, lines 6-7, 24-5, 132, 462, 431-4, 144-9 (and annotation), and the commentary in Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque*, pp. 130-46. The "mixing of hell with heaven" suggests outright sedition; see p. 119 above, and Francis Bacon, "A Letter Written out of England" (1599), in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. Spedding, Ellis and Heath, ix, p. 116.

<sup>91</sup> Jonson, *Masque of Queenes*, ed. Herford and Simpson, lines 45, 344-50, 753-6; on the significance of the dance, see J. C. Meagher, "The Dance and the Masques of Ben Jonson", *Jl. Warburg and Courtauld Inst.*, xxv (1962), pp. 258-77.

power of their *maleficium* are negated simply by the bruit of the royal reputation (a single blast of "loud Musique") and the sight of virtue; just as the valour of Tancred is enough in itself to dispel the demonism of Ismen. These magical knock-outs are in fact very striking, given the demonological belief that the efficacy of witchcraft waned in direct proportion to the legal and ethical bona fides of the prosecuting magistrate and his determination in rooting it out.<sup>92</sup> The argument about the ability of royal courts to bring order to the world could not have been put more effectively.<sup>93</sup>

## VI

Given the enormity of their sins and a world in which all phenomena were subject to inversion there was in fact no limit to the disorder of which (with the Devil's aid and God's permission) witches were capable. Nevertheless it is clear that audiences and readers were able and expected to make sense of their activities in a number of conventional ways, anchoring the meaning of witchcraft in terms of styles of thinking and writing about the world upside-down. Each detailed manifestation of demonism presupposed the orderliness and legitimacy of its direct opposite, just as, conversely, the effectiveness of exorcism, judicial process and even a royal presence in actually nullifying magical powers confirmed the grounds of authority of the priest, judge or prince as well as the felicity of his ritual performance. But it also had indirect meaning in terms of the many relations, both of causal interdependence and of "correspondence", which interlaced the Christian and neo-Platonist universe. The Devil's tyranny was an affront to all well-governed commonwealths but also to every state of moral equipoise. The wider implications of attacks on the family, and of the fact that they were promoted largely by women, could hardly have been missed in a culture which accepted the patriarchal household as both the actual source and analogical representation of good government. The reversing of the human bodily hierarchies or of priorities in natural things had effects which could literally be felt throughout a world thought to be an organic unity of sentients. Especially resonant

<sup>92</sup> Jonson, *Masque of Queenes*, ed. Herford and Simpson, lines 354-9; cf. the counter-magical efficacy of the royal glance in the *Ballet de Monsieur de Vendosme* (1610): McGowan, *L'art du ballet de cour en France*, p. 75. The relevant demonological arguments are in Jakob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer, *Malleus maleficarum* (1486-7), ii, q. 1, in *Malleus maleficarum*, ed. M. Summers (London, 1928), pp. 90-1; Jean Bodin, *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (Paris, 1580), bk. iii, 4, pp. 139-44; Rémy, *Daemonolatry libri tres*, i. 2, ed. Summers, pp. 4-5; James I, *Daemonologie*, pp. 50-1; see also Brome and Heywood, *The Late Lancashire Witches*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood*, ed. Shepherd, iv, pp. 255-7.

<sup>93</sup> In these circumstances there was a double irony in blaming a sorcerer for the disorders at the mock court of the Christmas "Prince of Purpoole" at Grays Inn in 1594; see "Gesta Grayorum", in J. Nichols (ed.), *The Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, 3 vols. (London, 1823), iii, pp. 279-80.

were references to the dance; for dancing not only had its own powers to confer (or destroy) order and virtue but figured the harmonic relations to which every phenomenon was subject. A single ritual act such as the anal kiss perverted religious worship and secular fealty, dethroned reason from a sovereign position on which individual well-being and social relations (including political obligation) were thought to depend and symbolized in the most obvious manner the defiant character of demonic politics as well as its preposterousness.

In these ways demonology superimposed image upon image of disorder. This profusion of levels of meaning made witchcraft beliefs ideal material for the literary imagination; but that they should have been integrated in performances as carefully structured as the court *ballet* and masque, shows how naturally they cohered with men's general conception of things. The best example of a dramatic fusion of this sort is, of course, in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. It is a critical commonplace that the pervasive disorder in the play is expressed in a series of multiple inversions of contraries in the personal, political and natural planes.<sup>94</sup> Especially striking in the present context are the substitution of tyranny for true magistracy, both in fact and in Malcolm's self-accusation to Macduff,<sup>95</sup> and the reiterated consequences of disobedience to anointed kings and fathers. Even without the explicit witchcraft it would have seemed quite appropriate that *Macbeth* should be prepared to turn the world upside-down,<sup>96</sup> that his castle and kingdom should become a hell and that his actions should be inspired by ultimately deceitful incantations. Nevertheless the witches' presence is vital, for it establishes the two crucial features of the play's atmosphere. One is the sense of obscurity, uncertainty and dissimulation which clouds the subsequent action and its physical location with the effect of claustrophobia. The other is the repeated expression in linguistic antitheses of the inversions which this action embodies and provokes. Both are fixed at the very outset, not only by the famous ritual utterance, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair", but also by the reference to a "hurlyburly" with its suggestion of misrule and topsyturvydom.<sup>97</sup> We must suppose that the dramatic effectiveness of this opening scene presupposed the wider context in which demonism was traditionally understood.

## VII

A contextual reading of Renaissance demonology may not help us to answer the major questions about the genesis or decline of the Euro-

<sup>94</sup> L. C. Knights, "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?", in his *Explorations* (London, 1946, repr. Harmondsworth, 1964), pp. 28-48; Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. K. Muir (Arden edn., London, 1951), "Introduction"; G. I. Duthie, "Antithesis in *Macbeth*", *Shakespeare Survey*, xix (1966), pp. 25-33; K. Muir, "Image and Symbol in *Macbeth*", *Shakespeare Survey*, xix (1966), pp. 48-9.

<sup>95</sup> *Macbeth*, IV. iii. 45-139.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. i. 50-61.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, I. i. 3-11.



pean "witch-craze", although it surely confirms the view that these were related to the fortunes of an entire world-view. My aim has been rather to sketch some of the conventions of discourse which governed the successful persuasion of audiences at the height of the persecutions — say, between 1580 and 1630. In fact these turn out to be so important that it becomes difficult to explain, not how men accepted the rationality of the arguments, but how, occasionally, sceptics doubted it. What it made sense for demonologists to say depended partly on traditional metaphysical notions about the logical shape and moral economy of the world and partly on shared linguistic patterns for describing its most disturbing aspects. The first entailed a conception of evil for the sake of structural coherence, linking demonism with all privations of good; the second required inversion (both in forms of thought and forms of words) to ensure linguistic felicity, linking demonology with the articulation of key political concepts. The idea of witchcraft was not then a bizarre incongruity in an otherwise normal world; like all manifestations of misrule it *was* that world mirrored in reverse, and the practices of the alleged witches were no less (and no more) meaningful than those of ordinary men and women. It may be true that the demonologists, like other late sixteenth-century writers, were preoccupied with a disorder which appeared to characterize all their affairs. Grounds for such apprehension have been found by historians in an acute instability wrought by inflation, social mobility, sectarian violence and warfare. But to attribute the belief in demonic witchcraft to some determining "social dysfunction" would not only beg philosophical questions about the way language gives such traumas the meaning they have but ignore the extent to which contemporaries found reassurance in demonological (and millenarian) explanations, even of chaos. In the same way the discovery of instances among believers of what we would today recognize as clinical insanity could never warrant the view that Europe was in the grip of a "collective psychosis". This would be to explain away what in effect was a constitutive assumption of its culture, whereas part of what we mean when we speak of a "world-view" at all is surely that its constituents need no other explanation than their coherence one with another. The primary characteristic of demonological texts as historical evidence is not their supposed unverifiability but their relationship to what J. L. Austin called a "total speech situation";<sup>98</sup> their meaning for the historian may be thought of as exactly symmetrical with their original meaning as linguistic performances.

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<sup>98</sup> J. L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson (London, 1962), p. 52.