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Heavenly Theater: Writing about Astronomy and Astrology in Jean Bodin's *Démonomanie des sorciers*

Abstract: In his *Démonomanie des sorciers* (1580), Jean Bodin presents astrology as a natural form of divination within clear limits, set by his understanding of the divine forces at work in the celestial realm. He uses two distinct manners of writing about these topics, where his assertive use of astronomical and astrological terminology is in contrast with the image of the heavens as a theater, used to showcase God's creation and to instill his readers with a sense of wonder and humility.

1 Introduction

Astrology has a curious place in the work of Jean Bodin,[1] being one of only a few acceptable – natural – means of learning about the future, whereas most other methods are presented as the work of the devil. The devil is, of course, a constant protagonist in Bodin's *Démonomanie des sorciers*, his book on magic, witchcraft and, quite literally, the *demon-mania* of witches. Published in Paris in 1580, this work attempts a systematization of all the various forms of magic and sorcery in the past and the present.[2] For this, Bodin ventures into the fields of religion, medicine, philosophy, natural history and, of course, jurisprudence. The prosecution – and, one could argue, persecution – of alleged witches and sorcerers is the beginning and end of Bodin's argument, the last parts of the work being explicitly dedicated to the legal process.[3] He was, after all, a jurist and professor of law in

1 Jean Bodin was born around 1530 near Angers. From 1549, he studied at the university in Paris as well as at the Collège des Quatre Langues. In the 1550s, he studied and later taught Roman law at the University of Toulouse; in 1561 he was called to the bar in Paris. He entered the world of high politics when he became secretary of commands in the household of François, Duc d'Alençon, in 1571. Bodin published books on history, economics, political theory, demonology, natural philosophy, and religion. He died in Laon in 1596. Cf. also the synopsis of his biography by Campion (1995, 95–98).

2 All quotations are from the edition prepared by Virginia Krause, Christian Martin, and Eric MacPhail (Bodin 2016).

3 On the legal-historical context, cf. Lattmann (2019).

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Toulouse, even if he is best known as a political philosopher. But in the *Démonomanie*, his political and legal arguments revolve around the ubiquitous influence of witches – and in consequence the influence of the devil – that he sees at work everywhere. In this light it is all the more surprising to see him explicitly embracing astrology – or at least parts of astrology.

I will try to explain this curious fact by briefly going into Bodin's understanding of natural divination and the limits this sets for astrology, before I present in more detail the way Bodin puts forth his knowledge of celestial matters. Bodin, while certainly versed in these topics, writes largely for a lay audience, and I will argue that he uses two distinct manners of writing the heavens to achieve his goals. In this context, I will also take into consideration the German edition of Bodin's work, translated by the prolific author Johann Fischart[4] and published in Strasbourg, first in 1581 – shortly after the French original – and then again in 1586 in an expanded version.[5] Here I will show how Fischart amplifies the celestial descriptions he finds in Bodin's text and expands upon them to further his own linguistic agenda.

2 Bodin's understanding of astrology and its place within the framework of the *Démonomanie*

The *Démonomanie* opens with a discussion of the place that humankind occupies in the larger scheme of beings and forces, between God, the Devil, angels, demons, spirits et cetera. Bodin suggests possibilities to influence the various entities as well as communicating with them – for example via dreams and prophetic speech. This is followed by the chapter I will discuss here, which focusses on nat-

4 Johann Fischart was born in 1546 or 1547 in Strasbourg. In 1574, he finished his studies with the degree of *doctor juris* at Basel University. He worked in the Strasbourg-based print shop of Bernhard Jobin, his brother-in-law, who published most of Fischart's books. In the early 1580s, Fischart was an advocate to the imperial court of appeal at Speyer; in 1583 he was appointed magistrate at Forbach, where he died in 1591. His literary production ranges from polemical and satirical to moral and philosophical works, including many translations, such as *Geschichtsklitterung* (1575), a free adaptation of Rabelais' *Gargantua*.

5 Bodin and Fischart (1581) and Bodin and Fischart (1586). In the following, I quote from the historical-critical edition, prepared by Tobias Bulang, Nicolai Dollt, and Joana van de Löcht (Bodin and Fischart 2024). Without marking this individually, in several instances I make use of the preliminary work for the unreleased commentary volume to the above-mentioned edition, prepared by Tobias Bulang, Raffaela Kessel, Isabella Managò, Helge Perplies, Joana van de Löcht, and Katharina Worms.

ural means to learn hidden things – thus the chapter heading –, and which is in turn followed by two chapters on unnatural or unlawful means.

Bodin argues that the celestial bodies are moved by powers or forces that he calls *angels*. These forces are subject to God, who could, as Bodin writes, of course move them directly, without any instrument, "mais il est plus seant à la Majesté divine d'user de ses creatures" (Bodin 2016, 140) ["but it is more fitting for the divine Majesty to use His creatures"].[6] This ties in neatly with Bodin's understanding of communication with the divine, which is also conducted through angels. In fact, as Bodin points out, God does not interfere directly with physical bodies, but uses the influence of heavenly bodies instead. Therefore, Bodin argues, it is and always has been lawful to inquire about the virtues and properties of the celestial lights. Their enormous powers do not detract from God's own might, on the contrary, they elevate it.

However, even this amazing power is limited, inasmuch as it only concerns the material world. The celestial bodies have influence over the human body because they can change the disposition and the humors in the same way they change the ebb and flow of the tides. Bodin lists, for example, the influences of the moon on the course of diseases, referring to Galen and the concept of Critical Days, even though, as he points out, Galen would have been surprised had he known about the influences of all the other heavenly bodies besides the moon (Bodin 2016, 143–144).[7] In the Arab world, Bodin claims, this knowledge is so widespread, that all doctors know about the celestial influences on the body and are therefore called *Iathromathematicians* (Bodin 2016, 144).[8] The important lesson of this is, however, that the influence of heavenly bodies on human bodies cannot just be established post facto, but also be predicted. Thus, astrologers can use horoscopes – including natal charts – to predict the future development of a person's humors, temperaments and physiognomy. This, according to Bodin, is a perfectly acceptable means of divination, that is, of learning hidden things.

But, and this is an important *caveat*, "[m]ais il ne faut pas que les Astrologues se meslent de juger des ames, des esprits, des vices, des vertus, des dignitez, des supplices, et beaucoup moins de la religion, comm plusiers ont faict" (Bodin 2016,

6 The English translations of French and German quotations are mostly my own, sometimes based on the (partial) translation of the *Démonomanie* by Randy A. Scott (Bodin 2001).

7 The concept of Critical Days, which indicate the course and chances of recovery from disease, goes back to Hippocrates. The second-century Greek physician and philosopher Galen explicates the connection between the course of diseases and the position of the celestial bodies in his *De diebus decretoriis* (here especially Galen 2011, 911.14–913.15).

8 The field of iatromathematics applies astrological knowledge to medical practice in the framework of humoral pathology. Ptolemy attributes the origin of iatromathematics to the Egyptians (Ptolemy 1940, 1,3,16).

144) [“astrologers must not get involved with making judgments on souls, spirits, vices, virtues, honors, punishments, and much less on religion, as many do”]. They must not, Bodin adds, turn to “choses qui ne touchent en rien le corps, à sçavoir, aux mariages, aux dignitez, voyages, richesses, et autres choses semblables, où les astres n’ont ny force ny puissance” (Bodin 2016, 144) [“things that do not concern the body at all, such as marriages, honours, voyages, riches, and other similar matters, where the stars have neither force nor power”].

Especially the topic of astrology in religious matters is a thorn in Bodin’s side. He criticizes the fourth-century astronomer Julius Firmicus Maternus, who claimed that people born under a certain constellation will go directly to heaven after their death,[9] and ninth-century Abu Ma’shar for his belief that prayers made under a certain constellation will inevitably be answered (Bodin 2016, 145).[10] Not only do these examples not concern the body, they also subject the divine will to the power of the heavens. But God has dominion over everything, even the celestial bodies, Bodin writes, pointing to the prophet Joshua, on whose request God stopped the course of sun and moon (Bodin 2016, 148; cf. Jos. 10:12–13).

Another point of contention is the idea of a celestial influence not just on the individual believer, but on the rise and fall of whole religions, as formulated amongst others by Abu Ma’shar,[11] Pierre d’Ailly[12] and Cyprian Leowitz.[13] In a sim-

9 Firmicus Maternus wrote his *Matheseos libri VIII*, the most comprehensive astrological manual in Latin, between 334 and 337. The passage in question is in the fifth book (Firmicus Maternus 1968, 5,3,22). Interestingly, Fischart adds the phrase “im Buch vom Herrn der Genitur” [“in the book of the lord of the moment of birth”] (Bodin and Fischart 2024, 129), referring to the term *dominus geniturae* used by Firmicus for the dominant planet of a horoscope (cf. for details Firmicus Maternus 1968, 4,19,1–40). This shows that Fischart himself was familiar with astrological terminology and probably with the *Matheseos libri VIII* as well.

10 In fact, the passage cannot be found in the over thirty works attributed to the Persian astronomer and astrologer Abu Ma’shar. Instead, it is recorded in the *Excerpta de secretis Albumasaris* (also known as *Albumasar in Sadan*), a collection of astrological instructions and anecdotes, composed by Abu Ma’shar’s pupil Sadan in form of a dialogue between the two men.

11 Abu Ma’shar included in his description of the stellar influence on worldly dynasties also a sequence of six dominant religions, which would replace each other in the rhythm of ten Saturn orbits (about 300 years) (Abu Ma’shar 2000, 2,8,33f.).

12 Pierre d’Ailly, French theologian and cardinal, wrote a series of treatises between 1410 and 1414 linking historiography and astronomy. There he describes, among other things, the succession of a total of six religions (especially in *De legibus et sectis contra superstitiosos astronomos*, printed *c.* 1490).

13 The sixteenth-century court astronomer Cyprian Leowitz wrote several works with astronomical calculations, especially on solar and lunar eclipses as well as on planetary conjunctions. In his *De Coniunctionibus Magnis Insignioribus Superiorum planetarum* (1564), he predicted that the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 1583/1584 would mark the return of Christ.

ilar vein, Bodin criticizes astrology-based predictions about the coming of the antichrist, namely by Arnau de Vilanova[14] (Bodin 2016, 145). For this criticism, Bodin relies heavily on the *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinatricem* by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola,[15] quoting him almost *verbatim* (Pico della Mirandola 1969, 1,550f.). This is all the more surprising in the face of the damning invectives that Bodin launches against another, more famous work by the Count of Mirandola, the *900 Theses* (e.g., Bodin 2016, 151–152).

It must be added, however, that Bodin is not averse to the idea that large cycles of history are influenced by the heavens, especially by the Great Conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn. In his work on political theory, *Les Six livres de la République* (Bodin 1576), as well as in his treatise on history, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (Bodin 1566), Bodin writes extensively about the societal changes that occur in the rhythm of the planets as they move through the zodiac. It is the idea of celestial influence on *religious* matters that he abhors.[16]

Interestingly, his critique of Cyprian Leowitz and others on this topic is twofold: not only do they promote impious ideas, they also prove to be bad astronomers. Pierre d'Ailly, for example, based his horoscope for the creation of the earth on the assumption that the sun was in the sign of Aries, when, according to Bodin, the Bible clearly shows that the sun was in the sign of Libra (Bodin 2016, 145–146). By pointing out their errors – or what he claims to be errors –, Bodin emphasizes his own expertise in astronomical, astrological and, in this case, theological matters.

However, Bodin also presents two important caveats as to the reliability of astrology: one, and this is especially important with regards to the large-scale societal changes, there are just not enough datapoints from the mere 3,000 years of astronomical observations to predict the future with any certainty. Two, and this is important for all astrological predictions from global events to a person's disposition, the celestial influence is merely a natural inclination, not a necessity (Bodin 2016, 147). Bodin has no doubt "que l'homme qui se fie en Dieu ne soit plus fort, et plus

14 The thirteenth-century Spanish physician and alchemist Arnau de Vilanova, who was convicted of heresy by the Inquisition but pardoned by Boniface VIII. In his *Tractatus de tempore adventus Antichristi* and the *Expositio super Apocalipsim* – attributed to, but most likely not actually written by Arnau – he calculated the time of the arrival of the Antichrist on the basis of biblical passages.

15 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, fifteenth-century *wunderkind* philosopher, wrote his *900 Theses* on natural philosophy, religion, and magic at the age of 23. After they had been banned by the Church and Pico had fled to France, he was allowed to return to Florence in 1488, where he wrote the *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinicatrium*, condemning a deterministic astrology that stood in conflict with the Christian notion of free will. The work was posthumously published in 1493.

16 For more on this point, cf. Halbronn (1987, 207–209).

puissant, que toutes les influences celestes" (Bodin 2016, 148) ["that the man who trusts in God is stronger and more powerful than all celestial influences"].

To summarize, Bodin's understanding plants astrology firmly within the means of natural divination. The heavens are created by God and moved by his angels, and they can influence the natural world, from tides to weather phenomena to human temperaments and dispositions. However, they are limited to this material world and do not have any influence on souls, spirits or religious matters. Also, the influence on the body is not an inevitable force but manifests only in certain inclinations.

3 Bodin's use of astronomical and astrological vocabulary

Next, I turn to the question of *how* Bodin presents his understanding of astrology to his readers; readers who, given the jurisprudential nature of the *Démonomanie*, would for the most part not have been experts on the topic. However, since astronomy and astrology were taught at universities as part of mathematics,[17] he could expect at least a general understanding of the matter and a familiarity with the basic technical terms. When, for example, he introduces Galen's concept of Critical Days, Bodin writes about patients' horoscopes and notes "que l'opposition ou quartier de la Lune au Soleil donne un changement notable aux malades, et quand la Lune attainct l'opposition ou quartier du lieu où elle est partie, quand la maladie a commencé" (Bodin 2016, 143) ["that the opposition or quarter of the moon in the sun produces a notable change in patients, as well as when the moon reaches the opposition or quarter of the place from where it set out when the illness began"]. He doesn't explain the terms *opposition* or *quarter*, expecting his readers to have a basic knowledge of horoscopes and celestial mechanics. Similarly, when Bodin points out Galen's limited knowledge, he talks about the effects of the planets and their conjunctions, both in relation to each other and to the fixed stars (Bodin 2016, 144), again without explaining what exactly conjunctions are.

The examples that follow are not much more forthcoming: "Car les anciens ont remarque pour maxims, et par experience de plusieurs siecles, que Saturne et Mercure estant opposites en un signe brutal, l'homme ordinairement, qui naist alors, est begue ou muet" (Bodin 2016, 144) ["For the ancients have noted as max-

17 For a discussion on this subject in the context of Kepler's horoscopes, cf. Boockmann (2010, 5–7).

ims, and by experience of many centuries, that when Saturn and Mercury are opposite to each other in a violent sign, the man who is born then is usually tongue-tied or mute"]. Even with astrological knowledge, both sixteenth-century readers and twenty-first-century scholars are left to speculate what Bodin exactly means with "violent sign"; presumably, he refers to those astrological signs whose planet rulers are associated with negative effects, knowledge he and his readers could find in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* (Ptolemy 1940, 3, 12, 150). Other examples use similar terms to determine the celestial situation at the time of birth, such to as "la Lune estant au Levant" ["the moon is in the ascendant"], "naist en la conjonction de la Lune" ["born in the conjunction of the moon"] or simply "en l'eclypse" ["during the eclipse"] (all quotations Bodin 2016, 144).

When Bodin criticizes Firmicus Maternus for his belief that people born in a certain constellation will go directly to heaven after their death, he uses a kind of shorthand: "celuy qui a Saturne au Leon" (Bodin 2016, 145) ["one who has Saturn in Leo"], again indicating both a familiarity with astrological terminology and the presumption of the same familiarity in his readership. A bit more complicated is the case of Abu Ma'shar's belief that prayers made under a certain constellation will inevitably be answered: Bodin writes that this has to happen – according to Abu Ma'shar – "estant la Lune conjoincte à une autre Planette, que je ne mettray point, et tous deux au chef du Dragon" (Bodin 2016, 145) ["while the moon is in conjunction with another planet, which I will not indicate, and both are at the head of the Dragon"]. This is one of only a few times where Bodin actually adds some discussion of an astronomical term: "le chef, et queuë du Dragon ne sont rien que deux poincts d'une intersection imaginaire, et de deux cercles imaginaires, et qui n'ont ny estoille ny planette, et variables à tous momens" (Bodin 2016, 145) ["the head and tail of the Dragon are only two points of an imaginary intersection, and of two imaginary circles, which have neither star nor planet, and are variable at all times"]. This description of the lunar nodes, the intersections of the lunar orbit and the ecliptic, is not really an explanation, since he mentions neither moon nor earth. Building on a presumed knowledge of the term 'head of the Dragon', his point seems to be that the lunar nodes themselves are not relevant for the influence of the celestial bodies. However, it must be mentioned that Bodin does not need his readers to understand the term; he is less interested in explaining the details than he is in criticizing Abu Ma'shar. It is difficult to discern the extant of the knowledge he expects in his readership, but he seems to be perfectly content with keeping them in the dark from time to time.

This relates to the curious censure of the planet in question. There are various similar instances in the *Démonomanie* where Bodin explicitly refuses to include some detail, usually the wording of magic spells or ingredients for potions (e.g., Bodin 2016, 177–178). His motivation for doing so is presumably to prevent

his readers from attempting to use the dangerous knowledge contained in his book. Here he even adds the case of Pietro d'Abano – "maistre Sorcier, s'il en fut oncques" (Bodin 2016, 145) ["a Master Sorcerer if ever there was one"] – who not only practiced this method to have his prayer answered, but also enticed other people to try it. It seems likely that Bodin's reluctance to explicate astrological details is connected to his attempt to keep control over the information.[18]

A special nemesis for Bodin is his contemporary Cyprian Leowitz and his belief that both the Christian religion and the world at large are destined to end in 1583/1584, "pour la grande conjunction en la triplicité aquatique de Jesus Christ" (Bodin 2016, 146) ["due to the Great Conjunction in the watery triplicity of Jesus Christ"]. Bodin sharply criticized Leowitz and his scientific methods in the *Six Livres de la République*, mocking the wrong predictions made by him (Bodin 1986, ch. 4.2). Here he again uses a double-edged critique, claiming that the prediction regarding the end of the Christian religion is both "une incongruité notable en Astrologie, et impieté en termes de religion" (Bodin 2016, 146) ["a notable incongruity in astrology and an impiety in terms of religion"]. He goes on: "car jamais Planette ne ruina son signe ny sa maison, et Juppiter est conjoinct aux poissons, en la conjunction qu'il craint si fort, qui est le signe de Juppiter conjoinct avec Saturne, qui est son amy" (Bodin 2016, 146) ["for never has a planet ruined its sign nor its house, and Jupiter is conjoined to Pisces, in the conjunction that he (i.e., Leowitz) fears so much, which is the sign of Jupiter conjoined with Saturn, which is his friend"]. While he meticulously points out Leowitz's errors, Bodin does not bother to explain any of the terminology he uses, from the 'Great Conjunction' to the 'watery triplicity' (the zodiac signs of Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces) to the 'friendship' of Jupiter and Saturn. As if he anticipated that not all of his readers might understand the intricacies of his critique, Bodin adds that Leowitz has also published printed ephemerides (tables to compute the positions of celestial objects) that go far beyond his proposed end of the world, indicating that Leowitz may not believe in his own predictions – a point of contention much easier to grasp (Bodin 2016, 146).

Probably the most detailed astrological description is also part of a refutation: Bodin criticizes as inept the judgement of sixteenth-century polymath Girolamo Cardano, who created a natal chart of Jesus Christ that was printed and widely distributed throughout Europe:[19] "disant que Saturne en la neufieme maison sig-

18 The planet in question, by the way, is Jupiter, in case readers want to try this at home.

19 Like others before and after him, Girolamo Cardano produced a natal chart of Christ, which he included in his commentary on Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* (1554). Although Cardano stressed that the stars only indicated coming events and did not cause Christ's power, he was nevertheless heavily criticized (Grafton 1999, 151–155).

nifioit la desertion de sa religion, et Mars avec la Lune en la septieme, monstroit le genre de mort, chose ridicule, attendu que Mars estoit en son propre signe, qui est ignee" (Bodin 2016, 146) ["saying that Saturn in the ninth house signified the desertion of his religion, and Mars with the Moon in the seventh showed the manner of death, a ridiculous thing, seeing that Mars was in his own sign, which is fiery"].[20] While the astrological critique is made explicit by Bodin, the accusation of impiety is only implied, because he goes on to say: "Mais l'impieté est beaucoup plus grande de vouloir asservir la religion aux Astres, comme aussi a faict Abenesra, qui avoit predict qu'il naistroit un grand Capitaine, pour afranchir les Juifs, qu'il appelloit Messie, l'an M.CCCC.LXIIII, ce qui n'est poinct advenu" (Bodin 2016, 146) ["But it is a much greater impiety to try to subjugate religion to the stars, as did also Abenesra who had predicted that a great captain would be born to free the Jews, whom he called Messiah, in the year 1464, which did not happen"].[21] Here Bodin criticizes both the wrong prediction – although he does not explicate the underlying astrological error – and the suggestion that the advent of the messiah could be predicted from the stars.

In summary, Bodin is using astronomical and astrological terms in an assertive way that demonstrates his deep understanding of the matter. While many of the terms would have been familiar to his readers, the *Démonomanie* – and the same can be said for his *Six Livres de la République* – is not directed at experts in the fields of astronomy and astrology. The lack of explanations regarding more complicated matters seems therefore to have a double purpose: It forms a barrier for those readers who are uninitiated in the topic, keeping potentially dangerous knowledge from them. At the same time, his assertiveness lends his propositions a certain authoritative nature that belies the fact that Bodin himself takes a lot of his arguments from other sources, such as the before-mentioned Pico della Mirandola, whom he quotes (mostly without attributions) throughout the chapter. However, this factual, almost technical discourse is at odds with another manner of writing about the heavens: the heavens as a theater.

20 Fischart's opinion of this matter seems to differ from Bodin's: when he discusses Christ's natal chart for the first time, he adds a marginal note, saying that "Christo sein Natiuitet stellen ist nit Astronomisch" (Bodin and Fischart 2024, 129) ["it is not astronomical to create Christ's natal chart"]. Whereas Bodin criticizes Cardano's *faulty* astrology, Fischart seems to reject *any* use of astrology.

21 There is no such prediction recorded by the twelve-century scholar and poet Abraham Ben Meïr Ibn Ezra. This is probably a mistake by Bodin, who confused him with the older mathematician and philosopher Abraham Bar Hiyya – both are known as *Abraham Judaeus*. Bodin most likely quotes Pico della Mirandola, who refers to the prediction by "*Abraam Iudæus*" (Pico 1969, 1,550) about the appearance of the Jewish messiah in 1464 (Sarachek 1968, 323–326; Töyrylä 2014).

4 The heavens as evidence of God's glory

In Bodin's view, the heavens and especially the movement of the celestial bodies give testament to God's power. He uses the image of a theater, showcasing God's creation in all its glory: "Et à dire vray, le Ciel est un tresbeau theatre de la louange de Dieu, et plus on cognoist les effects de ces lumieres celestes, plus on est ravi à louër Dieu" (Bodin 2016, 143) ["And truly, the Heavens are a most beautiful theater for the praise of God, and the more one knows the effects of these heavenly lights, the more one is inspired to praise God"]. This metaphor, probably taken from Philo of Alexandria (Philo 1929, XVII,54), is further elaborated in a later work of Bodin's, in the *Théâtre de la nature universelle* (1597).[22] He also quotes Psalm 8, using a rendition by French poet Clément Marot:

> Mais quand je voy, et contemple en Courage
> Les Cieux, qui sont de tes doigt haut ouvrage,
> Estoilles, Lune et Signes differens,
> Que tu as faicts, et assis en leurs rancs:
> Adonc je dy à part moy ainsi, comme
> Tout esbahi, "et qu'est-ce que de l'homme?"
> (Bodin 2016, 142)

> [But when I see and contemplate in courage the heavens, which are your finger's great work, stars, moon and different signs, that you have made, and sitting in their ranks: therefore, I say to myself thus, as if all amazed, 'and what is man?']

Here Bodin uses the astronomical images to instil his readers with a sense of wonder and humility in the face of God's creation, which, at the same time, reaffirms the idea that God alone is in control of the celestial bodies. This ties in nicely with a short passage, inserted between the cosmological introduction and the musing on celestial influence. Bodin reflects on the story of Job, especially the colloquy at the end, where God puts a number of questions to Job to show him the limits of his power: "Pourras tu dict-il, lier les Pleiades, ou desjoindre les estoilles de la grand' Ourse? Produiras tu les hyades, et si tu pourras gouverner les estoilles d'Arcturus?" (Bodin 2016, 142) ["Will you be able to say: bind the Pleiades or join the stars of the Great Bear? Will you bring forth the Hyades, and are you able to govern the stars of Arcturus?"].[23] He inserts this passage in an attempt, I would

22 For more on the metaphor of the theater, cf. Blair (1997, 153–179).

23 Job 38:31–32. As is often the case in the different biblical traditions and translations, the stars, planets and constellations that are mentioned here vary a lot; I have not been able to identify the direct source for Bodin's version.

argue, not only to establish God's dominion over the heavens, but also to emphasize their beauty and grandeur.

The German translator of the *Démonomanie* at least seems to have understood it in this way. One striking feature of Fischart's translation is his amplification of the source material, in many cases to show off the versatility of the German language and its suitability for scientific discourse.[24] In this passage we see the same tendency; however, I think we can see something more: Fischart's version not only offers a variety of different designations for the celestial bodies, showing the various possibilities the German language has to offer; it specifically presents a vivid imagery that fits well with Bodin's idea of the heavens as a theater.

> Kanst du auch die Zwitzerende Gluckhenne oder Glåntzige *Pleiadas* binden/ oder jhre Hůnlin zusamen bringen? Kanst du auch den vmbschweiff des hellen Sterns des Wagenmanns vnnd den Schwantz der grossen Bårin oder *Arcturi* von den anderen absônderen? Oder magstu den Zeug des Heerwagens zertrennen? Oder kanstu daß Rågenlich Sibengestirn im Kopff des Stiers oder die *Hyadas* herfůr locken? Kanstu den Morgen vnnd Abendstern zu bestimpter zeit vber die Kinder der Erden außführen/ daß du sie widerumb zu rechter zeit heimführest?
>
> [Can you bind the glittering clucking hen or the glistening Pleiades, or gather her chicks? Also, can you separate from the others the orbit of the coachman's bright star and of the Great Bear's tail or of Arcturus? Or can you disjoint the harness of the chariot? Or can you coax out the rainy seven-stars in Taurus's head or the Hyades? Can you lead forth the morning and evening star over the children of the earth at a certain time so that you can lead them home at the right time?] (Bodin and Fischart 2024, 124)

As is the case in Bodin's version, Fischart here refers by name to the open star cluster of the *Pleiades*, but he adds the popular image of the clucking hen and her chicks, common already in antiquity. *Zwitzernd* can be translated here either as 'glittering' or as 'chirping', showing right away the subtility of Fischart's writing. He also includes the names of other stars and/or constellations: The 'coachman' can either refer to the constellation Auriga – literally the coachman or charioteer –, in this case the bright star would be Capella, or to the (albeit not very bright) star above the shaft of the asterism of the Wagon – also called *Chariot*. This asterism forms the 'Great Bear's tail' mentioned in the passage, so there is some plausibility to the assumption. *Arcturus* seems out of place here in an astronomical sense, being the brightest star in the constellation Boötes, but mythologically it is tied to Arcas, the son of Zeus and Callisto, whose mother had been transformed into a bear and later placed among the stars as Ursa Major. It is plausible that Fischart adds Arcturus because of the mythological context, but it should be noted that Arcturus is mentioned in the Vulgate version of this pas-

24 On Fischart's inserts and additions, cf. Schüz (2011, 174–241).

sage.[25] The *Hyades*, the open star cluster in the head of the constellation Taurus, are commonly associated with rain, which, as well as their number, refers to Greek mythology. Fischarts adds these details, tying the astronomical phenomenon to the lived experience of his readers and emphasizing the close connection between the heavens and the physical world established in this chapter. The same can be said for the last phrase, where Fischart has God asking Job if he can "lead forth the morning and evening star over the children of the earth at a certain time so that you can lead them home at the right time?" 'Them' seems to refer to the morning and evening star – that is to say, Venus – being lead home at the right time, but it could also apply to the children of the earth and their dependence on the stars for daily routines. In fact, Bodin goes on to discuss briefly the role of the celestial lights as markers of time as described in Genesis 1:14 (Bodin 2016, 142), so it is possible that Fischart anticipates this argument here. It is notable that Fischart uses a variety of different designations, from astronomical terms in Latin and Greek to popular imagery in German. He evokes a vividness and immediacy that is in line with Bodin's conception of the heavens as a stage on which God presents both the wonders of his creation and the immense powers associated with them.

This sense of divine forces at work combined with the assertive use of astronomical and astrological theory and terminology provides the framework for Bodin's views on the stars, planets and other celestial bodies. Their influence on the material world can be measured, calculated and computed – and he gleefully points out any errors in the process –, but the real danger is a lack of humility in the face of God's glory. In the end, astrology may be a natural kind of divination, an admissible way of interpreting celestial signs to learn about the future, but Bodin tirelessly points to the limits of astrology specifically by highlighting the limitless power of its ultimate source.

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25 "numquid coniungere valebis micantes stellas Pliadis aut gyrum Arcturi poteris dissipare | numquid producis luciferum in tempore suo et vesperum super ilios terrae consurgere facis" (Job 38:31–32).

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