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THE PROBLEM OF DEMONIC CORPOREALITY  
IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

*Thomas Aquinas, Demonology,  
and Witchcraft Folkloric Ideas (c. 1587-1648)\**

1. *Introduction*

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Enlightenment was the dominant paradigm in European intellectual scene, the English scholar Isaac D'Israeli (1766-1848) looked back and mocked those past authors who had dedicated their time and effort to ask questions such as «how many angels can dance on the head of a very fine needle without jostling one another»<sup>1</sup>. By this phrase, the scholar intended to differentiate the obscurantist and superstitious past from his contemporaneity, a period that saw in the light of reason the dawn of a new era of humanity. Certainly, the passage did not intend to discredit religion, even less to celebrate atheism: D'Israeli, raised in a family of Italian Jewish merchants, was himself a believer. The quote should neither be read as a hostile judgement on Christianity by a Jewish thinker; the author baptized his three children, among them Benjamin (1804-1881), future Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, in the Church of England. What D'Israeli wrote might be framed in the final phase of the secularization of English culture and society, a process that led to the separation of almost all aspects of life and thought from religious associations or ecclesiastical direction. Through this period, initiated by Henry VIII's (r. 1509-1547) rejection of papal supremacy, John Sommerville identified what he called «the change from a religious culture to a religious faith»<sup>2</sup>.

The development of the Protestant Reformation is often considered as one of the leading causes of the aforesaid transformation. Protestantism has been catalogued as a champion of modernization and secularization, a landmark toward rationalization of religion and other areas of human existence. This interpretation was immortalized by German scholar Max Weber (1864-1920), who linked Protestant ethics with the rise of capitalism and the «dis-

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\* This article is part of an ongoing postdoctoral project funded through a two-year grant from the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET) in Argentina.

<sup>1</sup> Darren Oldridge, *Strange Histories. The Trial of the Pig, the Walking Dead, and other Matters of Fact from the Medieval Renaissance Worlds*, Routledge, London 2007, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> John Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England. From Religious Culture to Religious Faith*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992, p. 3.

enchantment of the world»<sup>3</sup>. Inspired by these ideas, historian Keith Thomas pointed out that the Reformation in England was crucial for the collapsing of magic and superstition's influence among the local population, notions that he considered to be utterly rejected by his intelligent contemporaries<sup>4</sup>. Protestantism was also considered as one of the main causes for the advancement of a naturalistic view of the universe, and the emergence of modern science. However, this interpretation of the Reformation's consequences in England and the rest of Europe has been revised in the last decades<sup>5</sup>. Alexandra Walsham, for example, suggests thinking the Reformation (both Catholic and Protestant) in terms of cycles of «desacralization and resacralization, disenchantment and re-enchantment»<sup>6</sup>. Likewise, Darren Oldridge asserts that shifts occurred «within a system of beliefs that maintained a fundamental role for occult powers»<sup>7</sup>.

Despite current revisions to traditional interpretations of Protestantism, its alleged modernizing ethos is still accepted, among other motives by its supposed intention to simplify and rationalize medieval theology and liturgy. Regarding the first point, it has been affirmed that magisterial reformers had as one of their main objectives to undermine the respect for intermediate entities of the Christian pantheon, angels among them. Indeed, D'Israeli's mock finds a precedent in John Calvin (1509-1564). In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, the French reformer severely criticised Scholastic theology, specifically its disproportionate interest in angelology<sup>8</sup>. According to Calvin, everything Christians needed to know about angels was revealed in the Scriptures. Good and evil angels were created by God, and instrumental to his will. Lacking divinity, those creatures should not be object of any kind of worship<sup>9</sup>. Thus, to speculate on angelic beings beyond the narrow margins

<sup>3</sup> See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Routledge, New York-London 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in the Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England*, Penguin, London 1991, p. ix.

<sup>5</sup> For discussions about the disenchantment of the world and Reformation in Europe, see Robert Scribner, *The Reformation, popular magic and the disenchantment of the world*, in «Journal of Interdisciplinary History» 23 (1993), p. 475-479.

<sup>6</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation and the 'Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed*, in «The Historical Journal» LI, 2(2008), pp. 497-528.

<sup>7</sup> Darren Oldridge, *The Supernatural in Tudor and Stuart England*, Routledge, Oxford-New York 2016, p. 154.

<sup>8</sup> See Philip Soergel, *Luther on the Angels*, in Peter Marshall - Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Angels in the Early Modern World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006, pp. 65-66.

<sup>9</sup> «Combien donc que Moysse, parlant rudement comme le simple populaire, n'ait pas au premier coup nombré les Anges entre les creatures de Dieu, toutesfois rien n'empesche que nous ne déduisions icy clairement ce que l'Escriture nous en dit ailleurs: car si nous desirons de cognoistre Dieu par ses oeuvres, il ne faut pas omettre ceste partie tant noble et excellente. Outreplus ceste doctrine est fort necessaire à réfuter beaucoup d'erreurs. La dignité, qui est en la nature angelique, a de tout temps esbloui beaucoup de gens en sorte (qu'ils pensoyent qu'on leur fist injure si on les abaissoit pour les assujettir à Dieu: et là dessus on leur a attribué quelque divinité). Jean Calvin, *Institution de la Religion Chrétienne*, éd. par Frank Baumgartner, Librairie de la Suisse Française, Paris 1888, 1,14,3.

of *sola scriptura* was considered by the theologian as unprofitable things («folle sagesse») and superfluous matters («questions vaines»)<sup>10</sup>.

This minimalist approach to angelology and demonology, nevertheless, had a longstanding tradition in Christian thinking. In the fifth century, Augustine of Hippo (354-430) considered angels from a moral standpoint. He was not interested in a thorough examination of the physical or natural qualities of angels and demons, but in their righteousness and wickedness, respectively. Augustine's intellectual endeavors in this matter were oriented toward using virtuous and vicious spirits as models of behavior. In this sense, a «gnoseological pessimism» permeated the Bishop's thinking: detailed knowledge of the angelic order was beyond human understanding<sup>11</sup>. Thence, even though neither Augustine nor Calvin rejected that demons could act on the material world, both theologians considered that the human soul and mind were fallen angels' favorite field of action<sup>12</sup>.

Although D'Israeli and Calvin never mentioned him, it is safe to assume that they both had Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in mind when they criticized angelology's theoretical excesses. The Italian friar was a turning point in the history of that branch of Christian theology. If, as David Keck stated, Augustine privileged divine grace over nature when writing about angels, Aquinas did the opposite. Because of that, Keck affirms that scholasticism gave birth to a science or epistemology of angels/demons, something inexistent during the Patristic or Early Medieval period<sup>13</sup>. Aquinas' works completed what historians have called «a revolution in medieval angelology», which extended from about 1150 to 1250<sup>14</sup>.

Albeit the Dominican theologian did not pay special attention to witchcraft in his writings, his theorizations about angels and demons are considered as one of the intellectual foundations of Early Modern European witch-hunts. His ideas underpinned theologically orthodox explanations of the witches' flight, of demonic apparitions and powers in the material world, and demons'

<sup>10</sup> J. Calvin, *Institution de la Religion Chrétienne*, 1,14,4.

<sup>11</sup> The expression is from Fabián Alejandro Campagne, *Demonology at a Crossroads: The Visions of Ermine de Reims and the Image of the Devil on the Eve of the Great European Witch-Hunt*, in «Church History» LXXX, 3(2011), p. 483. In this regard, Diana Walzel stated that first-millennium demonology was not especially fantastic or imaginative. Diana Lynn Walzel, *The Sources of Medieval Demonology*, Ph. D. diss., Rice University 1974, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> F. Campagne, *Demonology at a Crossroads*, pp. 476-477; Karine Langley, *John Calvin's preaching on the Devil*, Ph. D. diss., Université d'Ottawa 1999, p. 297.

<sup>13</sup> David Keck, *Angels and angelology in the Middle Ages*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1998, p. 85. See also: Maaïke Van der Lugt, *Le ver, le démon et la vierge. Les théories médiévales de la génération extraordinaire*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2004, pp. 515-516; Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1997, p. 154; Alain Boureau, *Satan the Heretic. The Birth of Demonology in the Medieval West*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 2014, pp. 94-95.

<sup>14</sup> D. Keck, *Angels and angelology*, p. 78. On the cultural, ideological, and intellectual transformations that underpinned the revolution in the study of angels during the thirteenth century, see A. Boureau, *Satan the Heretic*, pp. 93-111; J.B. Russell, *Lucifer*, pp. 159-207.

contacts with human beings, among other issues<sup>15</sup>. Nonetheless, his influence over Early Modern Protestant demonologists has been doubted or nuanced by different historians. In his article about English demonologists, John Teall concluded that, because of its rejection of canon law and scholastic theology, Protestant beliefs about witchcraft rested upon narrower foundations than did those of the Catholics. Similarly, Walter Stephens wrote that Catholics had a longer and more systematic demonological tradition. Euan Cameron pointed out that Protestantism's exaggerated providentialism reduced the explanatory usefulness of quasi-autonomous spiritual intelligences<sup>16</sup>. Conversely, Stuart Clark has an intermediate position. On the one hand, he considers that Protestant demonologies relied on the Bible for support at the expense of other authorities. On the other, he states that Protestants and Catholics shared an intellectual indebtedness to Augustine and Aquinas<sup>17</sup>.

Although this article agrees with Clark's second statement, it is essential to clarify that English demonologists relied on Aquinas' ideas more than they did on Augustine's. English authors of witchcraft treatises did not randomly lean on the Bishop or the friar's writings about angels or demons. If that happened, it was solely on the points on which both theologians agreed upon<sup>18</sup>. On the contrary, when a divergence existed between the two thinkers, as was the case with angels' corporeality, English demonologists always aligned themselves with Aquinas. In this respect, the present article suggests that despite their Calvinistic sympathies, English demonologists who published their treatises between 1587 and 1648 heavily relied on Thomistic notions, which had been dominant in Continental witchcraft treatises for a century. The main hypothesis is that Aquinas' demonology allowed English demonologists to shed light on popular ideas about demons spread through witchcraft pamphlets. These periodic publications that intended to report witchcraft cases and trials left essential problems of contemporary demonological discourse unexplained, such as, for example, if demons were corporeal or incorporeal creatures. English demonologists, then, intended to give a definitive answer to this issue in order to avoid confusions or heterodox ideas among pamphlet readers. Neither Augustine's gnoseological pessimism nor

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<sup>15</sup> See Charles Edward Hopkins, *The Share of Thomas Aquinas in the Growth of the Witchcraft Delusion*, Ams Press, New York 1940, 173-184; F. Campagne, *Demonology at a Crossroads*, pp. 479-497; S. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 153-156; Brian Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, Longman, London 2006, pp. 45-61; Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers. Witchcraft, Sex and the Crisis of Belief*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2002, pp. 62-83.

<sup>16</sup> John Teall, *Witchcraft and Calvinism in Elizabethan England: Divine Power and Human Agency*, in «Journal of the History of Ideas» xxiii, 1(1962), pp. 28-29; W. Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, pp. 177-178; Euan Cameron, *Angels, Demons, and Everything in Between: Spiritual Beings in Early Modern Europe*, in Clare Copeland - Jan Machielsen (eds.), *Angels of Light? Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2013, p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> S. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 527.

<sup>18</sup> On the shared demonological ideas by Augustine and Aquinas, see F. Campagne, *Demonology at a Crossroads*, pp. 279-281.

Calvin's minimalist approach provided them with the tools necessary for the task. Therefore, to correct pamphlets' vagueness and provide a theologically valid explanation, English authors resorted to Thomistic ideas.

## 2. Demonic Bodies in Christian Theology

Angelic natures' body was a significant matter of discussion throughout the history of Christian thought. However, the only biblical reference to the issue was Lk. 29:39: «For a spirit has no flesh and bones». In this passage, Christ appeared to his disciples in order to announce his resurrection. Because of their astonishment and fear that he might be a specter, the second person of the Trinity asked them to look at his body and notice that it had flesh and bones, two elements absent in spirits. This brief passage gave rise to one of the most important controversies in Christian angelology. Even though it explained that spirits lacked human bodies' features, it failed to establish if such creatures had another type of physical structure and, if they did, what were its attributes. These questions slowly emerged when the new monotheistic cult started to consolidate its doctrinal basis.

During the first millennium, the vast majority of the Church Fathers believed that spirits (both angels and demons) were corporeal creatures<sup>19</sup>. Augustine of Hippo, one of the main theological authorities of the period, considered the angelic body to be real, not illusory<sup>20</sup>. In order to fulfill God's requests, spirits could assume different shapes<sup>21</sup>. This was possible due to the fact that their bodies were made of a malleable and flexible element. In opposition to the rough and solid composition of the human structure, spiritual entities were made of ether, one of the noblest materials in the creation<sup>22</sup>. As a matter of fact, according to Aristotle, the superlunary world was composed of that same substance. Contrary to what David Jones asserted, Augustine did not affirm that angels lacked bodies, but that they lacked

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<sup>19</sup> F. Campagne, *Demonology at a Crossroads*, p. 15; Georges Bareille, *Angéologie d'après les Pères*, in Alfred Vacant - Eugène Mangelot (eds.), *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 1, Letouzey et Ané, Paris 1903, col. 1195. F. Campagne, *Demonology at a Crossroads*, p. 15; Georges Bareille, *Angéologie d'après les Pères*, in A. Vacant - E. Mangelot (eds.), *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 1, col. 1195.

<sup>20</sup> Eugène Mangelot, *Démon d'après les Pères*, in Alfred Vacant - Eugène Mangelot (eds.), *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* IV, Letouzey et Ané, Paris 1911, col. 371. Both Jörg Hausteijn and James Sharpe have affirmed that the Bishop of Hippo favored the idea of angelic incorporeality, despite the fact that the Augustinian corpus might not entirely underpin this conclusion. Jörg Hausteijn, *Augustine, ST.*, in Richard Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, ABC Clío, California 2006, p. 69; J. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> «Verum tamen corpus habuerunt, quod ex qualibet specie in quamlibet speciem pro sui ministerii atque officii ratione converterent, ex vera tamen in veram». Augustine of Hippo, *Sermones ad populum* XII, 9, 9, in Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, vol. 38, Garnier Frères, Paris 1815-1875, col. 104.

<sup>22</sup> Serge-Thomas Bonino, *Les anges et les Démons. Quatorze leçons de théologie catholique*, Parole et Silence, Paris 2007, p. 115; G. Bareille, *Angéologie d'après les Pères*, p. 1195.

corruption<sup>23</sup>. Thus, Augustinian angels and demons were corporeal, since they had spiritual and celestial bodies<sup>24</sup>. These bodies were delicate and immortal, not subject to decay or physical needs like human's<sup>25</sup>. This point of view dominated the theological scene for approximately eight centuries<sup>26</sup>. Among the Christian thinkers that followed the theory of ethereal bodies were Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) and Isidore of Seville (c. 566-636)<sup>27</sup>. Their moral and intellectual authority was crucial for the success of the Augustinian theory during the Early Middle Ages<sup>28</sup>.

Nevertheless, the Church did not take a definitive stand on the issue<sup>29</sup>. This fact left open the possibility for a new interpretation to break the achieved consensus, something that finally took place between the twelfth and thirteenth century, during the aforementioned revolution in angelology. Peter Lombard's (c. 1100-1160) *Sentences* inaugurated this transformation. Following the circulation of this text, angels stopped being a contingent matter for Christian thinkers, they became an independent field of research, a formal part of Christian theology. The emergence of universities as permanent and formal educational institutions was essential to this transformation.

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<sup>23</sup> «Angels had no body at all. They were pure spirits and were created that way. They had no need for a body». David Jones, *Angels. A History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010, p. 46. «Corpus enim sine corruptione, non proprie dicitur caro et sanguis, sed corpus. Si enim caro est, corruptibilis atque mortalis est: si autem iam non moritur, iam non corruptibilis; et ideo sine corruptione manente specie, non iam caro, sed corpus dicitur». Augustine of Hippo, *Sermones ad populum* CCCLXII, 15, 17, p. 162.

<sup>24</sup> «Corpus iam coeleste et spirituale, corpus angelicum». Augustine of Hippo, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* CXLV, 3, ed. Eligius Dekkers - Iohannes Fraipont ("Corpus Christianorum Series Latina", 38), Brepols, Turnholti 1956, col. 185.

<sup>25</sup> Gillian Evans, *Augustine on Evil*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990, pp. 81-82.

<sup>26</sup> Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the construction of Witchcraft: Theology and popular belief*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 2003, pp. 41-43.

<sup>27</sup> «Sed una tegmen carnis habuit, alia vero nihil infirmum de carne gestavit. Angelus namque solummodo spiritus, homo vero et spiritus est et caro». Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* IV, 3, 4, in Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, vol. 75, Garnier Frères, Paris 1815-1875, col. 642. About Gregory the Great, see Giuseppe Cremascoli, «Corpus diaboli». *Sulla demonologia di Gregorio Magno*, in *Il Diavolo nel Medioevo, Atti del XLIX Convegno storico internazionale*, Fondazione Centro Italiano Di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, Todi 2012, pp. 55-76. «Lapsi vero in aeream qualitatem conversi sunt». Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* VIII, 11, 17 in Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, vol. 82, Garnier Frères, Paris 1815-1875, col. 316 A.

<sup>28</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer. The Devil in the Middle Ages*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-New York, 1984, pp. 94-99; S. Bonino, *Les anges et les Démons*, pp. 115-117; Dyan Elliot, *Fallen Bodies. Pollution, Sexuality and Demonology in the Middle Ages*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1999, p. 129; Philip Almond, *The Devil. A New Biography*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-New York, 2014, p. 113.

<sup>29</sup> The Second Council of Nicaea (787) adhered to the idea of ethereal bodies because even though angels were spiritual creatures, God was the only utterly immaterial being. Nevertheless, the Council never defined this notion as a Dogma of the Catholic Faith. As a matter of fact, none of the theories about angels' bodies, either before or after Nicaea, achieved that status. Alfred Vacant, *Angéologie dans les conciles et doctrine de l'Eglise sur les anges*, in A. Vacant - E. Mangenot (eds.), *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* I, coll. 1266-1267.

Scholars' renewed interest in nature also benefited from the return of forgotten physical and metaphysical classical categories via Arabian commentators<sup>30</sup>. In this sense, Jan Machielsen was right when he recently asserted that demonology was «the first properly interdisciplinary science, touching not only on theology and law, but on areas of natural philosophy and medicine as well»<sup>31</sup>.

The sum of all these developments disrupted the field of angelology. From this period on, angels and demons began being studied not solely nor mainly as God's ministers, as happened in Patristic sources, but in their natural and metaphysical features<sup>32</sup>. By reason of these changes, previous ideas concerning angelic bodies could be revised. Even though the notion of incorporeal spiritual beings was not unknown, Thomas Aquinas gave it logical consistency<sup>33</sup>. Aquinas addressed the problem in works such as *Summa Theologiae*, *Summa contra gentiles*, and *Scriptum super sententiis magistri Petri Lombardi*. He even wrote a specific treatise about spirits: *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*. In each of these major texts, the Dominican friar argued that angels and demons were utterly incorporeal. In his writings, spirit and immaterial became synonyms. This position was in part justified by the Principle of plenitude: for the Creation to be perfect, every type of ontological structures should exist<sup>34</sup>. By reason of this, at least one of God's creatures should be immaterial<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Sophie Page, *Medieval Magic*, in Owen Davies (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Witchcraft and Magic*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017, p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> Jan Machielsen, *Introduction: The science of demons*, in Jan Machielsen (ed.), *The Science of Demons. Early Modern Authors Facing Witchcraft and the Devil*, Routledge, London - New York 2020, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> D. Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, pp. 83; S. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 153; Isabel Iribarren - Martin Lenz, *The Role of Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry*, in Isabel Iribarren - Martin Lenz (eds.), *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry Their Function and Significance*, Ashgate, Hampshire-Burlington 2008, 3; P. Almond, *The Devil*, p. 77; A. Boureau, *Satan the Heretic*, pp. 143; Etienne Gilson, *Thomism The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Ontario 2002, p. 189.

<sup>33</sup> During the first millennium, Eastern theologian and mystic Pseudo-Dionysius pointed out that angels could be incorporeal. In the 1230s, Bishop of Paris William of Auvergne (1190-1249) endorsed this idea a few years after the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) considered bold to defend the notion of ethereal bodies. On Pseudo-Dionysius, see D. Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, pp. 31-33; Glen Peers, *Subtle Bodies. Representing Angels in Byzantium*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 2001. For William of Auvergne's position in the matter aforementioned, see Thomas de Mayo, *The Demonology of William of Auvergne: By Fire and Sword*, Edwin Mellen, New York 2007, pp. 125-128. It is important to stress that the Fourth Lateran Council did not anathematize the thesis of angel's subtle ethereal bodies. However, it also did not consider angelic absolute immateriality to be a *de fide* doctrine. A. Vacant, *Angéologie dans les conciles et doctrine de l'Eglise sur les anges*, in A. Vacant - E. Mangenot (ed.), *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* I, coll. 1269-1271.

<sup>34</sup> «Talis enim videtur esse universi perfectio, ut non desit ei aliqua natura quam possibile sit esse; propter quod singula dicuntur bona, omnia autem simul valde bona». Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis*, a.5, in *Opera Omnia* iussu Leonis XIII, XXI, v. 2, Studium fratrum praedicatorum, Paris 1982, p. 61.

<sup>35</sup> José Alvarado Marambio. *Dos alternativas de ontología angélica*, in «Cuestiones Teológicas» XLI, 95(2014), p. 83.

Spiritual beings were the link that connected the immaterial Creator (God) with the most important corporeal creatures (humans)<sup>36</sup>. Aquinas model was inspired by Aristotle's work, fully available for Western scholars during the course of the thirteenth century. In those ancient texts, the Italian friar found references to what the Greek philosopher denominated «intelligences» or «separated substances», entities without form or matter<sup>37</sup>. Due to Aquinas' titanic intellectual efforts to christianize Aristotelian ideas, angels and demons were considered as examples of those beings. This allowed the theologian to associate incorporeality with immateriality: angelical natures were separated creatures, which meant not only that they lacked bodies, but that they were utterly deprived of form and matter<sup>38</sup>.

These ideas differentiated Aquinas from the Church Fathers, but also from some of his contemporaries. First-millennium angelological tradition defended the idea that angels have bodies to distinguish them from God, the only immaterial being. This argument was rejected by the Dominican, who pointed out that even though every creature had a certain degree of materiality when compared to God, this did not preclude the fact that angels were themselves immaterial<sup>39</sup>. Since angels were intermediate creatures between God and humankind, their intrinsic qualities could be misinterpreted if compared to the extremes of the continuum. To clarify this idea, Aquinas gave an analogy: a warm body would feel cold if contrasted to a hot one, but hot if compared to a cold one, but that did not mean that its temperature was not intermediate<sup>40</sup>. Something similar happened with angels and demons. They could be considered corporeal in relation to God, but exactly the opposite if compared with humans. Neither of these cases, however, conveyed that spirits were not intrinsically immaterial or incorporeal<sup>41</sup>. The Deity's infinite superiority over any creature was not related to its immateriality, but to the fact

<sup>36</sup> Tiziana Suárez-Nani, *Les anges et la philosophie. Subjectivité et fonction cosmologique des substances séparées à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Vrin, Paris 2002, pp. 31-32.

<sup>37</sup> D. Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, pp. 6. On the influence of Aristotle in Aquinas, see Joseph Owens, *Aristotle and Aquinas*, in Norman Kretzmann - Eleonore Stump, *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 38-59.

<sup>38</sup> A. Vacant, *Angéologie de saint Thomas d'Aquin et des scolastiques postérieurs*, in Id. - E. Manganot (eds.), *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 1, coll. 1230-1231. «Impossibile est quod materia sit in substantiis spiritualibus». Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis*, a.1, p. 21. «Ostensum est autem quod nulla substantia intelligens est corpus. Relinquitur igitur quod non sit ex materia et forma composita», Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra gentiles* II, 50, *Opera Omnia* iussu Leonis XIII, XIV, Studium fratrum praedicatorum, Paris 1926, p. 163.

<sup>39</sup> «Dicendum quod solus Deus dicitur immaterialis et incorporeus, quia omnia eius simplicitati comparata, possunt reputari quasi corpora materialia, licet in se sint incorporea et immaterialia». Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis*, a.1, p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> «Quod sustantiae incorporeae medium sunt inter deum et creaturas incorporeas. Medium autem comparatur ad unum extremum, videtur alterum extremum; sicut tepidum comparatur calido, videtur frigidum. Et hac ratione dicitur quod angeli, Deo comparati, sunt materiales et corporei: non quod in eis sit aliquid de natura corporea». Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 50, a.1, ed. Fr. F. Barbado Viejo, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid 1950, III, p. 84.

<sup>41</sup> «Dicendum, quod angeli dicuntur corporei in comparatione ad Deum, quia conveniunt cum corporibus in quadam proprietate, quae est loco definiri, in quo corpora a Deo distant; non

that it was a simple, not composite being. God, thus, was pure act; his act of being («esse») was not distinct from its essence («essentia»)<sup>42</sup>. This quality evinced the insurmountable gap between the Creator and his creatures<sup>43</sup>. The use of Aristotelian metaphysical notions like act and potency allowed Aquinas to advocate for angelic immateriality without questioning God's infinite supremacy and perfection.

Aquinas' ideas collided with Bonaventure's (1221-1274), the other great angelologist of the thirteenth century. A detailed analysis of their debate is impossible within this article. In a few words, the Franciscan theologian rejected the idea of angelic absolute immateriality because he adhered to hylomorphism, a theory that argued that all creatures (angels included) were made of matter and form<sup>44</sup>. As Keck explained, Bonaventure considered matter as a metaphysical construct «equivalent to indeterminate potency, something capable of being rendered into existence by being joined to a form». By reason of this, matter could be spiritual (if attached to a spiritual form) or corporeal (if attached to a corporeal form)<sup>45</sup>. For Bonaventure, then, matter could be incorporeal, something demised as impossible by Aquinas. French philosopher Étienne Gilson pointed out that Bonaventure's interpretation was essentially metaphysical, while Aquinas' was inspired by physics. For the Dominican friar, matter amounted to corporeity and should not be considered by its potential but by its real and worldly existence<sup>46</sup>. Hence, spirits were incorporeal by reason of their lack of dimensions and vice versa<sup>47</sup>. In a certain way, Bonaventure's position was philo-Augustinian, it supported the existence of demonic and angelic bodies in a way similar to Augustine's, but that was considered absurd by Aquinas<sup>48</sup>.

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quod aliquo modo naturam corporalem habeant». Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi* II, d. 8, q. 1, a. 2, ed. R.P. Mandonnet, P. Lethielleux, Paris 1929, II, p. 205.

<sup>42</sup> S. Bonino, *Les anges et les Démons*, pp. 124 and 131-133. For a thorough study of this matter in Aquinas' thought, see John Cheng, *The Meaning and Challenge of St. Thomas's Metaphysical Concept of God as Ipsum Esse Subsistens Today*, Fu Jen Religious International Studies 1, 1 2007, pp. 149-170.

<sup>43</sup> «Non est autem opinandum, quamvis substantiae intellectuales non sint corporeae, nec ex materia et forma compositae, nec in materia existentes sicut formae materiales, quod propter hoc divinae simplicitati adaequantur. Invenitur enim in eis aliqua compositio ex eo quod non est idem in eis esse et quod est». Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* II, 52, p. 166.

<sup>44</sup> J. Alvarado Marambio, *Dos alternativas de ontología angélica*, p. 81; D. Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, pp. 94; W. Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, pp. 67-68. For a comparative analysis of Aquinas and Bonaventure's demonological ideas, see D. Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, pp. 7-80. Gilson, *Thomism The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 193-198; S. Bonino, *Les anges et les Démons*, pp. 122-126; J. Alvarado Marambio, *Dos alternativas de ontología angélica*, pp. 75-96.

<sup>45</sup> D. Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, pp. 99; D. Elliot, *Fallen Bodies. Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages*, p. 134.

<sup>46</sup> Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, St. Anthony Guild Press, Paterson 1965, pp. 222-226; P. Almond, *The Devil*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>47</sup> «Angeli sint incorporei, et omnino absque dimensionibus quantitativis». Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis*, a.8, p. 81.

<sup>48</sup> J.B. Russell, *Lucifer*, pp. 172-173. «Dicendum quod impossibile est substantiam spiri-

Although accepted by later generations of theologians, Aquinas' ideas in these matters were never consecrated by the Church as *de fide* doctrines. Angelic immateriality was considered as *fidei proxima* since the Fourth Lateran Council, which meant that even though discussing it was incautious, it was not heretical<sup>49</sup>. As a matter of fact, despite his dismissal of Aquinas' theory, Bonaventure was canonized (1482) and received the title of Seraphic Doctor from the Catholic Church in 1558<sup>50</sup>.

The immateriality of spirits, however, led to a paradox that jeopardized Aquinas' angelological theory: how was it possible for incorporeal beings to be seen and felt as showed not just by folkloric tales or literature, but by several biblical passages? Always resourceful, the Angelic Doctor affirmed that although angels and demons lacked bodies naturally united to them, they could assume fabricated ones made from air. As Aquinas summed up in his *Summa Theologica*, air in its original form lacked shape, colour, and plasticity. Nonetheless, these features could appear if the air was condensed, as was the case with clouds. Thus, demons could simulate a body of any size or form from thickened air<sup>51</sup>. This was not a miracle, as it was not outside the order assigned to nature by God, rather it was an action within angels' (preter) natural capacities. Air was not transformed into something else, as its natural properties were not changed.

The angelic/demonic body, then, was a representation, something virtual that existed between reality and fiction<sup>52</sup>. It lacked biological functions and virtues enjoyed by real human bodies such as breathing, eating, speaking, and the possibility of having sex. These actions could be simulated but not truly performed<sup>53</sup>. As explained by Serge-Thomas Bonino, these bodies were not animated from the inside (as human's) but from the outside. Demons did not join these *simulacra* like matter joined form, but in an operative way, like a motor joined a mobile. Virtual bodies, then, could imitate features they did not have, like phonation or the act of moving<sup>54</sup>. It is important to stress that demons did not need bodies to exist or to produce effects in the material world. Their utility was *ad hoc*: spirits fabricated them when they considered

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tualem corpori aereo uniri». Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis*, a.7, p. 75.

<sup>49</sup> D. Elliot, *Fallen Bodies. Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages*, p. 108.

<sup>50</sup> J. Alvarado Marambio, *Dos alternativas de ontologia angélica*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>51</sup> «Dicendum quod, licet aer, in sua raritate manens, non retineant figuram neque colorem; quando tamen condensatur, et figurari et colorari potest, sicut patet in nubibus. Et sic angeli assumunt corpora ex aere, condensando ipsum virtute divina, quantum necesse est ad corporis assumendi formationem». Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 51, a.2, ed. Fr. F. Barbado Viejo, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid 1950, III, p. 128.

<sup>52</sup> W. Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, pp. 65-66; Joad Raymond, «*With the tongue of angels*»: *angelic conversations in Paradise Lost and Seventeenth-Century England*, in Peter Marshall - Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Angels in the Early Modern World*, p. 264.

<sup>53</sup> W. Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, pp. 62.

<sup>54</sup> S. Bonino, *Les anges et les Démons*, pp. 125-126.

it useful, and discarded them whenever they wanted. In conclusion, Thomistic spirits, though incorporeal, could create virtual bodies for themselves.

### 3. Witchcraft Pamphlets

Between the passing of the 1563 Witchcraft Act, the first statute against witches effectively implemented by judiciary authorities, and the publication of the first local demonological tract, Reginald Scot's (c.1534-1599) *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), English people could only know about witches and demons through three different means: by hearing church sermons, by attending witch trials, or by reading pamphlets or other periodic publications that reported stories about them. In the first two cases, people should be physically present in order to know what was said. Pamphlets, on the contrary, recorded in writing judicial depositions, examinations, and indictments, thus providing information to those who did not attend the trials<sup>55</sup>. These documents, designed to be read or absorbed by popular audiences, were not exclusive to England. During the Early Modern period, different European territories like Scotland, German-speaking lands, and Sweden spread stories about witchcraft and demons through similar reports<sup>56</sup>.

Concerning England, pamphlets were produced across the entire period. The earliest examples fully preserved dated back to 1566, while the latest reported witch trials from the 1710s<sup>57</sup>. During this 150-year span, pamphlets were demanded in every part of the kingdom. Londoners could acquire them in different sales points, while those who lived in the countryside bought them at fairs or from itinerant peddlers who brought ballads, broadsheet and news about extraordinary events to the most distant corners of the realm<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 537. Regarding pamphlets readers and audiences, see Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, Routledge, New York-London 2017, pp. 12 and 152; Carla Suhr, *Publishing for the Masses. Early Modern English Witchcraft Pamphlets*, Société Néophilologique, Helsinki 2011, pp. 15-124. On the diffusion of written texts and popular consumption, see Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2001, pp. 1-50; Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991, pp. 257-315; Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, 445-502.

<sup>56</sup> Marion Gibson, *Pamphlets*, in *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition*, in Richard Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft*, p. 873. Nevertheless, England was the British territory where more witchcraft pamphlets were published. Peter Maxwell-Stuart, *The British Witch. The Biography*, Amberley, Gloucestershire 2014, p. 152.

<sup>57</sup> James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness. Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, Penguin Books, London 1996, p. 71; Peter Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-hunting and Politics in Early Modern England*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016, p. 278. For a compilation of early and late pamphlets, see James Sharpe - Richard Golden-Marion Gibson (eds.), *English Witchcraft, 1560-1736. Early English Trial Pamphlets*, vol. 2, Routledge, London 2003; James Sharpe - Richard Golden - Peter Elmer (eds.), *English Witchcraft, 1560-1736. The Later English Trial Pamphlets*, vol. 5, Routledge, London 2003

<sup>58</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Harper Torchbook, London

Pamphlets were small in size (often octavos) and had a limited number of sheets (usually eight to twelve)<sup>59</sup>. They cost from a penny to a few shillings, which means that they were accessible to all except for the poorest<sup>60</sup>. Even though the fact that approximately twenty percent of men and ten percent of women living in rural areas were not illiterate, pamphlets and other short texts were frequently read in public. Because of this, the information contained in such documents was available even to those who could not purchase them or were unable to read<sup>61</sup>.

The absence of theoretical foundations characterized cheap prints. This type of popular literature was more descriptive than analytical; it aimed more to tell what happened than to explain how it was possible. As for demons, one of their most important features in pamphlets was their physicality<sup>62</sup>. Witchcraft pamphlets represented demonic beings as corporeal entities that intervened in the material world on a daily basis. Encounters between humans and unclean spirits were, in the first place, visual. In *A true and just Recorde* (1582), a pamphlet which described the Saint Osyth witch trials, young Henry Sellys stated that he saw a black spirit under the guise of his sister grabbing his brother's leg<sup>63</sup>. Elizabeth Sowthern, one of the main witches of the Lancashire trials reported by Thomas Potts in *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1612), confessed that her first contact with a demon took place in the forest of Pendle Hill, when the creature showed himself «in the shape of a Boy, the one halfe of his Coate blacke, and the other browne»<sup>64</sup>. Tibb, so was the spirit named, was part of Elizabeth's life since this meeting until she died in prison in 1612. The witches indicted during the East Anglia trials of 1645-1647 also referred to anthropomorphic demons. Before Matthew Hopkins (1620-1647) and John Stearne (1610-1670) published their treatises, popular literature exploited the growing wave of arrests and the increasing attention people paid to witches. *A True Relation of the Arraignment of Thirty Witches*

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1979, p. 253. The Licensing Act prohibited the existence of prints outside London, with the exception of universities. Barbara Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact England, 1550-1720*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-New York-London 2000, 87.

<sup>59</sup> Certainly, some pamphlets such as *A true and just Recorde* (1582) or *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches* (1612) were considerable extensive. The modern editions of both documents have more than 100 and 200 pages, respectively.

<sup>60</sup> M. Gibson, *Pamphlets*, p. 873; Jonathan Barry, *Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture*, in Tim Harris (ed.), *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850*, St. Martin's Press, New York 1995, 80.

<sup>61</sup> David Cressy: *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1980, p. 176.

<sup>62</sup> J. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 75. Darren Oldridge. *The Devil in Tudor and Stuart England*, The History Press, Gloucestershire 2011, p. 79. Nathan Johnstone. *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006, p. 7.

<sup>63</sup> *A true and just Recorde*, D.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Potts, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches* (London, 1612), B2v-B3. Potts published his pamphlet in November of 1612, less than four months after the end of the Lancashire judicial procedure. Philip Almond. *The Lancashire Witches. A Chronicle of Sorcery and Death on Pendle Hill*, I.B Tauris & Co. Ltd, London-New York 2012, pp. 1-2.

at *Chensford in Essex* (1645) alludes to the experience of Rebecca West from Lawford (Essex), who told that one night «the Diuel appeared unto her againe in the shape of a handsome young man, saying that he came to marry her»<sup>65</sup>.

Even though several pamphlets mentioned them as taking human form, demons usually preferred to appear as animals. In *The Examination of certaine Wytches* (1566), Elizabeth Francis acknowledged to have learned her witchcraft skills from her grandmother Eve at the age of twelve years old. This transmission of knowledge took place during a peculiar rite of passage where Eve asked Elizabeth «to renounce God and his Word, and to geve of her bloudd to Sathan (as she termed it) whyche she delyvered her in lykenesse of a whyte spotted Catte».<sup>66</sup> In his *A brief treatise* (1579), Richard Gallis explained that «the devil himself in a Cats likeness» lurked around his bed. More than forty years later, Elizabeth Sawyer asserted that her personal spirit showed to herself «alwayes in the shape of a dogge and of two collars, sometimes of blacke and sometimes of white»<sup>67</sup>. The passages relate directly to familiars (also referred to as imps), one of the most idiosyncratic concepts of English witchcraft folklore. Historians defined them as spiritual entities that assumed an animal shape and accompanied witches in their daily life<sup>68</sup>. Among the most common forms adopted by familiars were domestic, farm, and forest animals such as dogs, cats, mice, toads, horses, hogs, birds, and weasels<sup>69</sup>.

The corporeal character that the spirits mentioned above had in popular imagery caused them to be not only visible but also tangible. Elizabeth Sowtherns, for example, was the victim of numerous acts of violence by her familiars. Her demonic cat Tibb shoved her into a ditch and shed her milk because she refused to help two other witches in the fabrication of clay pic-

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<sup>65</sup> *A True Relation of the Arraignment of Thirty Witches at Chensford in Essex* (London, 1645), 4, Cornell University Library's Witchcraft Collection, <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=witch;cc=witch;rgn=main;view=text;idno=wit096>.

<sup>66</sup> *The Examination and Confession of certaine Wytches*, A6v

<sup>67</sup> Henry Goodcole, *The wonderfull discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a witch* (London, 1621): C2v.

<sup>68</sup> J. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, pp. 72-73; Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits. Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic*, Sussex Academic Press, Sussex 2010, p. 3; Patrick Patterson, «The Debate over the Corporeality of Demons in England, c.1670-1700», M.A diss., University of North Texas 2009, p. 17; Francesca Matteoni, *Il famiglia della Strega. Sangue stregoneria nell' Inghilterra moderna*, Aras Edizioni, Fano 2014, pp. 87-112. Familiars could also assume human form, although less frequently. Tibb, the familiar spirit that initiated Elizabeth Sowtherns from Pendle Hill into witchcraft, first showed itself as a boy, but later as a cat, a hare, and a dog. Years before, John Walsh also pointed out that his familiar «would somtyme come unto hym lyke a gray blackish Culver, and sometime lyke a brended Dog, and sometimes lyke a man in all proportions». *The Examination of John Walsh* (London, 1566), A5v.

<sup>69</sup> E. Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits*, p. 63; C.R. Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, p. 63. Fulya Arpacı, *Tares among the wheat: Early Modern English Witchcraft in its Socio-Cultural and Religious Context*, M.A diss., Bilkent University 2008, p. 52.

tures to bewitch a local family<sup>70</sup>. Her sufferings did not end there. Her sight problems were caused by Fancie, other familiar, who had taken «most of her sigh».<sup>71</sup> Later on in her life, the same spirit took the form of a bear and threw her against the floor only because she refused to talk to it<sup>72</sup>.

Indeed, there were other forms of bodily contact beyond shoves and blows that demonstrate the physical nature of the relationship between humans and familiars. Imps touched witches in an intimate way, in which romanticism sometimes mixed with vampirism and breastfeeding<sup>73</sup>. *The Examination and Confession of certayne Wytches* (1566) gives a perfect example. When Elizabeth Francis received the cat Sathan, her grandmother taught her to feed it with «breade and mylke».<sup>74</sup> Every time the spirit successfully accomplished a task requested by Elizabeth, she rewarded it with food such as dairy products, bread, or chicken, but also with a drop of her own blood, as happened when Sathan killed the hogs of one of her neighbors: «she ... willed him to kyll three of this father Kersyes hogges, whiche he dyd, and returning agayne told her so, and she rewarded hym as before, wyth a chicken and a droppe of her bloud»<sup>75</sup>.

Over the years, familiar spirits described in the pamphlets abandoned regular food altogether and nourished themselves exclusively with witches' bodily fluids. During the Saint Osyth trials of 1582, Thomas Rabbet remembered that the familiar spirit of her mother, Ursley Kemp, sucked blood from her arms and «other places of her body». After this statement, Kemp confessed that her spirit sucked from her «left thigh»<sup>76</sup>. Progressively, the contact between witches and familiars became more erotic. During her judicial examination in 1589, Joan Prentice affirmed that Bid, her familiar spirit, always showed up by night. In the shape of a ferret, the creature «leapt up upon her lap, and from thence up to her bosome, and laying his former feete upon her left shoulder, sucked blood out of her cheeke»<sup>77</sup>. By the dawn of the seventeenth century, familiars went one step further. Alizon Device, one of the accused witches of

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<sup>70</sup> «Tibb in the shape of a black cat, appeared unto her this Examinee, and said, turne back againe, and doe as they doe: To whom this Examinee said, what are they doing? Whereunto the said Spirit said; they are makinfe three pictures: whereupon she asked whose pictures they were? Whereunto the said Spirit said: they arethe pictures of Christopher Nutter, Robert Nutter, and Marie, wife of the said Robert Nutter. But this Examinee denying to goe back to helpe them to make the pictures aforesaid; the said Spirits seeming to be angrie, therefore shoved or pushed this Examinee into the ditch, and so shed the Milke which this Examinee had in a can». T. Potts, *The Wonderful Discoverie of Witches*, E-Ev-.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibi*, E3.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibi*, E3v.

<sup>73</sup> On witches as anti-mothers, see Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England*, Cornell University Press, London-Ithaca-New York 1999. For the sexual nature of the encounters between witches and their familiars, see C.R. Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, pp. 116-147.

<sup>74</sup> *The Examination and Confession of certayne Wytches*, A6v.

<sup>75</sup> *The Examination and Confession of certayne Wytches*, B-Bv.

<sup>76</sup> *A true and jut Recorde*, B2.

<sup>77</sup> *The Apprehension and confession of three notorious Witches*, B2.

Lancashire, breastfed a black dog in exchange for the punishment of a pedlar that refused to sell her some pins<sup>78</sup>.

It did not matter if demons became visible in an animal or human form, nor if they did it to beat witches or to suck blood from their bodies. In neither of the pamphlets mentioned above is possible to find information about the nature, density or composition of demonic bodies<sup>79</sup>. Depositions of alleged witches transcribed in those documents described spirits as entities that appeared to be tridimensional, to have color, and to be capable of moving and speaking. Demons seemed to be corporeal beings, to have real, fleshy bodies. At least nothing in pamphlets forbade to think about them in that way<sup>80</sup>. Neither judicial authorities, witnesses, alleged witches, nor pamphlet authors considered such information to be relevant. A theological or academic approximation to demonology did not concern any of them.

#### 4. *Demonologists and the pamphlets*

A century and a half after the consolidation of demonology in the thirteenth century, the era of the witch trials began in Western Europe. From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, though unevenly, the crime of witchcraft obsessed secular and religious European authorities, causing the execution of approximately 50,000 people, of which the majority of them were women<sup>81</sup>. Early Modern witches were believed to have made pacts with the devil and use harmful magic to torment people and destroy their goods through the power of demons. Prosecutions were central to the flourishing of scholar treatises which explored the complexities of witchcraft in a systematic and theoretical manner in order to establish what and what not to believe about witches, demons and the relationship between them<sup>82</sup>. Consequently, every treatise of witchcraft published during this period was essentially a treatise on demonology. Nowadays, the authors of this literature are called demonologists, although most of them came from dissimilar intellectual backgrounds such as theology, philosophy, law and medicine<sup>83</sup>. Despite of this fact, En-

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<sup>78</sup> T. Potts, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches*, R3v. Millar states that this was the first mention of a familiar sucking directly from a witch's breast. C.R. Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, p. 120.

<sup>79</sup> Garthine Walker, *The Strangeness of the Familiar: Witchcraft and the Law in Early Modern England*, in Angela McShane - Garthine Walker (eds.), *The Extraordinary and the Everyday in Early Modern England Essays in Celebration of the Work of Bernard Capp*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke-New York 2010, p. 111.

<sup>80</sup> E. Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits*, p. 61.

<sup>81</sup> B. Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, p. 1; Julian Goodare, *The European Witch-Hunt*, Routledge, London and New York 2011, p. 27.

<sup>82</sup> Stuart Clark, *Demonology*, in Richard Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft. The Western Tradition*, California, ABC Clío 2003, pp. 259-260.

<sup>83</sup> Michael Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, The Scarecrow Press, Lanham 2003, p. 36.

glish demonologists were mostly theologians, pastors or preachers<sup>84</sup>. In the 1580s, when demonological writing rose in England, witchcraft pamphlets were the only available written works on the matter. Such publications did not go unnoticed for scholar authors on witchcraft.

Philip Almond has signaled that Reginald Scot (c. 1534-1599) made references to the trials surveyed in *A Rehearsall both straung and true*, *A brief treatise*, and *A true and just Recorde*<sup>85</sup>. His thoughts on these reports were largely negative. Richard Gallis, autor of the second pamphlet, and Brian Darcy, who was justice of the Peace during the trials outlined in the third, were harshly criticised in *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Besides considering Gallis to be a «mad man» and Darcy a «franticke», both were cataloged as bloodthirsty fanatics<sup>86</sup>. Moreover, the blood they had on their hands was from innocent people. From Scot's point of view, alleged witches were women «old, lame, curst or melancholike» that confessed imaginary and utterly impossible crimes due to emotional or mental disorders, or by reason of judicial coercion<sup>87</sup>. Scot did not forget the fabulous skills of Father Rosimond, mentioned by Elizabeth Stile in *A Rehearsall*. The Kentish gentleman considered those who said «they can transubstantiate themselves and others, and take the forms and shapes of asses, woolves, ferrets, coves, apes, horses, dogs» to be worse than pagans<sup>88</sup>.

Similar arguments were advanced in George Gifford's (c. 1548-1620) treatises. In his *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcrafts* (1593), M.B asks Daniel about the existence of witches who dealt with three, four and even five familiar spirits which assumed animal shapes like cats, weasels, mice and toads, were fed with milk, chicken or blood, and were used as instruments of revenge to torment innocent people. Even though Gifford did not mention any witchcraft pamphlet, M. B's question could have been inspired by some of them. The idea of witches working with several imps could have referred to the confessions of Ursley Kemp recorded in *A True and Just Record* eleven years before. In 1566, Francis and John Walsh alluded to spirits who were fed with chicken. Finally, each of the different animal shapes allegedly assumed by familiars according to M.B were mentioned in the most important pamphlets published before Gifford's *Dialogue*<sup>89</sup>. Years

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<sup>84</sup> The exceptions were John Cotta (Physitian), Reginald Scot (lay gentlemen), Mathew Hopkins and John Stearne (witchfinders).

<sup>85</sup> J. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 51. P. Almond, *England's First Demonologist*, pp. 35-49.

<sup>86</sup> Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, London 1584 (repr., Elliot Stock, London 1886, pp. 13-14 and 455-456).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibi*, p. 88.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibi*, pp. 8 y 52.

<sup>89</sup> It is important to remember that *The examination and confession of certaine Wytches* (1566), *A Detection of damnable driftes* (1579), *A true and just Recorde* (1582), and *The Apprehension and confession of three notorious Witches* (1589) reported witch trials that took place in Essex: in Chemsford the first two and the last, in Saint Osyth the third. Maldon, the town where Gifford lived and preached for many years, was about ten miles from Chemsford

before, Gifford had pointed out that witches were absolutely deprived of any kind of magical power. He wrote thus in his *Discourse*: «It is the common opinion among the blind ignorant people that the cause and the procuring of harme by witchcraft, proceedeth from the Witch»<sup>90</sup>. It is possible that Gifford's quote might have been inspired by *A detection of damnable driffites*. In that pamphlet, John Chaundeler accused Elleine Smith of having sickened his body after she uttered a verbal threat. Both the victim and the alleged witch were from Maldon, the Essex parish where Gifford was appointed in 1582. Even though the report was published three years before his arrival, the clergyman was familiar with the religious beliefs of the local population, as Peter Elmer has demonstrated recently<sup>91</sup>.

Theologian Richard Bernard (1568-1641) was no stranger to witchcraft cases outlined in pamphlets. He was acquainted with Thomas Potts' text about the Lancashire trials of 1612, and also with *The Most strange and admirable discoverie of the three witches of Warboys* (1593), which described one of the most famous cases of demonic possession of the period<sup>92</sup>. He also mentioned Joan Willimot, one of the main accused on the anonymous *The Wonderful Discovery of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower* (1619)<sup>93</sup>. Furthermore, Bernard knew the names of the victims of the witches of Northamptonshire, whose trial was recorded in *The Witches of Northamptonshire* (1612)<sup>94</sup>. In relation with the concern on demonologists

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and less than thirty from Saint Osyth. Moreover, Marion Gibson pointed out that Gifford's criticism of popular ideas about witchcraft was inspired by the 1582 trials. M. Gibson, *Witchcraft and Society in England and America*, p. 25. Furthermore, in his first treatise, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devills by Witches and Sorcerers* (1587), Gifford might have had those trials in mind when he warned about the dangers of using kids as witnesses on witchcraft trials: «Yea sundry tymes the evidence of children is taken accusing their owne mothers, that they did see them give milke unto little things which they kept in wooll, The children coming to yeares of discretion confesse they were entised to accuse. What vile and monstrouse impieties are here committed». G. Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devills by Witches and Sorcerers*, pp. 51. The pamphlet written or commissioned by Brian Darcy gives account of the deposition of Thomas Rabbet, Ursley Kemp's eight years old son: «The saide Thomas Rabbet saith, that his said Mother Ursley Kemp alias Grey hath foure severall spirites». *A true and just Recorde*, 2A3v.

<sup>90</sup> G. Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devills by Witches and Sorcerers*, p. 43.

<sup>91</sup> P. Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-hunting and Politics in Early Modern England*, p. 42.

<sup>92</sup> «All have not one familiar spirit, but some have moe then others. Some indeed have but one, as old Dembdike: some have two, as Chattox, Ioane Flower, and Willimot; some three, as one Arthur Bill: some nine, as Mother Samuels of Warboys». Richard Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jury Men*, London 1627, p. 126 (Cornell University Library's Witchcraft Collection, <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=witch;idno=wit140>).

<sup>93</sup> «These spirits are received of one from another Witch, as Ioane Willimot had a spirit by William Berry her Master, who received it by his blowing into her mouth. This Ioane afterward helped Ellen Greene to two spirits. Many such instances may be brought». R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jury Men*, p. 170.

<sup>94</sup> «To fetch the suspected, and to scratch him or her to get blood, as one Mr Auery and his sister did scratch two Witches, and drew blood of them at Northampton». R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jury Men*, p. 204. According to Todd Pettigrew, Stephanie Pettigrew and Jacques Bailly it is very possible that Cotta alluded to the Northamptonshire trials in his *The*

over witchcraft pamphlets, Henry Holland (1556-1603) warned in his treatise about the lack of certainty and conceptual clarity of such publications: «That many fabulous pamphlets are published, which giue little light and lesse prooffe vnto this point in controuersie»<sup>95</sup>.

### 5. Aquinas' English Heirs

At least since Elizabeth's crowning in 1558, Calvin was the most influential continental theologian in Reformed England<sup>96</sup>. As stated previously, the French reformer considered late medieval interest in angels and demons to be irrelevant, a distraction from truly Christian concerns. The author of *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was even more pessimistic than Augustine regarding human capacities to learn about angelic natures<sup>97</sup>. He made, nonetheless, two positive references to this issue. First, he distanced himself from the Sadducees and accepted the reality of angels and demons. Secondly, he defined both kinds of entities as spirits, but without giving any further clarification about the meaning of the term<sup>98</sup>. As for other major magisterial reformers, a «healthy scepticism» characterized his stance on the matter<sup>99</sup>. His break with medieval tradition was meant to be complete and without compromises. However, since Scriptures mentioned angels and demons, their existence could not be denied altogether. Therefore, Protestants apparently had two courses of action: either limiting their analysis of angels to what was written in the Bible (Calvin's position) or returning to Patristic paradigms, those outlined before the corruption of the Church during the Middle Ages<sup>100</sup>.

However, English demonologists followed a different path. Concerning the thorny issue of demonic bodies, they did not limit themselves to consider spirits as fleshless and boneless beings, such as Christ had done in the Bible. The only exception was Reginald Scot, who utterly rejected spiritual

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*infallible, true and assured witch*. T. Pettigrew - S. Pettigrew - J. Bailly, *The Major Works of John Cotta*, pp. 27-30.

<sup>95</sup> Henry Holland, *A Treatise against Witchcraft*, London 1590, p. 39, (Early English Books Online, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A03468.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>).

<sup>96</sup> See Andrew Pettegree, *The Spread of Calvin's Thought*, in Donald McKim (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Calvin*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, pp. 207-224; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2001; Peter Lake, *Calvinism and the English Church*, in «Past & Present» cxiv, 1(1987), pp. 32-76.

<sup>97</sup> Joad Raymond, *Milton's Angels. The Early Modern Imagination*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010, pp. 36-38.

<sup>98</sup> «Il est bien démontré qu'ils ont une nature ou une *essence*». J. Calvin, *Institution de la Religion Chrétienne*, p. 77.

<sup>99</sup> The expression is from Laura Sangha, *Incorporeal Substances': Discerning Angels in Later Seventeenth-Century England*, in Clare Copeland - Jan Machielsen (eds.), *Angels of Light? Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2013, p. 263.

<sup>100</sup> T. Bonino, *Les anges et les démons*, p. 94; Alexandra Walsham, *Angels and idols in England's Long Reformation*, in Peter Marshall - Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Angels in the Early Modern World*, pp. 135-136.

interventions in the material world because spirits lacked the properties of human or animal bodies<sup>101</sup>. Thus, according to his *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), neither angels nor demons could act in the physical sphere<sup>102</sup>. Nevertheless, later English authors embraced Aquinas' position, distancing themselves from Scot and, more importantly, from Augustine and Calvin.

Even though reluctant about complex theorizations on demons, Gifford addressed the subject. While discussing demonic agility and speed, the Puritan preacher asserted that their lack of matter caused it: «such quickness is also in the divels: for their nature being spirituall, and not loden with any heavie matter as our bodies are»<sup>103</sup>. Spiritual creatures, then, were utterly different from humans by reason of their immateriality. Physician John Cotta (1575-1650) reached a similar conclusion. His treatise classified all created substances in three groups: corporeal, mixed, and spiritual. The first group included almost every physical and visible element in nature: «the heavens, the celestiall bodies of the Starres, of the Sunne, of the Moone; the bodies of the elements, and all elementarie substances from them derived and composed». The second group referred exclusively to human beings, the only creatures composed by «a naturall body and understanding soule». Finally, «spirituall substances are either Angels, or Divels, or soules of men after death, separated from their bodies»<sup>104</sup>. The last words of the quote are fundamental to this article: angels and demons, just as human souls after death, were separated substances, that is to say, not naturally united to any kind of body. According to Cotta, being a spirit necessarily entailed being incorporeal<sup>105</sup>.

Between the publication of Gifford and Cotta's treatises, William Perkins' (1558-1602) sermons about witchcraft were posthumously compiled in *A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (1608). Stuart Clark wrote about the theologian that he tried to «translate into practical, pastoral terms the Calvinism of Elizabethan Cambridge», including his views about witchcraft<sup>106</sup>. Even though Clark is right in his appreciation, it is possible to find that Perkins distanced his demonological ideas from Calvinist orthodoxy and

<sup>101</sup> «For the divell is a spirit, and hath neither flesh nor bones». R. Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, p. 41.

<sup>102</sup> See Sydney Anglo, *Reginald Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft*, in Sydney Anglo (ed.), *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, Routledge, London 1977, pp. 106-139; Philip Almond, *England's First Demonologist. Reginald Scot & The Discoverie of witchcraft*, I.B Tauris & Co. Ltd, London-New York 2011, pp. 71-116; George Modestin, *Le gentleman, la sorcière et le diable: Reginald Scot un anthropologue social avant la lettre?*, in «Medievales» 44(2003), pp. 1-12; Benjamin Bertram, *The Time is Out of Joint. Skepticism in Shakespeare's England*, University of Delaware Press, Newark 2004, pp. 28-57.

<sup>103</sup> George Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devills by Witches and Sorcerers*, London 1587, p. 20 (Cornell University Library's Witchcraft Collection, <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?e=witch;idno=wit052>).

<sup>104</sup> John Cotta. *The infallible, true and assured witch*, London 1625, pp. 38-39 (Cornell University Library's Witchcraft Collection, <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/textidx?e=witch;cc=witch;rgn=main;view=text;idno=wit036>).

<sup>105</sup> «The workes of Spirits are limited to no corporall substance or body». *Ibi*, p. 31.

<sup>106</sup> S. Clark, *Protestant Demonology: Sin, Superstition, and Society (c. 1520-c.1630)*, p. 55.

*sola scriptura* boundaries. While criticizing those who denied the existence of pacts or physical contacts between humans and demons, Perkins pointed out that if angelic natures could have a covenant with God, «the most spiritual being», even more so they could with creatures «whose substance is not so pure and spirituall»<sup>107</sup>. Certainly, these passages do not clarify if Perkins believed God to be the only utterly spiritual entity as Augustine affirmed or if, following Aquinas' approach, «spiritual» was not an absolute but a relative category. Nonetheless, some paragraphs later the theologian removed every possible doubt: Satan and witches had different natures, the former was spiritual, the latter were corporeal. Demons, thus: «hath not a bodily substance, as man hath»<sup>108</sup>.

The obscure clergyman Alexander Roberts provided another example<sup>109</sup>. If previous demonological texts considered spirits as separated substances and defended the doctrine of the absolute immateriality of angelic natures, *A Treatise of Witchcraft* (1616) took a step further: his concepts and choice of words were utterly Thomistic. After dismissing the possibility that demons were corporeal, Roberts contrasted Aquinas and Bonaventure's ideas without naming them. To defend the immateriality thesis, but also God's ontological superiority over everything, the author paraphrased arguments from the *Summa Theologica*: «yet is hee a simple essence, free from all division, multiplication, composition, accidents, incorporeall, spirituall, and inuisible. But in Angelicall creatures, though there be no Physicall composition of matter and form, or a soul and a body; yet is there a metaphysicall, being substances consisting of an act and possibility, subject and accident»<sup>110</sup>. Despite being incorporeal, the existence of a potential state in them placed angels and demons under God in the hierarchy of Creation. «Essence», «incorporeal», «matter», «form», «possibility», «act», «accident»: Roberts' treatise was a reserve of Aristotelian-Thomistic concepts in Early Stuart England.<sup>111</sup> This was not a mere coincidence on a specific matter; on the contrary, this was the complete adoption of an argument, with its explications, causes, and consequences.

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<sup>107</sup> William Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, London 1608, p. 42 (Cornell University Library's Witchcraft Collection, <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=witch;idno=wit075>).

<sup>108</sup> *Ibi*, p. 42.

<sup>109</sup> Roberts' birth and death dates are unknown.

<sup>110</sup> Alexander Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft*, London 1616, pp. 33-34 (Cornell University Library's Witchcraft Collection, <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=witch;idno=wit171>)

<sup>111</sup> James Sharpe and Euan Cameron referred to the lasting influence of Aristotle's ideas in English intellectual elite during the Early Modern Period. However, their assertions were general in character, and did not allude to demonology. J. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, pp. 258-259; Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250-1750*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010, p. 158. In their recent compilation of John Cotta's major works, Todd Pettigrew, Stephanie Pettigrew and Jacques Bailly highlighted intellectual influence of the Greek philosopher on the English physician. Todd Pettigrew - Stephanie Pettigrew - Jacques Bailly, *The Major Works of John Cotta*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2018, pp. 32-37.

One of the outcomes of accepting the immateriality of angels and demons was the need to explain how they could act in the material world. Following different biblical stories, Gifford, Cotta and Richard Bernard agreed that demons could be visible<sup>112</sup>. To solve the apparent paradox, Gifford affirmed that every time a spirit appeared in a visible form, it was «an apparition and counterfeit shewe of a bodie»<sup>113</sup>. Similarly, Cotta pointed out that demons assumed visible forms.<sup>114</sup> English authors interpreted «assumed bodies» in two different ways. The first one had to do with real anatomies. Perkins referred that demons could join body parts from different humans or animals to form a new body and animate it from the inside, as in a demonic possession<sup>115</sup>. The second one, on the contrary, alluded to simulated bodies. Gifford and Bernard mentioned them in the above-quoted fragments, but neither of them explained their origin or features. However, other local demonologists were more thorough in their descriptions. Roberts, for example, also believed that demons could assume bodies<sup>116</sup>. In the marginalia of the paragraph containing that statement, the cleric wrote «Aquinas in Summa parte 1. quest 51. articul. 2». That inscription referred to one of the most famous passages of the *Summa Theologica*, where the Dominican discussed demonic virtual bodies. Moreover, Roberts next sentence was almost a verbatim translation from Aquinas mentioned fragment: «That those bodies wherein they doe appeare, are fashioned of thek aire ... which if it continuing pure and in the owne nature, hath neither colour nor figure, yet condensed receiveth both, as wee may behold in the clouds, which resemble sometime one, sometime another shape, and so in them is seene the representation of Armies fighting, of beasts and Birds, houses, Cities, and sundry other kinds of apparitions»<sup>117</sup>.

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<sup>112</sup> «That Devils can both speake, and take a visible shape upon them». G. Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devills by Witches and Sorcerers*, p. 42. «Moreover, the devils be spirits, they have no bodily shape or likenesse but yet can make an apparance of a shape». George Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcrafts*, London 1593 (repr., Percy Society, London 1843), 18. «Satan can appeare in some visible shape». R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jury Men*, p. 119. «That they were manifestly seene, knownen, and familiarly by the outward senses discerned and distinguished, cannot bee denied». J. Cotta, *The infallible, true and assured witch*, p. 46.

<sup>113</sup> G. Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devills by Witches and Sorcerers*, p. 28.

<sup>114</sup> «Which is so farre forth to be understood of spirits, as they were in assumed shapes visible». J. Cotta, *The infallible, true and assured witch*, p. 44. Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft and Society in England and America 1550-1750*, Continuum, London 2003, p. 94.

<sup>115</sup> «By reason of his great power and skill, he is able to appeare in the forme and shape of a man, and resemble any person or creature, and that not by deluding the senses, but by assuming to himselfe a true body ... he is able having gathered fit matter to joyne member to member, and to make a true body, either after the likeness of man, or some other creature; and having so done, to enter into it, to move and stir it up and down, and therein visibly and sensibly to appeare unto man». W. Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, p. 14.

<sup>116</sup> «The Divell can assume himselfe a body, and frame a voyce to speake with». A. Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft*, p. 38.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibi*, 39.

The thickened air was visible and also maintained its malleability so that it could adopt different shapes. The «thick aire» mentioned by Roberts was the Aquinas' «aer inspissatus». Even though he never mentioned the Italian theologian, Matthew Hopkins also alluded to virtual bodies. In his treatise, the Witchfinder General highlighted that although Satan could not create anything as God did, it was capable of adopting different shapes «by him through joyning of condensed thickned aire together»<sup>118</sup>. «Take», «assume», «joyning», word selection was essential in English treatises. Just like for Aquinas, demonic bodies were not nouns or something inherent to their existence, but verbs, actions, something they shaped from natural elements using methods that did not break the natural world or its laws<sup>119</sup>. Unclean spirits' artificial and disposable bodies were one of the most obvious manifestations of their ability to deceive human senses. By a swift manipulation of air, they were capable of making people see and feel things that were not real. In order to do that, Perkins wrote, demons corrupted the humor of the eye, altered the air which was the mean by which the species were carried to the visual organs, and changed the objects humans were seeing<sup>120</sup>. Thus, demons could assume an infinite number of shapes<sup>121</sup>. As Gifford asserted: «one devill can seem to be foure or five, and foure or five can seeme to be one: It is therefore

<sup>118</sup> Matthew Hopkins, *The discovery of witches*, London 1647, p. 4 (Early English Books Online, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/ebo/A86550.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>).

<sup>119</sup> Dr. Laura Sangha considers that Calvin's rejection of metaphysical speculations about angels inhibited English thinkers from discussing the essence of angelic creatures until the second half of the seventeenth century. According to Sangha, Thomas Hobbes' (1588-1679) *Leviathan* (1651) sprang back to life medieval debates, «and meditation on the essence of angels came to occupy a new place in Reformed theology». L. Sangha, *Incorporeal Substances: Discerning Angels in Later Seventeenth-Century England*, p. 269. I do not agree with this interpretation. More than half a century before Hobbes' first publications were released, English demonologists broke apart from Calvin and theorized about demons' bodies. Nevertheless, it could not be denied that the topic received more attention from thinkers and reached a higher level of sophistication within the framework of the birth of Modern science during the Stuart Restoration. Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673), Joseph Glanvill (1636-1680), Henry More (1614-1687), and Robert Boyle (1627-1691), among others, wrote about the issue. As Stuart Clark has noticed, discussions about witchcraft and demons in England during the second half of the seventeenth century did not occlude scientific progress, but quite the opposite. Members of the Royal Society manifested interest in these matters because they were enthusiasts of the new philosophy, and by combining both they could explain the functioning of nature. See J. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 275; S. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 294-311; Ian Bostridge, *Witchcraft and its Transformations c. 1650-c.1750*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1997, pp. 53-84. Jacqueline Board, *Margaret Cavendish and Joseph Glanvill: Science, Religion, and Witchcraft*, in «Studies in History and Philosophy of Science» 38 (2007), pp. 493-505; P. Patterson, *The Debate over the Corporeality of Demons*, pp. 33-78; L. Sangha, *Incorporeal Substances: Discerning Angels in Later Seventeenth-Century England*, pp. 255-278. P. Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-hunting and Politics in Early Modern England*, pp. 175-229.

<sup>120</sup> W. Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, p. 37. See Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye. Vision in Early Modern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, pp. 123-160.

<sup>121</sup> «Sathan himselfe appeares sometime in one forme, sometime in another». H. Holland, *A Treatise against Witchcraft*, p. 42.

but the craft of Satan, to make shewe of more or lesse»<sup>122</sup>. As Roberts stated, the Prince of Darkness could take the form of an army, a city or a house.

One of the women questioned by John Stearne in Huntindonshire confessed that a spirit created a virtual body just like hers to replace her while she was being interrogated during a trial, in order that she could feed her familiar spirits<sup>123</sup>. Spirits could also appear as celestial messengers, such as the fake «angels of light» mentioned by Paul in his epistles<sup>124</sup>. However, as pamphlet writers did before them, most English demonologists considered that demons usually showed themselves in animal form, but with some differences of interpretation. According to folkloric conceptions demons and witches were part of complicated relationship. On occasions demonic beings seemed to command their human allies, while in others they appeared to play the part of obedient sidekicks. Sometimes demons collaborated with witches, but they were also inclined to damage them. Thus, familiars could be associated with the anthropological archetype of the «trickster», an amoral entity usually prepared to cause mischief and wreak havoc<sup>125</sup>. This ambiguous characterization was problematic for demonologists. As Fulya Arpacı stated, even though they were of common usage in witchcraft pamphlets, theologians rejected the use of categories such as «familiar spirit» or «imp» when they were referring to demons<sup>126</sup>. George Gifford pointed out that whenever the devil appeared in animal form it was «great deceit, and great illusion; here the divell leadeth the ignorant people into foule errorrs, by which he draweth them headlong into many grievous sinnes». Gifford did not reject that demons could adopt different outward forms. On the contrary, he credited that they did it in order to «beguile and seduce ignorant men, and lead them into errorrs and grievous sinnes» and to conceal the power he exercised «over the hearts of the wicked»<sup>127</sup>. Accordingly, the main goal of the deceit was to trick people into summoning demons and using their harmful powers in order to harm neighbors

<sup>122</sup> G. Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcrafts*, p. 21.

<sup>123</sup> «This woman confessed the Devill sate in her likenesse, and she went out, and suckled her Impes in the yard, as the other two affirmed». John Stearne, *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witchcraft*, London 1648, p. 17 (Early English Books Online, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A61373.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>).

<sup>124</sup> «Yet he can set such a colour, that the Apostle saith he both change himselfe into the likenesse of an angell of light». G. Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devills by Witches and Sorcerers*, p. 20. «Hee can turne himselfe into an Angell of light». J. Stearne, *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witchcraft*, p. iv. «To this end he appears first transformed into an Angell of Light». Thomas Cooper, *The Mystery of Witchcraft*, London 1617, 10 (Early English Books Online, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A19295.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext>). «He can change himselfe into an angell of light». H. Holland, *A Treatise Against Witchcraft*, p. 42. «Hee can turne himselfe into an Angell of light». R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jury Men*, p. 162.

<sup>125</sup> Carol Rose, *Spirits, Fairies, Leprechauns, and Goblins: An Encyclopedia*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1996, p. 315.

<sup>126</sup> Fulya Arpacı, *Tares among the wheat: Early Modern English Witchcraft in its Socio-Cultural and Religious Context*, p. 63.

<sup>127</sup> G. Gifford, *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcrafts*, pp. 18-22.

and destroy their properties. Demonologists saw this league between a human and the Prince of Darkness as an act of apostasy, as the very foundation of the crime of witchcraft<sup>128</sup>. By the end of the 1620s, Richard Bernard argued that those who follow the example of witches reunited at Malking Tower in 1612 which were carried by spirits in the likeness of foals «are to be inquired after for they proved the league and familiarity with the divell»<sup>129</sup>.

Thus, demonologists did not consider familiars to be the ambiguous creatures mentioned in the pamphlets. In line with their morally absolutistic worldview such beings could not exist, «they did not fit into the Christian-Aristotelic-Thomist categories of God, people, angels, and demons»<sup>130</sup>. According to the demonological treatises, then, familiars were utterly evil beings directly linked to the dark side of the preternatural order. In other words, familiars were demons assuming animal form. It was only after the English theological elite transformed it into something different that the folkloric concept of familiar spirits was incorporated into the demonological mainstream<sup>131</sup>. During the first half of the seventeenth century, to have a familiar spirits became one of the key aspects of English witchcraft beliefs, perhaps even the main evidence of being a witch for religious authorities<sup>132</sup>.

The idea that demons usually showed themselves in animal form allowed demonologists to appropriate the mythical complex of familiar spirits in order to adapt it to their theological frame. The doctrine of angelic immateriality, for example, enabled Hopkins to logically explain some of his most fantastic experiences in East Anglia. During an examination, the Witchfinder said that he saw the sudden apparition of several familiar spirits that changed their shapes and vanished in the air<sup>133</sup>. It was impossible to explain this phenomenon as the demonic possession of a real animal. Neither scriptural accounts or Calvinistic minimalist demonology were useful in cases like these, where

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<sup>128</sup> Agustín Méndez, *To Accommodate the Earthly Kingdom to divine Will: Official and Nonconformist Definitions of Witchcraft in England (ca. 1542-1630)*, in «Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural» vi, 2(2017), pp. 278-309.

<sup>129</sup> R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jury Men*, p. 234.

<sup>130</sup> E. Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion*, p.42

<sup>131</sup> In a recent book, Charlotte-Rose Millar rightly pointed out the diabolic nature of witchcraft in pamphlets. C.R. Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, pp. 1-81. Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of English demonologists the role and features of familiar spirits were not adequately described in those texts. Early modern Protestant scholars carried out an analogous process of resignification with ghosts and fairies. G. Bennett, *Ghost and Witch in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, in «Folklore» xcvi, 1(1986), pp. 3-14; E. Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits*, pp. 112-122.

<sup>132</sup> G. Walker, *The Strangeness of the Familiar: Witchcraft and the Law in Early Modern England*, p. 111.

<sup>133</sup> «Vinegar Tom, who was like a long-legg'd Greyhound, with an head like an Oxe, with a long taile and broad eyes, who when this discoverer spoke to, and bade him goe to the place provided for him and his Angels, immediately transformed himselfe into the shape of a child of foure yeeres old without a head, and gave halfe a dozen turnes about the house, and vanished at the doore». M. Hopkins, *The discovery of witches*, p. 2. Hopkins described familiar spirits as «evil angels».

spiritual entities disappeared in the air as quickly as they had emerged before. Demonologists needed different conceptual tools. If considered as demons, then, familiars were both entirely damned and absolutely immaterial beings.

A story reported by Roberts could also test this hypothesis. Edmund Newton, one of the victims of Mary Smith, an alleged witch from King's Lynn, told that he saw a bearded man with cloven feet lurking around his bed and capable of disappearing at any time<sup>134</sup>. Once again, Calvin's reductionism or Augustine's pessimism did not offer proper explanations for such a report. It was not by chance that both Hopkins and Roberts were the English authors that most firmly adopted thomistic ideas about demonic bodies. Aquinas' angelology was the only conceptual repertory that permitted them to standardize and explain popular beliefs<sup>135</sup>. In this sense, familiar spirits acted like a regional variation of a wider demonological matrix, one that in its most elaborated, technical and complex features showed to be transconfessional.

Before moving on to the conclusions it is necessary to address an important issue. One of the main ideas of this article is to demonstrate the influence of Thomistic ideas about demonic corporeality on Early Modern English demonologists. However, only one of those authors referred directly to Aquinas' texts. By reason of this, it is pertinent to wonder how the English demonologists accessed Aquinas' ideas. While it is not possible to know if they had read his works directly, it is plausible to demonstrate that they were familiar with Continental demonological treatises, texts which drew extensively on the concepts developed during the angelological revolution. In several passages of his *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Scot mentioned authors like Heinrich Krämer, Jean Bodin and Johannes Nider, among others<sup>136</sup>. While it is true that Scot criticised the aforementioned demonologists, his

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<sup>134</sup> «Either she or a spirit in her likeness did appeare vnto him, and whisked about his face (as he lay in bed) a wet cloath of very loathsome sauour; after which hee did see one clothed in russet with a little bush beard, who told him hee was sent to looke vpon his sore legge, and would heale it; but rising to shew the same, perceiuing hee had clouen feet, refused that offer, who then (these being no vaine conceits, or phantasies, but well aduised and diligently considered obseruances) suddenly vanished out of sight». A. Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft*, p. 64.

<sup>135</sup> Regarding this matter, Stuart Clark pointed out that pastoral work supported the homiletic and evangelical tone of protestant witchcraft writings (S. Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 438). I think this idea may be revised. It could be suggested that the pastors' permanent contact with their flock's views and beliefs might have driven them to promote an intellectual and theoretical approach to systematize it.

<sup>136</sup> «All these things are avowed by James Sprenger and Henrie Institor in Malleo Maleficarum, to be true, & confirmed by Nider, and the inquisitor Cumanus; and also by Danaeus, Hyperius, Hemingius, and multiplied by Bodinus, and frier Bartholomccus Spineus». R. Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, p. 7. «And finallie, the testimonie of all infamous persons in this case is good and allowed. Yea, one lewd person (saith Bodin) may be received to accuse and condemne a thousand suspected witches. And although by lawe, a capitall enemie may be challenged; yet James Sprenger, and Henrie Institor, (from whom Bodin, and all the writers that ever I have read, doo receive their light, authorities and arguments) sale (upon this point of lawe) that The poore fendlesse old woman must proove, that hir capitall enemie would have illed hir, and that hee hath both assalted & wounded hir; otherwise she pleadeth all in vaine». R. Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, p. 7.

*Discoverie* was widely read by later English authors, thus facilitating the access to their theorisations. Holland, for example, paraphrased Jean Bodin and French theologian and jurist Lambert Daneau<sup>137</sup>. Bernard quoted directly from Bodin and Spanish-Flemish Jesuit Martin del Rio<sup>138</sup>. English demonologists, thus, were aware of the works of their Continental colleagues<sup>139</sup>. As a matter of fact, they were intellectually closer to the demonological ideas of those foreign thinkers than they were to the depositions and testimonies reported in pamphlets by their fellow countrymen<sup>140</sup>.

## 6. Conclusions

In a collection of essays about angels in the Early Modern world, Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham affirmed that the Reformation disrupted the medieval consensus achieved in the field of angelology. Several ideas concerning spiritual beings developed throughout the millennium prior to the publication of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five thesis (1517) were considered unwarranted additions to Scripture, thus entirely rejected. Among them was Pseudo-Dionysius' celestial hierarchy of three descending choirs of angelic natures: seraphim, cherubim, thrones; dominions, virtues, powers; principalities, archangels, and angels<sup>141</sup>. Even though widely accepted in the West since Johannes Scotus Erigena (c. 815-877) translated the original text into Latin, the Syrian monk's scheme was spurned by reformers like Calvin because of its lack of scriptural basis<sup>142</sup>. Moreover, in the quest for eliminating every intercessory being between humankind and Christ, reformers spear-headed a campaign to remove the cult of angels altogether.

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<sup>137</sup> «Wherefore such iudges, as are so sharp sighted in the lighter sinnes of the second table, and as it were blind in the disobedience of the first, are (as M. Beza, Danaeus, h & Bodini say truly) great contēners of God themselues: & therefore the greater account shall they make». H. Holland, *A Treatise Against Witchcraft*, p. 23. Oldridge avers that Holland took his examples both from the Bible and Continental sources. D. Oldridge, *The Supernatural in Tudor and Stuart England*, p. 141.

<sup>138</sup> R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jury Men*, p. 148, 149, 231.

<sup>139</sup> According to Kirsten Uszkalo, even exorcism manuals penned by Continental authors were easy to obtain in Early Modern England. Kirsten Uszkalo, *Bewitched and Bedeviled A Cognitive Approach to Embodiment in Early English Possession*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2015, p. 136.

<sup>140</sup> For comparisons between English and Continental demonologists, see Agustín Méndez, *El infierno está vacío. Demonología, Caza de brujas y reforma en la Inglaterra tempranomoderna (s. XVI y XVII)*, Publicacions Universitat de València, Valencia 2020, pp. 139-429.

<sup>141</sup> Peter Marshall-Alexandra Walsham, «Migrations of angels in the Early Modern World», in Peter Marshall-Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Angels in the Early Modern World*, p. 5.

<sup>142</sup> Bruce Gordon, «The Renaissance angel» in Peter Marshall-Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Angels in the Early Modern World*, p. 43. «Nul ne niera que celuy qui a escrit la Hiérarchie Céleste, (qui on intitule de saint Denis, n'ait là disputé de beaucoup de choses avec grande subtilité: mais si quelcun espluche de plus près les matièeres, il trouuera que pour la plus grande part il n'y a que pur babil». J. Calvin, *Institution de la Religion Chrétienne*, pp. 35-36.

In England, for example, Protestant authors like William Tyndale (1494-1536) and William Perkins warned that worshiping celestial creatures was tantamount to idolatry<sup>143</sup>. Throughout the seventeenth century, the iconophobic fever that at different stages swept across English territories threatened to eliminate every image of angels in the realm because they violated the Second Commandment of the reformed Decalogue: «Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath»<sup>144</sup>. The existence of guardian angels was not denied, but Calvin stripped them from their personal protective ministry over humans»<sup>145</sup>. Although a specifically protestant catechism on angelic guardians did not exist, the belief in these entities was relatively tolerated in England. However, unlike what was advocated by Roman tradition, they were not thought to have an individualized safeguarding mission but considered as emblems of divine providence on a general level, as well as moral role models<sup>146</sup>. In summary, since the sixteenth century, angelology in England was purged from what was considered as medieval accretions to give birth to a simplified and reformed interpretation of celestial entities.

This article intended to demonstrate that ideas about angels mentioned in the two previous paragraphs did not apply to demons. Certainly, angelology and demonology were «intellectual sisters»<sup>147</sup>. Nonetheless, in Early Modern England they followed different paths. As Jeffrey Burton Russell and Joad Raymond have noticed, even though Protestant scholars asserted that their demonological ideas came from Scripture, they often relied on arguments that emerged, for example, from Patristic and Scholastic traditions<sup>148</sup>. This statement of sixteenth and seventeenth century reformed men was successful enough to be more or less reproduced by modern historians. Stuart Clark, for example, stated that although protestant demonologists did not reject sensational ideas such as the witches' aerial transvections or intercourse between demons and their human minions, they showed little enthusiasm for them and

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<sup>143</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Angels and idols in England's Long Reformation*, in Peter Marshall - Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Angels in the Early Modern World*, p. 137.

<sup>144</sup> Alexandra Walsham, «Angels and idols in England's Long Reformation», in Peter Marshall-Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Angels in the Early Modern World*, p. 141; John Bossy. «Moral Arithmetic: Seven sins into Ten Commandments», in Edmund Leites (ed.), *Conscience and casuistry in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988, p. 228.

<sup>145</sup> «Mesme ceux qui restreignent a un Ange le soin que Dieu a d'un chacun de nous, se font grande injure et à tous les membres de l'Eglise». J. Calvin. *Institution de la Religion Chrétienne*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>146</sup> Raymond Gillespie, *Imagining Angels in Early Modern Ireland*, in Peter Marshall - Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Angels in the Early Modern World*, pp. 221-222.

<sup>147</sup> P. Marshall - A. Walsham, *Migrations of angels in the Early Modern World*, p. 34.

<sup>148</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles. The Devil in The Modern World*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-New York 1986, p. 259; J. Raymond, *Milton's Angels*, p. 42. Brian Levack highlighted Luther and Calvin's use of medieval ideas about demons. Notwithstanding, the historian did not refer to English reformers or demonologists. B. Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, p. 112.

paid little attention to technical details<sup>149</sup>. A review of English demonologists' ideas about demonic bodies might have helped to nuance this interpretation.

In the last decades, the rise of English demonological writing in the 1580s has been explained by different factors: the considerable growth of witchcraft trials, the need to discuss Reginald Scot's sceptical ideas, intra-Protestants tensions about the definition of witchcraft, and the emendation of vulgar errors concerning witches' powers and actions<sup>150</sup>. Regarding the latter, Darren Oldridge pointed out that there was not a campaign in Early Modern England to abolish the array of monsters, bugs, and extraordinary terrestrial beings (among them familiars) that populated Early Modern English culture. Nevertheless, this initial stand could be modified if such beliefs attracted the attention of religious or legal authorities<sup>151</sup>. This happened, for example, when witchcraft cases were reported in cheap print. The written and oral transmission of the belief in familiars prompted reformers to reclassify and explain them. I argue that English demonologists adopted Thomistic ideas about demonic bodies to give an orthodox and systematic framework to the popular beliefs they came across during their pastoral, medical or judicial duties, and that were disseminated by witchcraft pamphlets<sup>152</sup>. As was demonstrated, almost every demonologist mentioned at least one of such reports. Instead of altogether rejecting pamphlets' ideas, English demonologists might have opted for their resignification and controlled use. In this sense, English treatises were doubly permeated by folkloric ideas and Scholastic concepts. Moreover, demonological tracts demonstrate that both corpora were not mutually exclusive: mixtures could give light to unified and homogeneous discourses<sup>153</sup>. The restrictive and excluding tone of official theology could be used to stabilize popular ideas<sup>154</sup>. Demonologists theologically sterilized

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<sup>149</sup> S. Clark, *Protestant Demonology: Sin, Superstition, and Society (c. 1520-c.1630)*, pp. 57-58. For a revision of Clark's ideas, see A. Méndez, *El infierno está vacío. Demonología, Caza de brujas y reforma en la Inglaterra temprano-moderna (s. XVI y XVII)*, pp. 353-430.

<sup>150</sup> J. Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, pp. 108-109; P. Almond, *England's First Demonologist*, pp. 3-4; N. Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England*, pp. 29-31; James Sharpe, *In Search of the English Sabbat: Popular Conceptions of Witches' Meetings in Early Modern England*, in «Journal of Early Modern Studies» 2(2013), p. 165. A. Méndez, *El Accommodate the Earthly Kingdom to divine Will*, pp. 278-309.

<sup>151</sup> D. Oldridge, *The Supernatural in Tudor and Stuart England*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>152</sup> In a recent book about possessions and exorcisms in the Christian West, Brian Levack has demonstrated that cheap prints about such cases were sources of inspiration and shaped the performances of the possessed. Brian Levack, *The Devil Within. Possession & Exorcism in the Christian West*, Yale University Press, New Haven - London 2013, pp. 153-156.

<sup>153</sup> Serge Gruzinski, *El pensamiento mestizo. Cultura amerindia y civilización del Renacimiento*, Paidós, Barcelona 2007, p. 211. Mijail Bajtin, *La cultura popular en la Edad Media. El contexto de François Rabelais*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid 2007, p. 359.

<sup>154</sup> In this matter I follow Nancy Caciola's statement: «I find useful to observe certain contrastive distinctions between «popular» and «elite» cultures as expressing ideological tensions between models of cultural interpretation, rather than static strata or levels of culture in opposition». Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits. Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-London 2003, p. 50.

folkloric conceptions; they re-signified idiosyncratic elements by integrating them into accepted religious ideas<sup>155</sup>.

As Michel Foucault suggested, the production of discourses in every society is selected, organized, and redistributed by different procedures «whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events»<sup>156</sup>. Calvin might have been a reference on ecclesiastical, sacramental, liturgical or soteriological issues, but his demonological minimalism collided with English demonologists' need for correcting vagueness in popular ideas. For the same reasons, Augustine's gnoseological pessimism regarding the spiritual world was equally flawed<sup>157</sup>. On the contrary, Thomistic theorizations satisfied English demonologists' needs. Popular beliefs were considered as significant threats in demonological treatises. As Charlotte-Rose Millar described, the line between familiars and devils in popular pamphlets was «extremely fine and difficult to navigate»<sup>158</sup>. Pamphlets unorthodox beliefs on corporeal amoral entities frequently subjected to the commands of their human allies collided with the biblical idea of fleshless and boneless spirits who only answered to God. In order to control this misconception, demonologists relied on Scholastic theology, which was also regarded as dangerous. However, it seems that pamphlets and folkloric ideas jeopardized reformed principles, while Aquinas' demonological postulates could be used to protect them. Thus, it was possible to transform the unclassifiable familiar spirits of English folklore into Christian demons that assumed animal shapes by condensing the air surrounding them. Far from being a hindrance, Thomism was a tool. As was stated before, some pamphlet writers already considered familiars to be demons, but they did not discuss the nature or characteristic of their bodies.

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<sup>155</sup> In another article I have already argued that English demonologists were worried about misapprehensions regarding witchcraft beliefs. In that case, I pointed out that they strongly disagreed with the definition of the crime of witchcraft in the laws passed by the Parliament to punish it. A. Méndez, *To Accommodate the Earthly Kingdom to divine Will*, pp. 278-309. Therefore, it is possible to reinforce the conclusions previously reached. English authors were part of a campaign to deeply modify ideas, conceptions and assumptions held by the cultural and political elite, but also by popular literature and their audiences.

<sup>156</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Discourse*, in Robert Young (ed.), *Untying the Text*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston 1971, p. 52.

<sup>157</sup> This is not to say that English demonologists utterly rejected Augustine ideas, or that he was not influential among the local intellectual elite. On the contrary, the Church Father was a prominent and highly prestigious figure. Ian Breward, for example, demonstrated Augustine's influence on William Perkins' theology. Ian Breward, *The Work of William Perkins*, The Sutton Courtenay Press, Berkshire 1969, pp. 52-53. Pettigrew and Bailly did the same with Cotta. T. Pettigrew - S. Pettigrew - J. Bailly, *The Major Works of John Cotta*, p. 31. These ideas are relevant to the present article. Even though Augustine's prestige remained in England during the Early Modern period, his ideas about angelic bodies were not endorsed by local demonologist. In other words, those who wrote demonological treatises adopted Aquinas' revisions to Augustine's postulations.

<sup>158</sup> C.R. Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, p. 68.

Finally, it is possible to suggest that English treatises evinced the success of Aquinas' angelological/demonological postulates, which not only became dominant among Catholics but were also embraced by authors from a Protestant stronghold<sup>159</sup>. It is important to remember that the Church approved the thesis of angelic immateriality in the same ecumenical council (Fourth Lateran) that sanctioned transubstantiation as the official eucharistic doctrine and mandated annual obligatory confession, two points completely rejected by reformed theology<sup>160</sup>. Furthermore, Thomistic demonology was later endorsed by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the institutional answer to the challenge posed by the Protestant Reformation<sup>161</sup>. Thus, regardless of its relation with doctrines, ideas, and events repudiated by English reformed theology, Aquinas' ideas on angels were validated and considered orthodox by local demonologists. Despite their praise of pure and primitive doctrine, these authors were open to theories from later periods of Christian history to correct popular ideas that differed from their definition of orthodoxy. Far from holding on to dogmatic stances, English demonologists demonstrated their ability to adapt. For that reason, contrary to Alexandra Walsham's assertion that English reformed ideas about angels were the result of the break with scholastic theology, here I have argued that English reformed conceptions about demons were the result of a continuity with medieval theology<sup>162</sup>. The English devil, thus, was perfectly scholastic<sup>163</sup>. Aquinas undoubtedly had his share on local demonological discourse, which was as «enchanted» as that created by Catholic authors.

## ABSTRACT

*Thomas Aquinas' ideas have frequently been considered as one of the intellectual cornerstones of early modern European witch-hunts. His revolutionary approach to the study of angels created the conceptual basis that allowed theologians and other members of the cultural elite to explain the*

<sup>159</sup> In a recent book, Fabián Campagne demonstrates that Aquinas' demonological ideas were not regarded as indisputable until the final part of the Early Modern period. Jesuit theologian Juan Maldonado (c. 1533-1583), for example, openly rejected Thomistic notions about angelic beings with no further consequences. See Fabián Campagne, *Bodin y Maldonado. La demonología como fenómeno de masas en la Francia de las guerras de religión*, Biblos, Buenos Aires 2018, pp. 70-81.

<sup>160</sup> Dyan Elliot suggests that the doctrine of transubstantiation and the thesis of the absolute immateriality of angels constituted a united program: «if transubstantiation represents the headiest reaches of corporeal potential, demonic incorporeality should be construed as the most poignant representation of the repercussions of bodily absence». D. Elliot, *Fallen Bodies*, p. 137.

<sup>161</sup> J.B. Russell, *Mephistopheles*, p. 50.

<sup>162</sup> Walsham, *Angels and idols in England's Long Reformation*, p. 135.

<sup>163</sup> Darren Oldridge stated that protestant representations of the devil in England exploited medieval ideas, meaning its character as a physical threat. D. Oldridge, *The Devil in Tudor and Stuart England*, p. 80. By incorporating discussions about demonic bodies to its analysis, this article might help to strengthen Oldridge's conclusions.

*physical and visible manifestations of demons in the material world, especially their interactions with human beings. Nevertheless, the penetration of Aquinas' notions among Protestant demonologists have sometimes been doubted or considered imperfect. English authors of witchcraft tracts, for example, have been pointed out as continuators of Augustine of Hippo's gno-seological pessimism or John Calvin's minimalist position on the matter. This article aims to demonstrate that despite being Calvinists, English demonologists adopted Thomistic ideas about the nature and features of demonic bodies, one of the essential problems of Christian demonological theory. The central hypothesis is that English authors resorted to demonological concepts developed by Aquinas in the thirteenth century and synthesized by late medieval and early modern European demonologists to rectify popular ideas about demons delineated in witchcraft pamphlets published during Elizabethan and early Stuart periods.*

#### KEYWORDS

England; Protestantism; Thomism; Demonic corporeality

#### PAROLE CHIAVE

Inghilterra; protestantesimo; tomismo; corporeità del demonio

