

MARTÍN DEL RIO
INVESTIGATIONS INTO MAGIC

Edited and translated by
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BOOK 2

Magic involving evil spirits¹

This is the most important subject for discussion in my work and in consequence I must break it down unto several chapters or questions so that I can discuss it as lucidly as possible.

Question 1: Is there such a thing as magic involving evil spirits?

Those who follow the Sadducees, Democritus, Aristotle, Averroes, and Simplicius in asserting that evil spirits do not exist also say that this form of magic does not exist. *But this opinion of theirs is impious and heretical.* Evil spirits do exist and so does the magic which involves them. Such a magic is not based upon the industry or inventiveness of human beings, nor does it rely upon natural causes. It rests, rather, on some kind of non-material, separate power (*virtus*). [Holy Scripture, tradition and testimony all prove the point. So do all Catholic theologians and most of the philosophers. Del Rio then gives names.] Finally, we know that, according to tradition, there have existed famous schools of harmful magic right up to the present day at Salamanca and Ioletum in Spain, at Lake Nursia in Italy, and in the cave at Vesaignes-sous-Lafauche.²

Question 2: Whence does this magic come? Who invented it?

There are those who say that evil spirits exist but deny that this type of magic is done by means of evil spirits or devils (*diaboli*), attributing its effects either to God operating directly through magicians of this kind, or to God using good angels in order to produce these effects. These people say that certain graces have been given freely (just as, for example, the gifts of language and of health are freely given), and that these gifts are not infrequently granted

¹ *De magia daemoniaca.*

² For 'harmful magic' here, Del Rio uses the word *goetia*. This, borrowed from Greek, invariably has a negative sense in both Classical and later sources. It is derived from *goes* meaning 'someone who wails', referring, according to Seneca, to the 'uncivilised howling' (*barbaricus ululatus*) in which spells were chanted. A marginal note in Del Rio draws attention to Anania: *De natura daemonum* (The Nature of Evil Spirits), Book 3, folio 104.

to people like Balaam and to other reprobates.³ I maintain, first, that this opinion is entirely blasphemous since it attributes to the magical arts something which belongs properly to graces freely given, and confuses genuine miracles with acts of trickery. Secondly, it makes the free gifts of God subject to human artifice and certain ridiculous practices. Thirdly, it says that God would unreasonably and malevolently prohibit something which he himself graciously bestows upon human beings as a favour.

The opposite point of view, which may be found in various places in Holy Scripture, proves only that effects such as these happen (up to a point), through magical arts and graces freely granted, and that God sometimes produces miracles by means of wicked people for the propagation of the faith as well as his own divine glory. It has happened that someone who operates through a gift of grace freely given is not restricted to a particular time, occasion, or the use of specific ceremonies, as magicians (*magi*) usually are, people who accomplish nothing if they are found wanting in the least degree. Nor can this kind of gift, freely given by God, be handed on to others by means of training and instruction. Magicians, however, do hand on this magic to their pupils, and those who listen to them, provided they follow their precepts, do the same things as their instructors.

Others say that these effects are produced by good angels whom they call, on account of their pre-eminence, 'spirits' (*spiritus*). This is what the celebrated modern magician, Scotus of Parma, used to boast. (He was the one who sent the apostate Bishop of Ubi, Gebhard Truchsius, mad.) This is also the ancient, fraudulent claim of the Platonist magicians in particular: Iamblichus, Porphyrius, Plotinus, Proclus, and Julian the Apostate. According to their tradition, magic is divided into *white* (which they think is lawful) and *black* (which is unlawful). Hence, they call the 'white' *theurgia* and the 'black' *goetia*. Actually, the Arch-magician himself pretty well rejects this *theurgia* which is obviously some kind of fictitious comedy.⁴

³ Del Rio refers the reader to *Numbers* 23 in which Balaam who has been asked by the King of Moab to curse his enemies refuses to do so in obedience to God's private injunction to him.

⁴ Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim (1486–1535), German occultist. Agrippa led a remarkably diverse life, exercising his very varied talents all over Europe. He lectured on the Kabbalah in France, became physician to Louise of Savoy, and then moved to the Netherlands where he practised medicine. For a while he was Imperial archivist and historiographer to Emperor Charles V. His two major occult works are *De occulta philosophia* (The Secret Philosophy) which he expanded and published in 1533, and *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium* (The Uncertainty and Uselessness of the Arts and Sciences), published in Antwerp in 1531, in which he repudiated many of the ideas he had propounded in his former book. Del Rio describes the *theurgia* as *fictitiam* and *palliatam*. This latter

[Many people think that theurgy is not unlawful on the grounds that it is regulated by good angels and the power of God himself. But] *very often, under the names of God and angels, it is involved with the deceptions of evil spirits*, [even if we suppose that, not only through the powers of nature but also by means of particular rites and ceremonies, we actually do win over and attract to ourselves those celestial and divine powers about which the ancient magicians, in many a book of precepts, have passed on information.] *But the greatest part of [all] the ceremonies consists in [preserving] cleanliness, [first] of mind, [and then] of body [and of those things which are around the body,⁵ such as skin, clothing, dwelling-place, vessels, utensils, oblations, offerings, and sacrifices. For their cleanliness administers to intercourse with and contemplation of divine things and is especially demanded in sacred matters, as we may see from the words of Isaiah: 'Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your thoughts'.⁶ Truly, uncleanness, which frequently taints both air and human beings, disturbs that most clean and celestial influx of divine things, and drives away the clean spirits of God; and there is no doubt that sometimes] unclean spirits⁷ and deceiving powers look for this so that they may be venerated and worshipped as gods'.*

[Let such followers of the Devil thus learn from Agrippa, says Del Rio, the truth about their white magic. God does not involve himself in such magical operations either directly or via good angels, so the effects of 'demonic' magic are undoubtedly instituted and brought to fruition by evil angels, and any opinion to the contrary is mistaken. One can prove this from various authorities (to which he then refers), and he quotes from John of Salisbury: 'Long ago the holy Fathers condemned those who practise the more harmful tricks, the magical arts, and various kinds of astrology. They banished them from Court because they knew that these skills, or rather, plague-bearing deeds of harmful magic (*maleficia pestifera*) were produced by a close intimacy between evil spirits and human beings'.]⁸

word is the name Classical Latin gave to a certain type of comedy. It may also have different meanings in later Latin, such as 'veiled' or 'fancily trimmed', but the context here seems to ask for something closer to Classical usage. The passage from Agrippa which follows is taken from *De incertitudine*, chapter 46. The 1537 edition I have used has no page numbers. Del Rio has mangled the text considerably. I have translated directly from Agrippa and shown what is missing from Del Rio by putting those passages in square brackets and Del Rio's version in italics.

⁵ Del Rio abridges what follows to 'externals'.

⁶ Agrippa misquotes *Isaiah* 1.16: 'Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil'.

⁷ *Spiritus* here and in the phrase at the end of the previous sentence.

⁸ Salisbury (c. 1115-1180), English diplomatist, Bishop of Chartres. He was secretary to two Archbishops of Canterbury, Theobald and Saint Thomas Becket. The quotation comes from

My point is also proved because for the following reasons one cannot say these spirits (*spiritus*) are good: (a) they command people to worship them and offer them sacrifices as though they were gods: good angels cannot order this; (b) these arts are directed as much to bringing death to others by theft, slaughter, adultery, etc. as to helping them; (c) they mix together many lies and deceptions; (d) the magicians are shown how to exercise command and compulsion over the spirits, especially in connection with things which are quite impossible and plainly ridiculous. None of this can be consistent with good angels, and for this reason I think Glycas should be read with care.⁹ He distinguishes magic from *goetia* as follows: while magic may originate with beneficent spirits (*geniorum*) and achieve some kind of good, *goetia* springs from maleficent spirits and produces evil. Not only has Glycas improperly taken over the generic term 'magic' for the specific 'theurgy', he has also slipped into the error of those who support white magic and attribute its administration to good angels.

[Palingenius Stellatus made the same mistake. In his proscribed book, *Zodiacus*, he thinks the air is full of good spirits (*bonis daemonibus*) whom he makes the authors of these arts and whom he calls gods. He is not a bad poet but neither is he a good Christian. Indeed, he is more of a heretic than a Catholic.]¹⁰

The next error belongs to those who are of the opinion that magical effects happen through the agency of the souls of the dead. Catholic theologians have long exposed these people and have done so without difficulty. The reasons which are convincing in the case of good spirits (*spiritus*) are also convincing when it comes to the spirits of the blessed, which are the souls in Purgatory. They do not come thence unless with God's special permission, so that they may seek favours of the living. Now, souls given over to perpetual punishment cannot come forth with any licence or permission of evil spirits because, of course, they have been consigned by God's command to the very worst of prisons. It is therefore perfectly clear that the claims made by necromancers about summoning up souls with the help of a *grimoire* are fraudulent.¹¹ If they

De nugis curialium (The Frivolities of Courtiers), Book 1, chapter 9. 'Frivolities' etc. is the sub-title of the book, whose formal title is *Policraticus*. Chapter 9 is headed, 'The derivation of the word *praestigium* and the originator of the art'. *Praestigium* is the Latin word for a trick or a deceit, often one performed by a juggler, conjuror, or other public entertainer.

⁹ Michael Glycas, 12th century Byzantine historian. He wrote a chronicle of events from the Creation to 1118. It includes a polemic against astrology. A Latin version of his *Annales* was published in Basel in 1572.

¹⁰ Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus = Pietro Angelo Manzoli (floruit 1528), Italian poet and, according to conjecture, physician. His book was published in Venice in c. 1531.

¹¹ A *grimoire* is a magician's manual for invoking or evoking spirits. It is an altered form of the French word *grammaire*. Cf. also *glamour*, originally 'magic, enchantment, spell'.

were to come forth, they would do so at the command of the one God; but there is no reason why God would order or permit this. To think that he would do so because of the prayers and incantations of magicians is impious.¹² Consequently, the overriding efficient cause of these arts is the Devil himself, followed by a natural tendency of human intelligence which has been twisted as the result of the original Fall.

[Del Rio ends by quoting from Celio Calcagnini: *Libellus de amatoria magia* (A Treatise on Magic to Induce Love),¹³ and by exhorting himself and the reader to pursue truth with the help of theology.]

Question 3: The types of magic which involve evil spirits, and the books connected with this subject

Since there is no such thing as theurgy or 'white' magic, it follows that all this magic of wonders is nothing other than *goetia* and 'black' magic. This we usually call specialised magic. The Arch-magician [Agrippa] divides it into two types: (a) the one whose practitioners, he says, surrender themselves to an evil spirit, sacrifice to him, and worship him; and (b) the one which he would persuade us is free from a pact with evil spirits but which commands them by nods of the head and, through the power of divine names, summons, adjures, and compels them to obey. The former, he says, is forbidden by human and divine law, is particularly wicked, and should be punished with every type of fire.¹⁴ The latter he says accomplishes what it claims to do, especially with regard to compelling evil spirits (which he goes on to argue is a proper thing to do), although it is exposed to the manifest dangers of illusion.¹⁵

[Del Rio now reviews the history of magical tradition which, according to some writers, stretches from teachings received by Adam from the angel Raziel and handed down through a sequence of Old Testament figures such as Enoch, Abraham, and Solomon, to the treatises of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance by Albertus Magnus, Johannes Trithemius, and Cornelius Agrippa himself.]

¹² Marginal note: Anania: *De natura daemonum* (The Nature of Evil Spirits), Book 3, folio 97. Petrus Thyraeus: *De apparitionibus spirituum* (On the Appearances of Spirits), Book 1, chapter 11, no. 216 and chapter 13, no. 301.

¹³ Calcagnini (1479-1541) Italian poet and astronomer. He came from Ferrara and, for a time, was Apostolic Protonotary. The pamphlet to which Del Rio refers appears in Calcagnini's collected works under the title *Amatoriae magiae compendium*. See *Opera Aliquot* (Basel 1544), 497-503.

¹⁴ Presumably fire upon earth and the fires of Hell.

¹⁵ From Agrippa: *De incertitudine*, chapter 45.

Question 4: The basis of this magic, that is to say a pact, explicit or implicit

First conclusion: *All magical operations rest, as on a foundation, upon a pact made between the magician and an evil spirit. Thus, as often as the magician wishes to effect anything, he is constrained explicitly or implicitly by this prop to his art to demand that the evil spirit meet the terms of the agreement.*

This is proved by the authority of the Church Fathers. Saint Cyprian says that magicians have a treaty with an evil spirit. Gratian recalls the words of Saint Augustine in the codex of his *Decretals*. These are as follows: 'All arts of this kind, either of frivolous or harmful superstition, come from a certain established plague-bearing association, like a pact of faithless and deceitful friendship, between individuals and evil spirits'. Secondly, it is proved by Imperial decree: 'Many people use magical arts to disturb the elements. They do not hesitate to undermine the life of children and they dare to summon the spirits of the dead and expose them to the air, so that someone may destroy his enemies by means of their wicked arts. May a deadly plague carry these people off, since they are alien to nature'. Thirdly, one should believe the decree of the Articles of the School of Paris, which runs thus: 'To enter into a pact, tacit or explicit, with evil spirits is not idolatry but a type of idolatry.'¹⁶ We maintain that there is an implicit pact in all superstitious observation whose effect one may not reasonably expect to come from God or from nature'. Fourthly, reason persuades us of this pact, for many wicked people wish it and the evil spirit desires it. As the prophet Isaiah tells us, they say: 'We have severed the treaty with death and we have made a pact with Hell'.¹⁷ [Aquinas applied this text to magicians, as did Popes John XXII and Sixtus V. Indeed, Satan dared to offer a pact to Christ himself.]

Now, as I have said, magical effects happen through the action of evil spirits, not by the power of the magicians; and since evil spirits cannot be compelled by human beings to do this, it follows that they rush to help of their own free will. But evil spirits pursue the individual with unsparing hatred, so one must not imagine they rush up out of the goodness of their hearts. Obviously they exact a price in return for their effort; and so from this it is clear that the assembly and association of magician with evil spirit is like that of two brigands. One wanders openly in a wood while the other lurks secretly in ambush. The first attracts the attention of a traveller by means of a hiss or a sign, and the second pierces him through with a treacherous arrow. The first man often does

¹⁶ Here, Del Rio adds the word 'error' to his text.

¹⁷ 'And your covenant with death shall be annulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand', *Isaiah* 28.15.

not see this and does not know which weapon it was that brought death: yet he agrees to the poor wretch's death. The magician is like the first brigand, and the evil spirit like the second. The situation is rather like that in which powerful individuals who are greedy for revenge attach to themselves men who are quick with a dagger. They nod to these men with an agreed signal as an indication of whom they want killed and when.

[Older and more recent theologians are also in accord upon this point and we may notice, too, the common confession and consent of workers of harmful magic (*malefici*) and of witches (*sagae*) at all times throughout Europe. Only Johann Wier seems to disagree.]

Second conclusion: *The evil spirit is at liberty either to fulfil this pact or to fail to carry it out.*

This is proved by experience and reason. Reason tells us that an evil spirit cannot be compelled by a human being to stand by his promises, and experience tells us that he is utterly deceitful and filled with a desire to cheat. Therefore he rarely carries out what he has promised. When he does stand by his promises – which he does, occasionally – he does so not by compulsion but of his own accord with the crafty intention (a) of keeping his hold over the magician he has bound to him, and (b) of enticing others and persuading them that there is power in trifles of this kind.

Third conclusion: *A pact of this kind has two parts, one explicit, the other implicit. One cannot have the same opinion about both in every circumstance.*

This conclusion must be explained rather than proved. The explicit form of such a pact occurs in various kinds of ritual observance during which loyalty and homage are promised to the evil spirit (*cacodaemon*) himself who appears visibly in corporeal form in front of witnesses.¹⁸ [Examples given.] Sometimes the magicians present a book of requests to the Devil. Thus, in our own time, the Mantenses [Norman magicians], wrote a little book which they intended to present to the Wise Women, guardians of necromantic magic.¹⁹

[Del Rio records five requests contained in this book: the women were to consecrate the magicians' magic books so that the demon the men invoked would appear in the shape of a handsome young man and obey them; the

¹⁸ Marginal note: This is described in *Malleus Maleficarum* (The Hammer of Women Who Work Harmful Magic), part 2, question 1, chapter 2; and by Alfonso de Castro: *De iusta haereticorum punitione* (The Just Punishment of Heretics), Book 1, chapter 6. De Castro was a Spanish theologian (1495–1558) whose book was published in Salamanca in 1547.

¹⁹ Del Rio calls them *Sibyllae*. In Classical Latin, the word refers to women who interpreted the messages of a particular deity to human beings who asked him or her questions.

women were to sign the books with a powerful magical sign; the magicians were to be protected from arrest and judgement; they were to succeed in everything they did and make money therefrom; and their enemies were to be powerless against them.]

In return for these things, the magicians promised they would take these wise women as their ladies and rulers for ever and, for as long as they lived, would offer them people's souls every year – i.e. they would kill people and sacrifice them, or at any rate initiate one individual to this same sin of treachery – on this very day of the consecration of the books. But, in fulfilment of their part of the agreement, the wise women would be obliged to furnish them, in good faith, with the things they were demanding. All these men were burned in Paris, along with their books.

[Another very similar method is performed without witnesses, and a third employs a substitute for the evil spirit for fear of what the spirit may look or sound like. All these forms of the pact have in common a renunciation of the Christian faith, at the end of which the spirit 'thrusts his nail into their forehead, making them rub away the oil of baptism and destroy the mark it made'. The spirit then re-baptises them with water, gives them a new name, forces them to deny their Christian god-parents and assigns them others. The new initiates give the Devil some of their cast-off clothing²⁰ (because he is eager to lay personal claim to something which belongs to them),²¹ as well as blood, and perhaps one of their daughters. Next, they swear an oath to the evil spirit at the top of a circle drawn on the ground, and ask that their name be deleted from the Book of Life and inscribed in the Book of Death. They offer sacrifice, 'and witches (*striges*) make certain promises that every month or fortnight they will kill a small child by witchcraft (*strigando*), i.e. by sucking out its life'; and each year they are bound to pay something to their teachers, the evil spirits. The evil spirit imprints his sign or mark upon them: the location varies. Del Rio gives examples of various types of mark, not necessarily connected with witchcraft. Once marked, the initiates make various promises.]

They will never worship the Eucharist. They will always offer injuries and insults to the Blessed Virgin and the rest of the saints, not only in word but in deed also. They will tread underfoot, pollute, break in pieces, and keep themselves at a distance from any relics of the saints, images, the sign of the

²⁰ *Scrutum aliquod vestimenti*. The word *scrutum* literally means 'husk, grout, paunch, tripe'.

²¹ Personal contact is one of the principal ways through which occult power is exercised. Witches, therefore, were keen to get hold of something (it did not matter what) belonging to their potential victim.

cross, holy water, blessed salt, wax figures and anything else which has been blessed or consecrated by the Church. They will never give a complete confession to a priest and, in steadfast silence, will keep secret their traffic with the evil spirit. On pre-arranged days they will fly to meetings [of witches], if they can, and there they will always actively accept orders telling them what they must do. Finally, whenever they can, they will add to the numbers of those enslaved to the evil spirit. The Devil promises each one that he will always be in attendance upon them, that he will grant their prayers in this world, and that he will bless them after death.

[This obligation, however, is not mutually binding, for the initiates gain no real power or advantage, and yet sign themselves away to eternal death.]

In these three versions of the pact there occurs the most grave and deadly sin of idolatry, because idolatrous worship is openly offered to creatures which God has made. If magicians cast away faith, they are apostates. If, on the other hand, they do not throw it away entirely, in as much as they believe they owe such worship to the Devil, or that the Devil has power to do things the Catholic faith says he cannot do, then they are heretics. But if they merely pretend to do all this, they are neither apostates nor heretics but mortal and very grave sinners because then they worship the evil spirit of their own accord. Even if they are compelled by the evil spirit to do this out of great fear (as sometimes happens), they commit only a slightly less serious mortal sin.

[Del Rio now illustrates his point about the way a witch's initiation mimics religious ceremonies with an extended quotation from Grillando, based on a witch's confession.]²²

The implicit pact is of two types. First, when someone knowingly and willingly uses those superstitious signs usually employed by magicians, which he gets either from books or from conversations with magicians or other people. This is a mortal sin, for in no way is it licit knowingly to enter into any fellowship, directly or indirectly, with depraved spirits (*spiritus*), as theologians and canon lawyers agree. If, however, anyone has taken a natural remedy which he has got from the books of or conversations with magicians, that would not be connected with any pact, and so the person may legitimately use a remedy of this kind. The second type of implicit pact is when someone unknowingly

²² Paolo Grillando (floruit early 16th century), Italian priest, auditor of criminal causes in Arezzo, Papal judge in the district of Rome. Del Rio is referring to his *De quaestionibus et tortura tractatus* (Treatise on Methods of Questioning and Torture) which appeared in his *Tractatus de hereticis et sortilegiis* (Treatise on Heretics and Witches), published in Leiden in 1536.

uses magical signs because he does not know they are evil and originate from an evil spirit. This usually happens to those people who, in good faith, read superstitious books, thinking they are by reputable philosophers or physicians. A similar thing happens when they are told about them by people who have the reputation of being good and true to the faith. This is either not a sin at all, or a very slight one in private individuals provided two conditions obtain. (i) If it can be proved they are the kind of people one may assume to be ignorant of such matters, as opposed to ministers of the Church, confessors, heads of monasteries, and Doctors,²³ their ignorance is for the most part passive and stupid and their sin less grave than that of those who knowingly perpetrate such things; and (ii) if the ignorant person is ready to give up superstition of this kind once he has been told about it; because after admonition he is no longer ignorant and persistence then becomes a matter of obstinacy and the magnitude of the offence increases.

[If you ask why the evil spirit chooses to make a pact, the answer seems to be that the evil spirit and the would-be evil doer are alike in malice. Each reacts to the other, with the evil doer being deceived by the evil spirit into thinking he really does have control. It is a very grave sin to make any kind of pact with evil spirits, and Del Rio concludes the chapter with a lengthy section which argues that one cannot make excuses, as some people do, for magicians who use evil spirits for a good intention, even in imitation of Christ and his apostles. Moreover, the Church has been promised power to work miracles in the name of Christ, so why should anyone have recourse to Beelzebub? It is also a vain and foolish thing to do, for the evil spirits do not keep their side of the bargain. 'They are liars and pursue human beings with an irreconcilable hatred which, from the time of their fall, they have never relaxed and never will diminish or relax. If God were to allow it, they would quickly destroy every mortal. But because they see they are not allowed to do so, they labour assiduously for the death of people's souls by using a variety of different allurements to sin so that thus they may constrain human beings to fall from blessedness.' Del Rio now gives examples of how bitter they can be, and shows that to make a pact and become intimate with evil spirits is dangerous and pernicious as well as vain and foolish; and he ends with a long anecdote taken from Rémy's *Daemonolatria*, chapter 9.]²⁴

²³ *Doctores*, i.e. theologians or canon lawyers, not *medici* (physicians).

²⁴ Nicolas Rémy (1530–1612), French advocate, Attorney General of Lorraine. His *Daemonolatria* (The Worship of Evil Spirits) was published in Lyon in 1595.

Question 5: By what signs can one recognise the workings of magic which is dependent upon a pact from its physical, miraculous, and artificial effects?

[When one cannot find evidence of a miracle or an act of nature or a piece of trickery, then a pact has occurred. Theologians explain the attendant circumstances which lead to such a conclusion: (i) if what is done goes beyond its natural capacity and cannot be ascribed to God or good angels. Valencia and Aquinas agree that marvellous effects cannot be achieved naturally by a cause working from a great distance; (ii) if the operator uses secret words, characters, figures or signs, or sacred words wrenched to alien meanings; (iii) if the effectiveness of the operation is attributed to certain rites and particular observances; and (iv) and if power is attributed to superstitious practices. Any one of these claims should rouse suspicion. Two or three together are evidence that something unnatural is taking place. On the other hand, if wonderful effects happen without any of these attendant circumstances, we may adjudge them natural provided we bear in mind (a) Satan's power to deceive, and (b) our own ignorance about many things in nature. Trickery can be discerned without much trouble.]

Chapter 6: Does this magic produce real effects? How can one recognise what kind of pact lies behind them?

Whoever maintains that every effect is the result of trickery, or believes that every effect is real, should be regarded as a water-melon rather than a human being. Too often the evil spirit deceives us because he is the father of lying, because frequently he affects the eyes or dupes the other senses by casting a vain image in their path. But not infrequently God obstructs him so that he does not really do something which may or can please the magicians; and when Satan sees this, he takes refuge in trickery lest his lack of power be discovered. When the evil spirit wishes to produce a real effect, however, and God allows him to do so, provided the effect does not surpass the powers he has, God undoubtedly does not stop him from producing a real effect. For natural causes do give rise to a real effect; so the Devil can use them and apply active things to passive, and therefore will be able to produce effects which are real. According to the divine author, Dionysius of Athens,²⁵ the Devil lost none of his natural gifts by sinning and so it follows that he has a natural strength which is very powerful, along with a multiplicity of daily experience and an exact knowledge of the

²⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (floruit c. 500 AD): *De divinis nominibus* (On the Names of God). Del Rio seems to be referring to the passage in which pseudo-Dionysius discusses evil and demons, 724C–725C, especially 725A.

essence and qualities peculiar to each and every thing – so much so that he can very easily produce the genuine effect he wants. This is why the majority of theologians carefully recognise two magical effects: the real and the apparent. On account of these, Tertullian²⁶ calls magicians entertainers and sophists, and I add to these a third type, that of mixed effects, true and false.

[Examples of magical effects from ancient literature are given, along with the entertaining story of a Bohemian illusionist, taken from the *History of the Kingdom of Bohemia* by Janus Dubravius, Bishop of Olmutz.]²⁷

The following are things which (for shame!) certain very credulous but otherwise pious princes, allow to take place in their presence. Iron objects, silver platters and similar things of great weight are put on top of a table and then, without the assistance of a magnet, a cord, a hair, or other means, are pulled from one end of the table to the other, jumping up and down as they go. Someone pulls out a playing-card from the rest of the pack without letting anyone else see it, and then its face is changed three times while the person still has the card in his hand. There are mirrors which seem to show things from far away places. In the space of three hours a real shrub is made to grow a span's length from the table, and trees with leaves and fruit suddenly appear. Lanterns lit with a special flame make all the women present look as though they are naked, and reveal those parts which nature tells us should remain concealed; and while the women are unclothed, they perform a ritual dance as long as a lantern, which is hung up in the middle of the room, continues to burn. (The lantern has certain characters inscribed on it and is filled with hare's fat) – oh, and other stories of the same kind, the sort of thing apprentice entertainers cram into their heads from reading the works of Battista della Porta.)²⁸ Since neither natural causes nor appropriate artificial causes are advanced to explain such things, they should be ascribed to trickery.

[There follow examples of real effects from Holy Scripture, including (a) the incident of the raising of Samuel by the witch of Endor and (b) the contest between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians, both of which Del Rio discusses at length.]

²⁶ Marginal note: Tertullian: *Apologeticus* (A Man Ready to Defend Himself), chapter 23 (The charge to which Del Rio refers occurs at the start of the chapter.); *De idolatria*, chapter 9.

²⁷ (1486–c. 1553), Austrian historian and natural philosopher. He also wrote a book on the making and care of fish ponds, which was translated into English in 1599. His *History* was first published in 1552.

²⁸ Giovanni Battista Della Porta (c. 1535–1615), Italian physician. He wrote several books on occult subjects, including *Magia Naturalis* which was first published in Naples between 1558 and 1561.

My opinion is that the incident relating to the soul of Samuel belongs to the 'mixed' type of magic. It really was Samuel's soul which appeared but the incident contained falsehood and a deception of the senses, since that which was seen by Saul obeyed the voice of the enchantress. Samuel had not brought with him either his real body or his real shroud. The other example, relating to the Egyptian sorcerers, also belongs to the 'mixed' type, provided we follow the opinion of those who do not know that the snakes were introduced by fraud. On the other hand, if we follow Saint Augustine, it belongs to the 'real' type. [Del Rio continues by telling a fabulous story about another contest between two magicians.]

So now it remains for us to discuss how to distinguish genuine effects from counterfeit by looking at the pact involved. Marvels are accomplished, not by the magicians but by the Evil Spirit himself. Therefore magicians will not be able (as some people have written without due caution), to accomplish what the Evil Spirit cannot; but whatever he can do, the magicians can do as well because of the pact. Once this basic point has been made, the following rules may be established: (i) if the magic effect is of the kind which depends upon power exercised by an evil spirit (a power which is reserved to the omnipotence of God alone), then the effect should be considered fraudulent; (ii) but if it is not agreed that the effect is caused by the power of an evil spirit the matter is plainly doubtful and one must then refer oneself to the circumstances. The reason for doubt is that God does not always allow an evil spirit to do whatever he is capable of doing and will stop him from doing it. Moreover, the evil spirit does not always actually want to do what he is permitted to do but, being one who lies to humanity, rejoices in deception.

Question 7: Can a magician perform a real miracle?

[These marvels are not done by the magicians themselves but by an evil spirit, and they will not be able to do anything the evil spirit cannot do. But the magicians will actually accomplish what the spirit is able to do through the pact they have with him. References to Clement of Rome, Porphyrius, and Iamblichus.]

I should like the reader to observe that I do not use the word *miracle* in this discussion to mean 'some extraordinary effect', as secular authors do. I follow the more restricted theological definition which is that of the Greek *to theras*, 'an effect produced only beyond and above the power of created nature' – for example, restoring sight to someone born blind, or resurrecting the dead. But when the effect is consistent with the power of the created individual (for example, the ability to stir up rain and winds, cure fevers, etc.), this is usually

known as *to thauma* – not simply 'a miracle', but 'a miracle in accordance with x', or 'as far as we are concerned', or 'a wonder', or 'something extraordinary'. Again, these wonders (*mira*) are divided into (a) 'absolutely wonderful, which refers to something worthy of astonishment of itself and in its own right, even if we know why it is wonderful and how it is done; and (b) 'wonders in accordance with x' or 'wonders as far as we are concerned', which refer to things which astonish us as long as we do not know why they are extraordinary, but will cease to do so once we know the reasons.

It occurs to me that there are various points by which a wonder (*mirum*) may be distinguished from a miracle (*miraculum*). (1) If, as I said, the effect surpasses the power both of the created individual and of nature, it will be a miracle. (2) If the proposed aim of the effect is not good (e.g. spiritual or physical welfare) but merely bad (e.g. curiosity, something alien to good morals, or repugnant to the true faith), it is not a miracle. Thus, the prodigies and 'miracles' of Antichrist will not be true miracles, as Saint Paul wrote to the Thessalonians; and it is obvious from this what we must think about the cure of swollen glands done by the princess Elizabeth, Queen of the English, if, as Tooker claims, she does it in confirmation of her faith. (3) The wonders of evil spirits are often deficient in the smallest details, whereas miracles are perfect because they are works of God. See *Exodus* 8 on the contest between the magicians and Moses. (4) The wonders of evil spirits vanish in the face of miracles, as the rods of the magicians were devoured by the rod of Moses, and the oracles of evil spirits are dumb in the presence of saintly people. (5) Finally, miracles happen by means of open, sober invocation of God. The wonders of magicians always happen by means of a mixture of discordant, secret, vain, ridiculous, or superstitious prayers or signs.

First conclusion: *No magicians can produce miracles in the proper sense of the word.*

[The power to work miracles is reserved to God alone. The power of his creatures is limited by natural boundaries. The Church is able to perform miracles because of God's grace, and God may sometimes permit individuals to work miracles in confirmation of the true faith. But he cannot give confirmation of a false faith through miracles. Therefore one cannot say, 'X has performed a miracle, therefore his faith is true'. One must be careful how one uses the word 'miracle'. Second conclusion: *Magicians cannot work perfect wonders, either.* Something which is quite extraordinary is not the same thing as a miracle. Third conclusion: *Magicians can work many wonders according to whether they are helped by an evil spirit or are permitted to do so by God.* The Devil understands many wonderful secrets of nature and can produce his effects naturally and very quickly, and it is difficult for us to appreciate how extensive this power of Satan is.]

Question 8: By what kind of pact with the Devil do magicians work these wonders?

All evil spirits operate either by immediate action through local motion or by mediated action; and this is done in two ways, either by a deception of the senses or by application of active things to passive through a genuine alteration. This is the teaching common to all theologians. So the spirits operate *by local motion, by alteration, and by delusion*.

(1) Local motion. Inferior bodies obey the angels to such an extent that they can rotate the heavens, although whether in fact there are such movers of the spheres must be discussed elsewhere. Given that they can move them, however, it follows that there is no body so huge that evil spirits cannot move it from its place by some hefty shove – provided, however, they do not thereby disturb the order of the universe. So they will not have the power to move a whole element from its place (and it is with this limitation in mind that one should understand Firmilianus when he wrote to Saint Cyprian that effects arising from a local or partial movement of the earth will not be genuine), and nor will they be able to change the way the heavens move in their ordained orbit. But an evil spirit can move bodies very forcibly by *local* motion and this is what makes us see the heavens move very rapidly. So this is how the spirit can remove something from one's view and substitute something else so instantaneously that he deceives the minds and eyes of the onlookers, and persuades them that the change of the one thing into another is genuine. [Examples given.]

(2) The application of active things to passive. By this alteration or change of things, he often creates wonders whose causes are natural but unknown to us, although very well known to himself. For he sees the substances of all natural things and has studied the particular properties of each. He knows the right times for application, and there is scarcely any clever device or contrivance he does not know. For what has he not achieved by daily assiduous experience and observation? In particular, he knows everything good angels have accomplished since the beginning of the world, what people have thought, and the very many things revealed to Satan by means of good angels at God's command, things which the good angels have learned from God. Therefore, very often many things are done which the operation of nature alone could never have done, unless evil spirits had helped her by this unnatural application.

[Evil spirits thus use natural agents as instruments to accomplish their intentions. Del Rio discusses what he means by 'instruments' and gives examples of what they can do. Natural agents achieve their effects without the Devil's adding anything to their innate power. A cook, for example, confers nothing upon the

fire he uses to prepare a meal. Therefore the cook is, in this case, the principal cause of the final effect, and the fire is the instrumental cause.]

(3) I shall now review operation by delusion. When neither local movement nor the type of working I have been discussing is sufficiently effective, magicians usually take refuge in travelling showmen's tricks, and by means of false appearances so play upon people's senses that even the least thing magicians do may be considered done by deception. (I am expanding the word 'deception' to include 'trickery', 'deception', and 'error' even though these are normally kept distinct.) The Devil has three particular ways of deceiving people: by changing the object, by changing the intermediate air, or by changing the sense-organ itself.

[Del Rio now says he will follow the explanations given by Molina.²⁹ These largely give an account of the tricks of the street entertainers' trade, and Del Rio supports these by references to early Christian literature and later theologians and chroniclers. He then quotes a story from the Polish historian Martin Bielski,³⁰ and ends with a series of references to tricks played by the Devil.]

Question 9: How remarkable were the effects attributed by the ancients to magicians?

[This section consists mainly of references to and extended quotations from ancient literature, especially Ovid, Tibullus, Lucan, Seneca, and Claudian, relating to the deeds of magicians and sorceresses.]

Question 10: What powers do magicians have over the natural order and the laws of the universe?

[Magic boasts that nature obeys her and that she is superior to all the laws of the universe. This is false. Such supremacy is reserved to God alone. Magicians cannot produce any substantial or accidental form; they cannot create anything either from nothing or from anything in nature. They cannot produce substantial forms unless alterations and arrangements of matter have taken place first. They cannot insert a vacuum in nature, or restore anything once it has been taken away, or change or overthrow the natural order of things, transfer a body from

²⁹ Luis de Molina (1535–1600), a Spanish Jesuit. He wrote a book on free will, which is likely to have been Del Rio's source at this point. It was published at Antwerp in 1588–1589.

³⁰ (c. 1495–1575). He published a *Kronika Swiata* (History of the World) in Cracow between 1550 and 1564, and a *Kronika Polska* (History of Poland) in Cracow in 1597.

one extreme to another, move it some distance from themselves, or move it instantaneously or with any speed at all. They cannot eliminate the connection between things or the subordination of one thing to another; nor can they interfere with the action of a natural agent, although such a thing is possible in the case of doctors who use the agent indirectly as a medium of cure. Del Rio now gives references to ancient writers whose anecdotes show how the Devil deceived pagans into thinking they were witnessing marvels, whereas in fact the 'marvels' were simply natural events such as *ignes fatui* or sudden outbursts of fire – although 'if there is evidence of some agency extrinsic to what follows, then that agency is certainly not natural, but demonic'. Nevertheless, we should not run to marvels as the immediate explanation for everything which strikes us as unusual. Del Rio directs his readers' attention to the well-known *Commentary on Genesis*, chapter 9, by the 'astrologer' Luther,³¹ who ascribes aerial phenomena to the work of demons. Del Rio dismisses his arguments and points instead to genuine examples of demonic activity given by Nicholas Rémy. He ends with further references from early Christian literature and an extraordinary anecdote about religious obedience.]

Question 11: What power do magicians have over heavenly bodies, the stars, and the elements?

[(a) Magicians cannot control the movements of the heavens or of the stars; neither can they reverse their fixed orbits. Examples. (b) They cannot transfer one element from its natural place to another. References to early Christian and pagan authors. (c) They can, however, calm tempests, rouse thunder and lightning, hailstorms, showers of rain, or any other manifestations of the weather, and send these down upon any fields they wish. Many examples from both Scripture and demonological literature, including this anecdote about rain-makers in Peru.]

The Indians procure rain by means of the a ridiculous ceremony which is described in letters, dated 1590 and 1591, from our Jesuit brethren in Peru. Gaspar Stitillius gives the following extract. 'When they need rain, one of their magicians cries out in a loud, impassioned voice, at greater and greater speed, that everyone must go to the mountain and that when they have all arrived there, they must abstain from food according to custom. (Their "fast", however, refers merely to salt, pepper, and food which has been cooked.) When the period of fasting is over, they call earnestly upon the stars at the tops of their voices and pray for water. Then they turn towards their fields and their castle and,

³¹ *Mathaeologus Lutherus*. The passage occurs during Luther's discussion of the rainbow.

taking a drink offered to them by a young woman of noble birth, they drink it down. This causes them to lose their senses and their reason, and they look like dead men. After they have recovered, however, they mingle honey with water and maize and sprinkle the mixture towards the clouds. On the next day a noble old man, or at any rate someone of good reputation who is held in honour, is laid on a couch under which they light a slow fire. When the old man begins to sweat, the magician catches the sweat in a jar, mixes it with goose-blood and the juice from a crushed root, and again throws this liquid into the air as if to soak the clouds. He asks that, by means of the sweat, the blood, and the water, the rain they desire be bestowed upon them, and if by chance it rains on the day they work their superstitious ceremonies, they give thanks to the stars and carry the magician shoulder high and honour him with many gifts'.

[(d) An example of Tartar magicians' causing darkness to fall. (e) Magicians can corrupt the air and water in certain places and render them both decayed and lethal. Examples given. (f) They can prevent fire from burning, so that someone can walk through it and not be harmed. Examples given. (g) They can affect the weather by using certain minerals, with results which seem marvellous but are, in fact, due to natural causes.]

Question 12: What power do magicians have over external things or the good things one owes to fortune?

[Evil spirits, and through them magicians, have wide-ranging powers over property. (1) They destroy flocks and herds. Example. (2) They alienate corn and fruit crops. Examples. (3) They can destroy crops and render the land infertile. Example. Rémy says magicians usually do this by scattering powder they have received from an evil spirit, and this creates various kinds of caterpillars and locusts. Sometimes the evil spirits send gadflies and sometimes wolves to destroy farm animals. Additional modern examples. (4) They burn down houses. Example. (5) They can destroy reputations. Examples. (6) They can conjure up banquets which are no more than illusions. Examples. (7) With God's permission, they can snatch captives from imprisonment. For example, an evil spirit sent by a magician offered to liberate Frederick, Duke of Austria, from captivity, but the Duke made the sign of the cross and the spirit vanished. This happened in 1533. Further ancient examples. (8) Del Rio says he has no doubt that magic can be worked through the agency of evil spirits. Examples, drawn largely from Mediaeval chronicles. (9) Many people are persuaded that men have been elevated to dignities and honours by magical means. Examples of certain Popes slandered in this fashion. Del Rio answers the charges with a vigorous defence.

(10) The same explanation may be offered about those who acquire great wealth, as Psellus says. By applying active things to passive, the Devil can produce what passes for good coinage. Del Rio thinks that the Devil is merely the instrument whereby good angels, with God's permission, actually effect the creation of money. The Devil knows where treasure is hidden and can produce it when he wishes. Examples given from Rémy. Faustus and Agrippa are credited with creating money which, after a few days, turned into worthless rubbish. Other examples of the search for treasure, including an anecdote from 1520. The section closes with praise for the Emperor Charles V who had exiled Agrippa and other nobles from his Court and Empire because they had promised to find him treasure through their magical arts.]

Question 13: Do magicians have the power to cast a spell on brute beasts?

[This section consists of quotations from and references to Holy Scripture and ancient and modern literature to show that magicians do indeed possess this power.]

Question 14: Can they use their art to produce or bring into being anything which is of more than one kind and, in particular, capable of feeling?

[Saint Augustine said that imperfect creatures such as flies, worms, and frogs which are born from putrefying matter, can be produced by applying active things to passive. Magicians do the same thing through their pact with an evil spirit, as when the Devil gives witches (*sagae*) some powder and they throw it into the air and all kinds of insects are born therefrom at once. Magicians can produce other forms of imperfect creatures too (examples given), but Del Rio thinks they cannot produce perfect creatures. An evil spirit, however, can do so. Examples.]

Evil spirits can also produce strange monsters, unless one is going to argue that these are born from the wicked congress of humans and animals – undoubtedly the origin of most monsters. One example is the monster from Brazil which was seventeen palms high, covered in lizard-skin, with swollen breasts, lion's limbs, and staring, flame-coloured, glittering eyes, and a flame-coloured tongue – something like the monsters with semi-human faces which were captured in the forests of Saxony in 1240. Similarly, at the time of the Marsian War,³² Alcippe gave birth to an elephant; in 1278 an Helvetian woman bore a lion; in 1470 a woman from Pavia produced a cat; and in 1531 a woman from

³² 90–89 BC. The Marsians were renowned for their magicians, who specialised in curing diseases.

Augsburg, in one and the same birth, produced a human head wrapped in membranes, a two-footed snake, and a complete pig. One can read other things of this kind in modern authors.

One example which caps the rest, extraordinary though they may be, is the one reported by Castaneda in his *Annales Lusitaniae* [History of Portugal].³³ On account of some crime or other, a woman was transported to a desert island and there abandoned. A large number of monkeys, which were numerous in the area, stood round her, growling, and then one, bigger than the rest, arrived on the scene, took her by the hand, and coaxed her into a huge cave. He set before her, himself, and everyone else, plenty of apples, nuts and various roots, and invited her to eat. Then the animal forced her to have sexual intercourse with him, an outrage which was repeated for many days, and as a result of which she gave birth to two children.

The unhappy woman, who would have found death infinitely preferable, continued in this fashion for several years until God in his mercy sent thither a ship from Portugal. The soldiers disembarked at a spot watered by a spring which emerged from the ground right next to the cave, and by good fortune, the monkey was not there. The woman rushed up to the first human beings she had seen for a long time, threw herself at their feet, and begged them to take her away from the outrage and appalling slavery she was suffering. They took pity on her misfortune and agreed to take her on board with them. But lo, the monkey bore down upon them, and with clumsy gestures and deep roaring summoned back his wife (who was, of course, not a wife), when he saw the sails spread to the winds. He ran forward and drew the mother's attention to one of her children; he issued threats and, far from retreating, seemed on the verge of hurling himself into the sea, and none of this did he do with any half measures. Having made his threat, he dashed back to the cave and, just as quickly, returned to the shore and showed her the other child. Then he renewed his threats and plunged into the water, pursuing them closely, raging all the time, and swimming after the ship as long as he could until the waves proved too strong for him.

The whole of Portugal can bear witness to this very famous incident. The King condemned the woman to be burned at Lisbon but, at the prayers of certain people who begged for her life, he commuted the death-sentence to perpetual imprisonment.

[Is the reader astonished? Del Rio gives examples of peoples descended from animals.]

³³ Fernão Lopes de Castanheda (died 1559). A French translation of his work appeared in 1581.

Actually, I do not put much faith in these tales because I am sure that a real human being cannot be born from intercourse between a human and an animal. An animal's semen lacks that perfection which is required to house a noble human soul, so if anything is produced by intercourse of this kind, it will be a monster, not a human. For it is the composition of the inferior semen which determines the kind of foetus which will follow, and therefore at best it will produce only something which looks like a human, and I cannot believe that a brute creature of this type, with parents of different species, can be considered perfect (for example, the children born to the Portuguese woman were neither monkeys nor humans). It is, rather, a monster of a mixed and imperfect type, such as a mule which comes from a horse and an ass, or a *thos*³⁴ which comes from a hyena and a wolf.

[Del Rio adds further examples from a *History of Peru* by Petrus Chieza, and then points out that the condition of the semen and the humours of the womb have their part to play, and that intercourse between witches and evil spirits may result in extraordinary births.]

To these I add an absolutely true story. Here in Belgium a certain criminal individual had sexual intercourse with a cow. It was noted that the cow became pregnant, and after a few months she gave birth to a male offspring – not a calf, but a boy. Several people were present and witnessed him falling from the womb of his mother, the cow. They then picked him up from the ground and handed him over to a nurse. The boy grew up, and was baptised and instructed in the precepts of the Christian religion; and, because of what his father had done, he applied himself to works of piety and penitence. The boy was perfectly human, but his mind had bovine leanings which made him want to graze in the fields and ruminate his cud. What should one think about this? That he was not a human being? Such is certainly my belief. Nevertheless, I deny that his mother was the cow. What, then? The Devil knew about his father's sin: indeed, he instigated it. Shortly afterwards he made it look as though the cow was pregnant and then, at a time of his choosing, produced an infant he had stolen from someone else and placed him under the cow while she was heavy in womb and on the point of giving birth. This is how she appeared to drop the boy. In consequence, a piece of fantasy was born, and the boy was persuaded he was the son of a cow. His imagination got to work and in consequence he thought he had imbibed certain propensities from his supposed mother. To think that he was a real human being, born from the material of bovine semen, and that the fully-formed organic arrangement of a human body was perfected in the womb of a cow by means of the heat and power of a

³⁴ Greek = a short-legged carnivorous animal of unknown species.

bovine spirit is something which I think all philosophers will agree with me should be reckoned as impossible.

[Del Rio ends the section with further examples, mainly from ancient and Mediaeval sources.]

Question 15: Do *incubi* and *succubae* really exist? Can there be issue from intercourse with such spirits?

Axiom 1: It is common for workers of harmful magic (*malefici*) and witches (*lamiae*) to perform the sexual act with evil spirits. The former do it with *succubae*, the latter with *incubi*. Several heretics – indeed, the majority of them – incorrectly deny this proposition. So do some Catholics, but not very many. [Del Rio gives names from both communions, and references to early Christian literature.] Evil spirits can assume the bodies of dead people, or construct for themselves from air and the other elements bodies which feel like flesh to the touch. These they can move as they wish and make them warm. By artifice they can make show of a sexuality they do not possess by nature, and abuse men by appearing to them as a woman, and women by appearing to them as a man. They lie down and spread themselves out underneath the woman, and can bring along real semen taken from someone else, and so imitate natural emission. Therefore they are able to do everything posited by the first axiom, and since they can do so, and experience tells us that they do, there is no reason why we should doubt it.

Axiom 2: Offspring can be born from such an intercourse with an *incubus*. [The Devil can take semen from someone else (for example, from a man while he is asleep), and carry it off while preserving its heat; and just when a woman is ready to conceive, he places it in her womb to mingle with her female semen.]

Axiom 3: Evil spirits cannot, as living creatures do, generate life by their own power and from their own substance. [Evil spirits do not multiply among themselves, nor do they have any kind of body. (References given.) Evil spirits are insubstantial and therefore cannot produce semen from themselves. 'So my opinion is that intercourse between an incubus and a woman sometimes produces offspring, and that in these circumstances the real father of the child is not the evil spirit but the man whose semen the evil spirit has misused'. Del Rio now cites authorities for and against this proposition, along with examples from ancient and modern times. The arguments of those who deny it, he says, are very flimsy, especially those of Rémy whose objections Del Rio now proceeds to answer.]

First: he says that an evil spirit and a human being are different species. Therefore there cannot be offspring from such a copulation. I answer: While

it is true that mules, *thoes*, leopards, panthers, and other hybrids are born from intercourse between different species of animal, it is a non sequitur to apply that example here because in this case generation is not attributable to an evil spirit but to the man whose semen it is, as Saint Thomas [Aquinas] rightly says. [Reference given.]

Second: he says that an evil spirit knows nothing of how life and death begin. Therefore he cannot be the author and origin of the process of giving life. I answer: The vital spirit is not in the evil spirit but in the semen itself, just as the power of warming is not in the drinking-cup or the spout of the wine-jug, but in the wine itself. (See Aquinas and Sprenger.)

Third: he tells us that witches (*sagae*) say that the semen ejaculated by the evil spirit is cold and brings consternation rather than pleasure, and that therefore it will not be possible for generation to follow. This was the argument of Marcus of Ephesus, as quoted by Psellus. Rémy confirms it by the confession of witches who said that all sense of pleasure is absent from such a copulation which is extremely painful. I reply: I am compelled by the futility of this argument to spend more time than I might wish on refuting something which is both inane and filthy. Certainly it seems that when an evil spirit wishes to deceive by taking the appearance of a particular man and does not wish anyone to know he is an evil spirit, he can give a most exact imitation of whatever is required in copulation between a real man and a real woman; and therefore of necessity he takes care, if he wants generation to follow, to use what is necessary for this purpose. Generation, however, is something which very rarely happens. He cannot ever, of himself, cause generation because he cannot procreate anything like himself. But sometimes he attempts generation from someone else's semen collected by a *succuba* who does this for him as a favour. Therefore he seeks out a great quantity of semen, and when he has found it he preserves it and brings it back so quickly that its vital spirit does not evaporate. Then he pours out the necessary quantity whenever it is required.

[When the evil spirit does not intend to generate, he pours out something which resembles semen and is hot (to avoid any suspicion of fraud), but controls the body he has assumed in case contact with *him* give rise to fear and horror. On the other hand, when he does not need to disguise himself, his semen is both unreal and cold, and there can be no generation of children thereby. He asks *succubae* if they want to become pregnant and if they do, he uses real semen. (See Sprenger.) Del Rio goes on to discuss the presence or absence of pleasure in these encounters, citing modern authorities in support of what he is saying.]

Fourth: Rémy says that one cannot believe that God agrees with this kind of act or gives a soul to a body born of this type of coition, thereby adding

the final touch to the evil spirit's imperfect work. I reply: The evil spirit, as far as the operation of nature is concerned, is in this case merely the instrument which applies the principal agent – the real human semen.

[God therefore concurs in the formation of a human body born from this human semen. The sin in the birth belongs to the witch (*saga*) and the evil spirit. The argument that although the natural order of things is preserved in fornication, adultery, and incest, it is not so preserved in the case of intercourse with an evil spirit is simply frivolous. The natural order is preserved in this case because male semen is mixed with female semen and therefore a child may be born as a consequence. A further argument by Molitor is refuted. Del Rio does not believe, however, that children can be born of intercourse between an *incubus* and a *succuba*, for which he gives physiological reasons. He discusses variations upon this theme, with references to ancient and Mediaeval literature. Can evil spirits make a virgin conceive in the absence of male semen? Del Rio thinks they can, and gives references to Mediaeval authors. Do evil spirits sometimes have intercourse with witches the wrong way round?³⁵ Del Rio refers the reader to several witchcraft treatises and demonologies. His final question is, can giants or pigmies be born by the exercise of magical power? He discusses this at length, with reference to Holy Scripture, ancient, and Mediaeval literature.]

Question 16: The nocturnal meetings of witches (*sagae*). Are witches really transported from one place to another?

[Protestant writers, such as Luther and Melancthon, believe that both transportation and meetings alike are delusions, and so do many Catholic authors. (Del Rio gives a list.) Their arguments, however, are not very convincing. Although witches can be deceived, it does not follow that they always are deceived. Sometimes their souls do not leave their bodies. Often their bodies are so deep in sleep that the women believe they are awake and see and hear images, whereas in reality they do nothing of the kind. Del Rio says he knows several examples of this. He dismisses the argument that because women are sometimes found lying motionless they do not ever fly. He says this merely shows that sometimes the women are mistaken. He refers to Alciati³⁶ who asks, can we say that the women go to a meeting and leave an evil spirit next to their husband in the bed? Experience, authority, and the confessions of credible

³⁵ *Praeposteram libidinem*. This may mean (a) with the woman on top of the man (b) with entry from the rear, or (c) anal intercourse.

³⁶ Probably Andrea Alciati (1492–1550), an Italian lawyer who published several works on the law. Del Rio refers to 'Book 8', but does not give his source a title.

witches confirm the possibility, says Del Rio. When the witch (*strix*) sets out, her husband is made to sleep deeply, and something resembling his wife is put in her place. (Examples from Rémy.)

Del Rio discusses various aspects of the *Canon Episcopi*³⁷ and then returns to Alciati who argues that at the name of Jesus all those attending a witches' meeting disappear, which proves they must have been merely phantasms. Del Rio says that the witches (*sagae*) do not vanish, but their attendant evil spirits carry them off very quickly while the eyes of onlookers are closed.

Evidence says that when witches anoint themselves, sometimes they are not carried off but are found lying in the place where they anointed themselves. Del Rio says there are various explanations for this. Sometimes the evil spirit prefers to deceive the witches and not move them, so that he may persuade judges and princes that the witch is lying and so preserve her from execution. In this way, he keeps his pact with her, to the greater danger of the human race. Sometimes God allows this to happen, sometimes he does not. Del Rio accepts that witches (*sagae*) are sometimes transported by an evil spirit from one place to another on a goat or some other animal, or on a reed or stick, and that they are physically present at their meetings. (References given, including both Catholic and Protestant authors.) He illustrates the point with anecdotes taken from both Mediaeval and ancient historians. The stick, he says, is usually smeared with an ointment which contains the fat of dead children, and this is why witches practise infanticide.]

Once they have anointed themselves in this way, they are usually carried away sitting on a staff, a pitch-fork, or a distaff; or they stand on one leg in a basket; or they sit on brooms or a reed, or a bull, a pig, a male goat, or a dog. [Examples from Rémy.] So this is how they are normally borne off to the meeting, 'the sport of good fellowship', as they call it in Italy. There, on most occasions, once a foul, disgusting fire has been lit, an evil spirit sits on a throne as president of the assembly. His appearance is terrifying, almost always that of a male goat or a dog. The witches come forward to worship him in different ways. Sometimes they supplicate him on bended knee; sometimes they stand with their back turned to him; sometimes they even throw their legs in the air and hold their head, not forwards but tilted right back so that their chin points up to the sky. They offer candles made of pitch or a child's umbilical cord, and kiss him on the anal orifice as a sign of homage. What more can

³⁷ A legal document issued in about 900. It dismissed the notion of the physical reality of witchcraft and suggested that those who believed in it were weak in their faith. The Canon became one of the key documents of witchcraft literature and was quoted or referred to by most of the demonological writers who followed.

one say? Sometimes they imitate the sacrifice of the Mass (the greatest of all their crimes), as well as purifying with water and similar Catholic ceremonies. [Del Rio says that in Book 3 he will offer evidence that they also sacrifice children to the Devil, and retain the Host from communion and offer it for desecration at their meetings.]

Once they have committed these and similar atrocious and execrable abominations, they sit down at table and start to enjoy food supplied by the evil spirit or brought by themselves. Sometimes they perform a ritual dance before the feast, sometimes after. Usually, there are various tables – three or four of them – loaded with food which is sometimes very dainty and sometimes quite tasteless and unsalted. Each witch has his or her place allotted according to station or wealth. The evil spirit attached to each of these workers of harmful magic (*malefici*) sits near him:³⁸ sometimes on one side of him, sometimes opposite. Nor do they omit to use a grace worthy of such a gathering, using words which are always openly blasphemous and in which Beelzebub himself is declared to be the creator, giver, and preserver of all things. (This information comes from a list of graces, which they stick underneath the tables placed at their disposal. I have read a copy of these formulae written in the hand of a very famous worker of evil magic.)

Sometimes they take part in this feast with their face covered by a mask, a linen cloth, or some other veil or facial representation.³⁹ Usually they are masked. After the feast, each evil spirit takes by the hand the disciple of whom he has charge, and so that they may do everything with the most absurd kind of ritual, each person bends over backwards, joins hands in a circle, and tosses his head as frenzied fanatics do. Then they begin to dance. Sometimes they hold lighted candles in their hands, with which they worship the evil spirit, and exchange kisses in his presence. They sing very obscene songs in his honour, or jump up and down to a drum or a pipe which is played by someone sitting in the fork of a tree. They behave ridiculously in every way, and in every way contrary to accepted custom. Then their demon-lovers copulate with them in the most repulsive fashion.

When they sacrifice, they usually start with an act of adoration; but they often make sacrifices outwith the sabbat. Finally, we are told, each person gives an

³⁸ This and the following adjectives are masculine in Latin. One is led to presume from the majority of other writers on the subject that most of the people present at such gatherings were women. Del Rio's use of the masculine form of words both here and elsewhere in this section merely indicates that the company is mixed, in accordance with the usual Latin practice of using the masculine form of adjectives and pronouns to cover both the sexes.

³⁹ 'Mask' = *larva*, which is both an evil spirit and a mask. 'Facial representation' = *persona*, once again a mask whose likeness is that of a human face. The word 'masked' in the next sentence is *personati* and is, again, masculine.

account of the wicked deeds he has done since the last meeting. The more serious these are and the more detestable, the more they are praised with ever greater fulsomeness. But if they have done nothing, or if their deeds are not dreadful enough, the sluggish witches are given an appalling beating by the evil spirit or by some senior worker of harmful magic (*maleficus*). Finally, they receive powders – which some writers say are the ashes of the he-goat whose shape had been taken by the evil spirit whom they worship, and which has suddenly been consumed by fire in front of their eyes – or else they receive some other poisonous substances. Often they are given the task of harming someone, and then is pronounced the decree of the evil spirit Pseudotheus:⁴⁰ ‘Avenge yourselves, otherwise you will die’. (This, as you will appreciate, is contrary to the law of charity.)

Each person then goes home. If they live nearby, they go on foot. If they live further away, since they are transported to the meetings, they come, as far as is possible, either in the silence of midnight when the power of darkness is strong, or at midday: which reminds us of what the Psalmist says about ‘the destruction that wasteth at noonday’.⁴¹ Abenezra writes that magicians observe certain days and hours.⁴² Our witches (*striges*) seem to have different appointed days in different districts. In Italy, they gather on the night before Friday at about midnight [references given]; whereas in Lotharingia, they meet on the nights before Thursday and Sunday, as Rémy says. Others, I have read, meet on the night before Tuesday.

The evil spirit can transport them without the use of an ointment, as I have said, and sometimes does so; but for various reasons he prefers to use one. Sometimes the witches (*sagi*)⁴³ are too timid to make the venture or too weak to bear the horrible contact with Satan via the body he assumes. Sometimes he stupefies their senses by means of the ointment and persuades the poor wretches that its power is very great. On other occasions he mimicks the holy sacraments instituted by God, and by these quasi-rituals imports a degree of reverence and veneration into his orgies. The power of the ointment adds nothing to the transportation. Hence, it is obvious that even if those who wish, out of curiosity, to take part in the meeting at the appointed time, and anoint themselves, and are thereby transported through the air – something which, as has been proved on many occasions, God permits to punish this rash, self-indulgent curiosity – if anyone firm in the faith and armed with charity were

⁴⁰ ‘False god’.

⁴¹ *Psalm* 90, verse 6 (Vulgate).

⁴² I.e. Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra (1092–1167), a Jewish Biblical exegete from Toledo. He also wrote works on grammar, mathematics, astrology, and astronomy.

⁴³ Masculine form of the word.

to anoint himself with this unguent with the intention of conquering the evil spirit’s deception and confirming the true faith, there can be no doubt (as Binsfeld rightly says)⁴⁴ that no transportation would follow. The reason is that such a person refrains from entering into a pact with an evil spirit and will not have been permitted by God to enter one. Moreover, when witches (*sagae*) anoint themselves outwith the appointed time of a meeting, they do not fly away and nor are they carried off, because this is not part of their contract. They know this, and so they do not anoint themselves unless they hear the signal for a meeting.

[That witches can indeed be transported in body is proved because (a) it is well within the Devil’s power to do this (see Augustine and Aquinas), and (b) God permits such a thing to happen. (Examples given.) There is also a large number of examples taken from experience. (Reference and examples given, including lengthy anecdotes from Grillando, Spina, Rémy, and the following anecdote which comes from the *Medical Letters* of Baudouin van Ronss.)⁴⁵

In the village of Oostbrouck not far from Maastricht, there was a widow who found herself obliged to take in a servant as a lodger in order to help with her domestic expenses. With the usual nosiness of servants, he often used to look through the netting⁴⁶ and see his landlady come into the stable where she would make her way to a specific place and then reach out her hands and grasp hold of the hay-trough next to the horse’s stall. Wondering what on earth this behaviour signified, he decided to take a risk and do the same thing, once, without his landlady’s knowledge. So after she had gone through her customary procedure and seemed to have disappeared, he made his way to the same spot, checked it was the right place, and then, following his landlady’s example, seized hold of the hay-trough.

Immediately he was caught up into the air and carried off to the town of Wyck and into a hidden, subterranean cave where he found the scum who are workers of harmful magic,⁴⁷ discussing their acts of malefice. His landlady and

⁴⁴ Pierre Binsfeld (1545/6–1598), German theologian, Bishop of Trier. His *Tractatus de confessionibus maleficorum et sagarum* (Treatise on the confessions of workers of harmful magic and witches), was published in Trier in 1579.

⁴⁵ Bartolommeo della Spina (c. 1475–1546), Italian philosopher, Dominican, author of *Quaestio de strigibus* (An Investigation Into Witches), published in Rome in 1576. Baudouin van Ronss (died 1596), Belgian physician. He wrote several works on medicine. His *Epistolae Medicinales* were published in Leiden in 1590.

⁴⁶ *Transenna*. Here it must be referring to some kind of screen over the stable window.

⁴⁷ *Coenum maleficarum*. ‘Coenum’ means scum or filth, and carries a sense of moral degradation as well. ‘Maleficarum’ is specifically feminine and is here clearly meant to refer to witches.

her friends were astonished by the servant's unexpected appearance. She asked him how he had managed to come thither so suddenly and what trick he had used to do so, and he told her, step by step, how he had done it. She immediately became indignant and turned very angry, afraid that now their secret, nocturnal meetings would be revealed. So she decided to talk to her partners in crime and ask them what they thought should be done in this difficult situation, and they came to the conclusion that they would accept his presence amicably, but would make him swear to remain silent and not communicate or reveal to anyone those secrets which he – beyond either his merit or his comprehension – had happened to see. He for his part made no such promise, but spoke to them in soothing tones and, with a view to getting them to behave with greater mildness, pretended that he prayed they would allow him (at some future date) to become a member of their witches' guild (*collegium sortilegarum*).

But while they were discussing this, the minutes glided by and it was time to go. Doubt now set in, and his landlady badgered the rest to decide whether he should be sent back home, which might prove a danger to everyone who had attended the meeting, or whether he should be killed for the general good. In the end they all chose the more merciful of the two and decided to send him back once they had exacted from him an oath of silence, and his landlady said that once he had given his word she would carry him home on her shoulders. So the two of them got into position and were then borne swiftly through the air by a wind from the East. But now, listen to this! They had covered a good part of their journey when there came into view a huge lake covered in reeds. This provided the maleficent old woman (*malefica anus*) with an opportunity and, fearful lest the youth repent of his initiation into their frenzied rites, she saw a way of getting rid of him. So she suddenly shot forward and threw him off her back, hoping, one must suppose, that the violence of the fall would kill him and that he would be swallowed up in the depths of the lake.

Ah, but how very merciful is God, who does not seek the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live! For God put a stop to the mad woman's intention and did not allow the innocent youth to be drowned. Indeed, he countered it and let the young man live right up to the present day. You see, as chance and good luck would have it, the man was not dealt a fatal blow by falling into the lake, and the violent impetus of his descent was somehow broken by the reeds. Dawn was beginning to break. The poor man's body was tortured by a thousand agonising pains and the only part of it which still worked was his tongue. So with laboured breath he started to groan and kept it up until some huntsmen who were passing by gathered round him, extremely surprised by the unexpected sound of wailing, and there in front of them they found a man who had dislocated both his hips. They asked where he had come

from and what kind of an accident had brought him thither, and he told them everything, just as it had happened. Then they brought him in a carriage to Utrecht where Master Johannes Culemborg, the mayor, struck by the strangeness of what had happened to him, asked a good many questions about every astonishing detail and then ordered his men to track down⁴⁸ the landlady-witch (*fascinatrix era*), arrest her, and put her in chains. The moment she came into the mayor's hands, she confessed absolutely everything".

[This last, says Del Rio, is enough to contradict the Protestants Wier, Godelmann,⁴⁹ Luther, and Melanchthon who would explain witches' flights by referring to medical conditions such as melancholia. So when witches anoint themselves and say they are transported, it is no figment of their imagination. They⁵⁰ take careful note of their surroundings, unless they are masked (*larvati*), and of what they do and whom they meet. They are often seen by other, perfectly sane Catholics, going to and returning from their meetings. Sometimes they have been seen and arrested without any clothes on; or they have fallen from the sky; or they have been badly wounded. When they get home, they are so tired they sleep for three days. (See Rémy.) They all confess the same thing with corroborative details.

Nor is such a flight to be explained by reference to dreams. Those who offer such an explanation commit a sin, 'For the Catholic Church does not punish crimes unless they are certain and manifest; nor does she consider people heretics unless they have quite clearly been taken in heresy'. (Del Rio gives references to pertinent literature.) Why does the evil spirit hold such meetings? So that the witches may enjoy the association; to aggravate their sinfulness; to increase numbers by initiating new witches there; to make them bolder in wickedness; to provide them with illicit sensual pleasure; and to harden them to wicked behaviour. (See Spina.)

Del Rio concludes with further references to Holy Scripture and to modern demonologists, and raises one last point. Since an angel has no body, can he move a physical object? Various answers given by other authorities, says Del Rio,

⁴⁸ Van Ronss's narrative is carefully constructed. He uses the word *indago* = 'a ring of huntsmen or nets thrown round a particular location to prevent the escape of game' to refer (a) to the men who discover the injured servant in the reed-bed, and (b) to the men sent out to arrest the witch. A parallel between the two situations is thus created. The contribution of literary style to demonological and witchcraft literature is an aspect of the subject which needs close study.

⁴⁹ Johann Godelmann (1559–1611), German lawyer and diplomatist. His book *De magis, veneficis, et lamiis recte cognoscendis et puniendis* (The Proper Way to Recognise and Punish Magicians, Workers of Venomous Magic, and Witches) was published in Rostock in 1584.

⁵⁰ *Sortiarii*, literally 'diviners', generally used of witches. Again, it appears in the masculine form, but without necessarily excluding women.

are mistaken. In his opinion, an angel cannot move anything beyond his own power or the nature of the object to be moved. But when he assumes a body, he can use the natural ability of that body to move another body.]

Question 17: Can an evil spirit change the size of bodies in such a way that he will be able to penetrate their various parts; and can he locate one body in two different places, or two bodies in one and the same place by penetrating them?

Briefly, I think that the answer to all these points is No, because they are all contrary to the principles of natural science and the way in which nature is ordered.

[The rest of the section gives reasons for this opinion and references to the relevant literature.]

Question 18: Can magicians transform the bodies of one species into those of another?

[Del Rio says he is not talking about ancient fables, or natural changes in imperfect animals, but about magical transformations brought about with the help of an evil spirit. (References given, including the belief of the Nicaraguans that witches [*striges*] can change themselves into cats, monkeys, and pigs.) But a human soul cannot inform the body of an animal, nor can an animal soul inform the body of a human being; and when Circe changed Odysseus's companions into pigs, they did not lose the rational part of their soul.]

The soul is immortal and cannot be damaged or wounded by an evil spirit. So those people who think they have been transformed into something else are always labouring under an illusion, just as those who think they are seeing something they are not in fact seeing at all are often deluded, too. The sensible person who does not wish to be deceived must distinguish the transformation from its attendant effects (and if Jean de Sponde had done this, he would not have given us so much useless, puerile drivel on the subject in his *Commentaries on Homer*).⁵¹ So one may conclude that whereas the transformation itself is delusory, many of its concomitant effects are perfectly real.

For example, both human beings and their livestock can be destroyed by an evil spirit using a body made of air, or the body of a wolf, or by human

⁵¹ Jean de Sponde (1557–1595), French Classicist, poet, and Catholic apologist. His edition of Homer's works, together with the commentaries to which Del Rio is referring, was published in Basel in 1583.

beings in the guise of wolves (a point I shall clarify later), or by humans without such a guise who have worked themselves into an animal frame of mind. These last may be suffering from a fault in the humours and an excess of black bile, which has caused their mind to be taken over by by a kind of wolfishness so that they are possessed by a hatred for livestock and humans, and a desire to attack them, tear them in pieces, and devour them. There are several medical terms for this condition, including *lykaon* or *lycanthropy*, Arabic *chatrab*, and Latin *melancholia* or *insania lupina*.⁵² A similar disorder makes people think they are dogs, lions, or other animals. Those who are simply suffering from an illness of this kind are not magicians (*magi*), and although they believe they are wolves and imitate the savage behaviour of a wolf, to other people they seem to be what they actually are – just human beings. [Examples given.] But when others, too, imagine these people are wolves, dogs, cats, or some other animal – like the woman in Palladius's *Life of Macarius* who seemed to be a mare, or the Neuri in Herodotus and Mela, or (to give a modern example from the second part of Camden's *Hibernia*), popular belief about what happens to certain of the Irish every year – this is magic and cannot proceed from illness alone.⁵³

It is the Devil's habit to deceive in a number of different ways. Sometimes, for example, he substitutes one body for another. He puts a person to sleep and while he or she is off in some secret place, he takes the body of a wolf or manufactures one out of air, and wraps himself in it, like a garment. Consequently people believe that the things he does are done by the poor wretch who is actually somewhere else, fast asleep. [Reference to a story by

⁵² *Lykaon* is a technical term found in the seventh century Greek medical writer, Paul of Aegina whose work Del Rio cites at this point. Both it and lycanthropy were said by Greek doctors to be a form of madness in which the patient had a ravenous appetite and exhibited other wolf-like qualities. The Arabic term may be based on the verb *shatara* = to rip or tear. *Melancholia*, a medical term borrowed from Greek, refers to a condition involving black bile, and *insania lupina* simply means 'wolfish madness'.

⁵³ Palladius: *Historia Lausiaca*, chapter 19 = *Patrologia Graeca* 34.1044. The relevant part of the story says that a man fell in love with a respectable married woman who was too modest and chaste to be seduced by him, so he consulted a magician who made anyone who looked at her think she was a horse. The Neuri were a tribe living north of Scythia. Herodotus (4.105) says that it was rumoured they practised a dangerous form of magic by turning themselves into wolves for a few days every year. This is more or less repeated by the geographer Pomponius Mela: *Chorographia* 2.14. Camden's information, however, is not of the same kind. The Irish, he says, claim they have wolves for their fathers. They call them 'Beloved of Christ', pray for them, make diligent supplication for them, and are therefore not afraid that wolves will be hostile, *Britannia* (Frankfurt 1590), 716. 'Beloved of Christ', which is a translation of Camden's Latin, should perhaps be 'Friends of Christ' if Camden's *chari* is meant to represent Irish Gaelic.

Guillaume de Paris.]⁵⁴ Sometimes (and this is a fact derived from a number of people's confessions), he wraps actual people very tightly in genuine animal skins, and in this case he gives them a wolf's pelt which they are supposed to keep hidden in the hollow of a tree. Sometimes, in accordance with the pact he has made with them, he manufactures from air the likeness of an animal, surrounding the magicians (*magi*) with it, and builds the copy round each part of their body, fitting head to head, mouth to mouth, belly to belly, foot to foot, and arm to arm. He usually does this when the magicians apply certain ointments to themselves with a view to effecting this change (as in the case of Dolanus the lycanthrope, which has been published in judicial records), or when they merely use the words they have learned from him. [Examples given.]

Once the real body has been removed, the Devil wounds it in the same place he knows has been wounded in the animal body, and Bartolommeo della Spina gives us a contemporary illustration of this in chapter 16 of his *Quaestio de strigibus* (An Investigation into Witches).

'Another witness of this apparent transformation of witches (*striges*) into cats, an artisan from Ferrara by the name of Filippo, made the following declaration to me earlier this year in court under oath. Three months previously, he said, a certain witch (*strix*) had undertaken to cure his son of a bewitchment (for which, incidentally, she herself may have been responsible), and made him agree that he would not stop her from coming to his son if he were to see any cats⁵⁵ fawning around him or behaving in a playful fashion. Well now, that same day, an hour after she had left the house, Filippo and his wife noticed a large female cat they had never seen before, trotting towards the boy. This frightened them and they made several attempts to drive it away, but were distressed to see she kept coming back, until finally they lost both their patience and their temper. So they closed the door and, while the cat raced round, looking all over the place for a way of escape, Filippo threw his spear at her. It took him more than one attempt, but at last he landed her a very heavy blow which finally forced her to hurl herself out of a window high up in the wall. The result was that her body appeared to have been completely flattened. Now, from that very moment, the elderly witch I mentioned⁵⁶ was confined to her bed for a good long time, since every bone in her body had been broken, something which made the parents more or less certain (where before they had been merely suspicious) that the woman was indeed a witch and had subjected their

son to the enchantment which was draining him of his strength. For the marks of the heavy blows the cat had received, looking like the marks one finds on the bodies of those who are sick, were found on the elderly woman.'

Not quite five years ago, in a village in the west of Flanders, not far from Diksmuide, very near the confluence of the Iperlae and the IJzer, while a magical plague was expanding in remarkable fashion,⁵⁷ I happened to hear the following story from a devoutly religious man, well worthy of belief, who was in the neighbourhood at the time.

A peasant and his son were drinking in an ale-house and the man noticed, out of the corner of his eye, that the trollop⁵⁸ was chalking up double the amount of ale when (as is their custom) he drank a toast to her. He pretended not to notice, but when he and his son had had enough, he summoned the taverner, asked her for his bill, and was charged the sum marked up in chalk. He refused to pay and the two of them exchanged blows; then, flinging down on the table the amount he knew was correct, he left. Boiling with indignation, the woman called out, 'You will not have the power to reach your house today, or I am not the woman I am!' But he paid no heed to her threats and went on his way.

When he reached the stream where he had left his boat, however, neither he nor his son (who was pretty strong), could shift it from the bank, even though they leaned on their poles with all their strength. It was as though it had been nailed down in the mud. Now, it so happened that two or three soldiers were marching past, so the peasant hailed them. 'Come and help us get this boat off the bank, mates.⁵⁹ I'll pay you for it and you can have a big drink on me'. They answered his call, came along, and pushed as hard as they could; but for a long time they pushed in vain. Then one of them, sweating and gasping for breath, said, 'Why don't we unload all this stuff from the boat? Perhaps we'll find it easier to get it down to the water if it's empty'. So they emptied the boat of its load. But then (mark this!) they saw a huge fallow toad in the bottom of the boat, looking at them with glittering eyes. One of the soldiers, rather than pick up the toad, drilled a hole in it with the point of his sword, as far as its swollen throat, and threw it into the water. There, apparently

⁵⁷ *Fascinaria pestis mire gliscit*. 'Fascinaria' indicates that the plague had been caused by magical means, through the evil eye in particular. The verb *glisco* means (a) distend, swell, and (b) increase in power or violence. Del Rio seems to have chosen the verb because of its association with buboes, the inflamed swellings symptomatic of one type of plague.

⁵⁸ *Copa*. In Classical Latin this refers to a woman who provides entertainment in drinking places. Hence her reputation was tainted.

⁵⁹ *Contubernales boni*. A 'contubernalis' was actually someone who shared a tent, a comrade-in-arms, or one of two cohabiting slaves.

⁵⁴ Dominican inquisitor, died c. 1312. His principal work was *Postilla super epistolas et evangelia* (Notes on the Epistles and Gospels).

⁵⁵ The text makes it clear these are female.

⁵⁶ *Strix illa vetula*. Strictly speaking, *vetula* refers to an age less than *vetus* = 'old'. In Classical Latin, it tends to imply what we would call 'middle-aged'.

dead, it rolled over on to its back, belly upwards. The other soldiers wounded it still further while it floated, and suddenly the boat came free.

The peasant was very pleased and brought his helpers back to the same tavern he had left earlier, asked for a drink, and was served by a waitress. He asked after the taverner and was told she had become very ill and was in bed, dying. 'Stupid woman!' I said. 'Do you think I'm drunk? I left her standing over there scarcely half an hour ago, and she was in good health and a nasty frame of mind, just like yourself. I'm going to go and see what's going on'. He went into the bedroom and found that the woman had died of wounds which had slashed and ripped open her neck and stomach. 'How did she get these wounds?' he exclaimed. The waitress insisted she did not know and was sure the woman had not set foot outwith the house.

The case went before a magistrate who came to the conclusion that the wounds had been caused by both slashing and stabbing blows, and that they had appeared in the very same places where the soldiers had struck the toad. The toad itself was nowhere to be found.

Question 19: Can magicians make animals speak, and can they understand what animals are saying?

[This section is largely given over to citations from and references to ancient and Mediaeval literature.]

Scripture shows that animals can sometimes speak if God gives them the power to do so. But for the most part I think the phenomenon takes place with the assistance of angels who speak via the animals, except in the case of magpies, crows, and parrots, etc. which can speak by nature. When it comes to voices from fire, air, water, dead bodies, severed heads, statues, and trees, however, the speech is the work of an angel. (Examples.) Sometimes, with God's permission, the Devil works a pseudo-miraculous trick. As for whether magicians understand animal speech, one must suppose they do so with the help of an evil spirit, not an angel, although they may also be able to interpret the movements of animals.

Question 20: Can an evil spirit bestow upon animals the ability to reason?

[This depends on whether they are endowed with such a faculty in the first place. If they are, the evil spirit can easily make them understand something. If they are not, he cannot. Del Rio then discusses the matter and concludes that none of the best authorities credit animals with endowment of the power

to reason and (following Girolamo Fracastoro)⁶⁰ that animals do what they do largely by instinct.]

Question 21: Can evil spirits deprive a person of feeling, or make him sleep for a very long time, or do without food?

[With regard to the first part, the question is not whether an evil spirit can deprive a body of its power to feel, but whether he can deprive of feeling something which is naturally able to feel: for example, the body of someone undergoing torture. (Examples from both ancient and later literature discussed.) 'Every day, workers of evil magic (*malefici*) make light of the severity of the pains they suffer on the rack. They overcome them all with laughter or sleep or silence'. (Examples, including an incident of 1599 related to Del Rio by the Jesuit Provincial in Belgium.) Some people attribute this to the witches' ointment; others to a miracle. Others take it to be a sign of their innocence; others to unusual strength of mind and body, and others to the use of narcotic substances. Most people, however, attribute it to magic worked with the help of an evil spirit. (Examples given.) But narcotics can also be used to make people sleep for a long time. (Examples.) As for the ability to go without food, there is no doubt that an evil spirit can make this happen. (Examples.)]

Question 22: Can magical arts operating with the help of evil spirits change one sex into the other?

[References to and examples from ancient and more recent literature, tending to show that this kind of thing can happen naturally.]

Question 23: Can an evil spirit give an old man back his youth?

[The ancient stories of such a thing are false and repugnant to nature, since they involve the preliminary sacrifice of the old man. (Example.) But there are texts from the Scriptures, which suggest that rejuvenation is possible. Certain aspects of youthfulness can be restored. (Examples from recent literature.) A counter-argument is that human life has a term fixed by God. This, however, varies from person to person and God may permit wide variations. (Examples.) A stronger argument says that human life depends on a natural humidity which is maintained by food but diminishes over the years. It can be restored, but doctors do not think this can be done by their art or by nature. Del Rio replies

⁶⁰ Italian physician and poet (1483-1533). His complete works were published in Venice in 1574.

that if doctors do not know how to do this, it does not follow that an evil spirit is equally ignorant or has not the power to effect it, if God gives him permission. Moreover, if life can be extended by years, in theory, at least, it could be extended to eternity. But nature could not cope with this, and such a thing would be sinful.]

Question 24: What power does magic or an evil spirit have over a soul which is joined to a body and animates it?

[(1) An evil spirit can deceive the senses. (2) He can use the imagination to create fantasies of various kinds. (References given, and a quotation from Mattioli.) (3) He disturbs the senses and humours in order to cause sinful thoughts. (References to Protestant literature.) (4) He assists the memory to retain sinful thoughts. (References to Holy Scripture, ancient, and later literature.) (5) One can restore one's intellect and the rest of one's constitution to a more desirable working order by various means, including medicines and purges.]

These evil spirits (*mali isti daemones*) love to pour darkness into human minds by making the humours dense and the spirits (*spiritus*) few, stupid, and impure. They bestow upon their followers wicked potions (*pharmaca*) by means of which they cast down people from their right mind, something which often happens to those who have been besieged by evil spirits.⁶¹ They lead people astray with misguided and wicked suggestions, persuading them of various things, quite incorrectly: at one time saying something is illicit, and at another that in fact it is allowed; or that something is a grave sin when in reality it is venial (the intention here being to torture people with scruples); or they drive home the idea that things which are contrary to right and law are actually just; or they say that things are contemptible and trivial when in fact they are lethal and ought to be feared strongly (this being done with a view to rendering the conscience lax and wanton.)

[Can an evil spirit teach the arts and sciences? He certainly can if he wishes and has God's permission to do so. He may appear in visible form or speak internally. Such instruction is either illumination or illusion. Modern Anabaptists, for example, eat and drink Holy Scripture and yet continue to think they are right to persist in their errors. Who teaches them, unless it be the Devil? (Quotations from Nider, with Del Rio's comments on them.) The Devil tried

⁶¹ *Spiritus* here refers to those subtle highly-refined substances or fluids which were believed to permeate the blood and principal organs of the body. *Pharmaca* is a word borrowed from Greek and refers both to herbal remedies and, by extension, to some form of magical spell.

to deceive Saint Ignatius of Loyola, but failed. (Quotation from Saint Ignatius.) Now, if he could try to deceive such a saintly person, how much more easily would he have succeeded in teaching falsities to pagan minds? (References given.)]

Here are further examples of teaching received from the Devil. In March this year, 1600, in accordance with a decision made by the Inquisitors of the Faith, the bones of a certain Roman Ramirez, together with a statue, were burned to ashes at Toledo. Ramirez had died in prison while awaiting trial. He was accused among other things of having received knowledge of medicine from an evil spirit, and since this criminal united in his person several aspects of magic, I shall make it my business to translate the accusation faithfully from Spanish into Latin. He said he had already been accused once and abjured the Muslim error, but added that he had relapsed (as is the wont of dregs such as he), and returned to his vomit. For many years he had kept the great fast they call *Ramadan*, and observed the rites and ceremonies of Muhammad by first saying *guadoc* and *zála*, washing his whole body, putting on a clean outer garment, reciting the *azoras* (i.e. prayers) of that sect with his face turned to *al-quibla* (i.e. the East), raising and lowering his head and bowing himself down to the ground, extending his palms upwards to the sky while he was saying *Alaqueur* (i.e. 'God is great'), and rising before daybreak to celebrate the fast *Zahor*.⁶² This absolved him of his sins and then he solemnly celebrated the feast⁶³ of *Ramadan* itself for three days. This he did by abstaining from all labour and servile work, especially on the first day, by putting on a clean outer garment, and by making the declaration *guadoc* and *zála*, along with many other Muslim rites and ceremonies. Then, adding crime to crime and sin to sin, he revived a pact or treaty, which he had made with an evil spirit many years before, with the intention of undertaking a wicked exploit. He worshipped this spirit, did him homage, and dedicated his soul to him on condition that the spirit assist him with favour and advice as often as he might be needed or asked in connection with anything at all. So Ramirez requested and obtained from the evil spirit a knowledge of and expertise in the cure of many secret, hidden (*occultae*) illnesses by means of herbs, fumigations, and superstitious incantations; and as a matter of fact he restored not a few people to health this way.

At the same time he persuaded people that he had a wide and detailed

⁶² 'Guadoc' is probably a reference to the *shadah*, the declaration that there is no God but God and that Muhammad is his prophet. 'Zala' = *sala*, the five daily prayers of the devout Muslim. 'Azoras' = *ashurah*, readings from the Koran. 'Al-quibla' = *al-Qibla*, the direction faced by a Muslim while praying, i.e. towards the Ka'ba in Mecca. 'Alaqueur' = *Allah w' Akbar*, God is great. *Zahor* = *Zuhr*, actually the name of the midday prayer.

⁶³ Del Rio calls it 'Pascha', using the usual Latin word for Passover or Easter.

knowledge of both sacred and profane literature, and that he had a very good memory (since he plainly had no skill in reading or writing.) So he used to recite to others, word for word from memory (and quite openly for money), stories which were recited to him as if he were reading from a book open in front of him – something he did with the help of the evil spirit. In this way he amassed not a little power because of the money he was given by his audiences; and when someone asked him how he had acquired so reliable a memory, he replied that someone who had a very close association with him, a man highly skilled in the nature of herbs and who enjoyed the familiarity of an evil spirit, had given him some kind of drink. He also said that on one occasion, when this same person wanted to set out for Saragossa which was fifteen leagues away, he made a conjuration (*de bon y varon*, as they say),⁶⁴ and suddenly acquired a horse. They both mounted it and very soon arrived at the gates of the city where they left the horse and removed its bridle. Then they did the business for which they had set out, turned back to the gate, threw the harness on the horse again, and were brought back home almost at once.

Similarly, there was an incident which took place in the town of Deza. A woman was going to bed (angry, as it happened), and commended herself to an evil spirit. Suddenly, someone (she did not know who) removed her from that place. Her husband came to Ramirez and asked him for his help. Ramirez replied that the man should not be downcast and that he would restore his wife to him. He gave him a letter, telling him to go to a certain place among the vineyards, where he should make a circle, stand in the middle of it and when he heard a crowd of people passing through, he was to ask, 'Where will the King be?' If he was told that the King was crossing by that route, he should throw the letter to the ground in front of him. The man did as he was told and his wife was returned to him. But he did not see who brought her back or how it was done.

The procurator fiscal added that Ramirez used to say a good many very obscure things, including some which touched upon places very far away about which he could not have known anything except through his pact with an evil spirit.

[While Ramirez was away, someone came to ask for his help in freeing his daughter from an evil spirit. She had begun to show symptoms of possession on her wedding day, and seemed to hate both her parents and her new husband. A priest was called to exorcise her and the evil spirit told him that 101 spirits beside himself had infested the woman, but that they were now gone to Deza

⁶⁴ A phrase perhaps related to *buen varón*, 'a man who can be trusted, a man of good judgement, education, and experience'.

to meet Roman Ramirez. It was only he, the spirit said, who could order all the spirits to leave the woman. At this point, the parents summoned Ramirez to cure their daughter.]

The moment he entered the house, the woman began to say and do extraordinary things, crying out that she knew he had arrived, but did not know why he had come. Then, as he entered the room, she lost consciousness, her face became contorted, and she remained like this for three days without food or drink, having no power to move at all. The magician drenched her with a strong suffumigation of sandalwood, juniper oil, and other things, summoned her back from her fainting fit, and then addressed the spirit which had invested her.

'Leave her alone. Leave her alone and depart. Flee, unless you want me to repeat the suffumigation'.

The evil spirit was unwilling to reply, so Ramirez told everyone to leave the room and, thinking no one could hear him, he questioned the spirit and protested, 'Why don't you answer me? The spirit which attended my grandfather had more humility. What have I done for you to disdain to speak to me? Isn't it enough that I have sacrificed to you for such a long time? Now make this woman sleep so that she doesn't hear anything we say'.

[Ramirez went on to complain that he was in debt and needed money to pay for a garden he had contracted to have made and asked the spirits to leave the woman's body for fifteen days and leave her well and safe during that time, so that he could get paid by a grateful family. It was in the spirits' interest, he added, that he should continue to have a great reputation as an exorcising magician. They could possess the woman again later on, if they wished to do so.

But when Ramirez noticed that this conversation had been overheard, he threatened the spirit with violence unless he left, so the spirit departed. The woman's parents, however, did not pay him as much as he was expecting, so he threatened them with a return of the evil spirit and ordered other spirits to come and possess the woman's husband. This they did and afflicted him horribly. Summoned a second time, Ramirez then expelled these spirits by means of suffumigations, and here the anecdote ends.

Del Rio closes by adding a sixth point to those with which he began Question 24. The power of magic and evil spirits over the will, he says, is quite restricted and the spirits can succeed in overcoming it only by presenting it with constant enticements which inflame the imagination and the passions. They cannot force anyone to do anything against his will, and no one can sin unless he has consented to do so. Therefore Satan (unless God prevents him) works to engender this consent. God allows people to be tempted, but not beyond their

capacity to resist. (References to Holy Scripture, early Mediaeval and later literature, with a long quotation from *The Life of Saint Angela de Foligno*.)⁶⁵

Question 25: What power does the Devil have over a soul which is to be separated from the body, and over the separation itself? Ecstasy, and extraordinary things which happen to dead bodies.

[The Devil can cause ecstasy by binding or loosing the exterior senses in one of two ways: (a) he blocks the paths by which the sensitive spirits reach the exterior senses, or (b) he attracts the spirits to the external organs of sense and then holds them there, unable to descend. This is a natural cause of rapture, easily within the Devil's power. This is how witches (*sagae*) and magicians (*magi*) fall into ecstasy, deceived by Satan into thinking they travel far and wide while actually they lie asleep. (Quotation from Olaus Magnus).⁶⁶ It is a mistake to think that people throw themselves into a magical trance. It is done through a pact with an evil spirit. (References to ancient and more modern literature are given and discussed.)

Death is a separation of the soul from the body. If this separation takes place, the person dies. Only God can separate the soul from the body by means of a trance and still keep the body alive. (References given and discussed, especially a work by the sixteenth century Marco Antonio Mocenigo, *De transitu hominis in Deum* [The Passage of Humankind to God]). The second type of separation of body and soul is death, which the Devil cannot effect save with God's permission. But when death has taken place, although the Devil cannot touch the soul, he does have power over the body. He can assume a corpse and appear in it. He can work wonders thereby, which astonish the ignorant: for example, making blood flow in the presence of the corpse's murderer.

Corpses may be preserved from decay by natural means (references), but the evil spirit knows how to do this, too. He can also keep both living and dead bodies from burning, and cause the hair and nails of a corpse to grow. (References.)

⁶⁵ Italian mystic (1248–1309). She is actually 'Blessed', not 'Saint'.

⁶⁶ (1490–1558). Swedish historian, Archbishop of Uppsala. His book, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (History of the Peoples of the North) was published in Rome in 1555.

Question 26: Can the power of evil spirits cause the souls or spirits of the dead to appear to the living?

Section 1

First conclusion: That the souls of the dead can and sometimes do appear to the living by virtue of God's power, you know is consistent with the tenets both of the Catholic faith and of genuine philosophy. [Proof: this was the common opinion among ancient writers.]

Section 2

[Those who believe nothing unless they see it, and in consequence believe nothing at all, are contradicted by the fact of God's power to make souls visible. Apparitions may be of three kinds: (a) *intellectual*, when separated beings appear only in one's mind, and appear as themselves, not under some other guise; (b) *imaginary* or *spiritual*, when separated souls appear to our inward senses under other forms which are recognisable to us; (c) *corporal*, when they appear to our external senses as physical images.]

Section 3

[It is appropriate and useful that God should sometimes allow this to happen.]

Section 4

[Authority, divine and human, tells us that such a thing can and does happen.]

Section 5

[The conclusions of Church Councils, the Fathers, and historians. Examples drawn in sequence from the first to the sixteenth centuries.]

Section 6

[Objections quickly reviewed.]⁶⁷

Section 7

Second conclusion: Magicians make use of the power of evil spirits to show us the real souls of the dead.

⁶⁷ These four sections are quite long, but space prevents a detailed account of their argumentation.

Question 27: The appearances of evil spirits or the spectral images which evil spirits throw in our path

Section 1

[There are various causes of illusions, and there are various types of evil spirits. Many things are considered to be spectral images when in fact they are quite natural or the result of contrivance, and are caused by impairment of one's senses or one's physical weakness. *Ignes fatui* are natural, but frequently deceive people. So are islands which move from place to place. (Examples.) Vapours seem to take different shapes; places and objects produce noises. (Examples.) All these are either natural or artificial, but may be mistaken for evidence of spectral presence or activity. Compare, too, the remarkable automata of the ancient world (examples), and the artificial spectres created by illusionists (examples). An alteration or impairment in the sense-organs is also not an infrequent cause of 'apparitions' (references). The Devil is accustomed to make use of such natural frailties and abuse people's tendency to be credulous.]

Section 2

[There are various kinds of evil spirit and they have different desires and different ways of working. (References.) Psellus divides these spirits into six *genera*, which are here repeated with additional examples and comment: (1) belonging to fire; (2) belonging to air; (3) belonging to earth; (4) belonging to water; (5) belonging underground; (6) avoiding the light. Del Rio now describes eighteen of the different kinds of spirit, with references to Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and accompanies his references with a large number of examples drawn from a very wide range of literature. The eighteen include *incubi*; frightening apparitions whose names are used by nurses to quieten children; those which manifest themselves as an animal such as a goat or a snake, or as soldiers grouped in platoons or lined up ready for battle; those which appear in the form of girls or women in woods or other pleasant places; those through whom God sometimes gives warning of plague or war; or who cause trouble because of the amount of noise they make; and those who are the guardians of hidden treasure.]

Question 28: How can an evil spirit make itself visible to eye of the flesh when it has no body?

[It is generally agreed that a spirit cannot do this unless he assumes a body. He either makes one from the elements or gets inside a corpse and uses that.]

Section 1

Sometimes, then, they assume the dead body of a human being or an animal and make it move. This they do, not by a motion which confers life upon it (vital motion), but only by a motion restricted in its area of operation (local motion) – the kind of motion whereby they can stir the air; and I think that if God permits it, they can so make adjustments to this body (especially one which is not too far decayed) that they can completely deceive the sense of touch, and I see nothing put forward in argument by any learned or pious person which persuades me otherwise. Take, for example, what the Lord says in Saint Luke [24.39] where he proves he really is in body and is not a spirit of the imagination. 'Handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have'.

Now, this does not add much to our discussion, and certainly does not move it forward. The Lord merely wished to prove that they could feel him and distinguish him by touch; that their eyes were not deceiving them; that he actually did have a body which was real because it could be touched; and that it was not an unburied ghost clothed with a fictitious body. There was no question in this case of a body's having been assumed. It is clear he had flesh and bones, and by this Christ proved that he was not a spirit – something the disciples believed because they saw he had entered through closed doors, which a body cannot do, be it alive or dead; and because they could recognise by touch only that it *was* a body but not *whose* body it was, he told them to use their eyes and *see* – (this is the correct sense, as the text indicates) – his hands and feet; and from the wounds which were still there they were quite certain that this was the man who had been crucified three days before. So from this it is clear that the words of the Lord are true and credible, even if we were to say that the body had been assumed by an evil spirit and could be so modified by him that the sense of touch was deceived.

Well now, I ask you: does not the evil spirit do things every day far more astonishing than simulating the softness of flesh, the hardness of bones, the warmth and gentle heat and all the other qualities associated with touch which one notices when touching a body? I say he can *simulate* these qualities. He cannot produce real ones, those real vital characteristics which belong to a living body and proceed from its informing soul. Simulated characteristics, and those which approximate to the real thing, do not require an informing soul and can be constructed from the substance of the intellect, to the extent that they appear real to the external senses.

[I agree with those who say that even in a corpse so recently dead that it is still warm, the vital heat is missing and rigor mortis has begun to set in. But I do not agree with their conclusion regarding an evil spirit's ability to assume

such a corpse. I think that in the case of such an assumption, the evil spirit is inside the corpse, *simulating* the signs of life. It is easier to do that than create real signs. So it does not follow that because a corpse, still warm, cannot furnish its own vital signs, therefore the evil spirit inside it cannot simulate those signs sufficiently to deceive the sense of touch. (References and examples.)]

Section 2

Sometimes the Devil surrounds himself with a body made from the elements, and once it has been formed by the power he has to do such a thing, he makes it one with him, just as a lifeless body capable of being moved is united to the mover existing inside it. I doubt whether he can choose his material simply from the air, and I do not think he can condense air alone to the point where he produces something solid. But whether he can or cannot, he usually finds it easy to mingle parts of air (the element he uses most), earth, water, cloud, vapour, and exhalations with the result that he easily produces colours from this mixture and easily condenses them into parts of a body and makes them stick together. [References given from Scripture, and ancient and modern literature.]

At this point one must make a distinction. When evil spirits appear in a real corpse, they cannot surround that corpse with a second, living body and neither can they assume any other body when they are wearing a dead one. Physical laws are against it because the spirits cannot penetrate those dimensions which govern size. But when they appear in an elemental body, either they cannot assume another corpse or body at all, or they can do so only with very great difficulty. (I incline to the former opinion.) However, they can surround a real, living body with this elemental body so that it seems to be a human body, or an animal bigger and more gigantic than the real one. I see no reason why this cannot be so, for the argument that air has the ability to expand and become less solid, or to thicken and become dense is persuasive.

[Very occasionally, evil spirits may also manifest themselves in small statues. (Quotation from Thomas of Cantimpré.)]

Section 3

It is popularly believed that there is always something about the appearance of the bodies which have been assumed by evil spirits, which indicates that they constitute a demonic apparition, and I would be quite prepared to believe that this is true. But I think that if the evil spirits are not stopped by a greater power, they can appear in whatever shape they wish and manifest a perfect human form, handsome – indeed, beautiful in every detail.

[The rest of the section gives examples from a wide variety of sources.]

Section 4

Finally, to perform ceremonies intended to make evil spirits appear to us or to show us the souls of the dead (something they cannot actually do) is in no way permissible and, indeed, is a mortal sin. [References.]

Question 29: Can the Devil really make a man rise from the dead?

Section 1

[References to ancient and modern literature refer to ways in which the dead can be revived.]

- (1) I think that animals which are born from putrefying matter can, once they are dead, be revived by an evil spirit using natural remedies. [References to relevant literature.]
- (2) I think that an evil spirit cannot restore to life the more perfect living beings which are not born from decaying matter. This is because these require certain more perfect arrangements of their material and a more careful preparation of each organ, which cannot be achieved except by the natural power of semen. [References.]
- (3) I think that an evil spirit cannot make the soul of a dumb animal animate another body. This is because individual souls of this kind produced from the potentiality of matter die if you separate them from their own matter. But what about a human being?
- (4) I think that an evil spirit has very little or no power to do such a thing. He cannot make a person rise from the dead. He cannot make a person's soul enter its own body and give it life and shape.

[He himself cannot inform the body, nor can he direct into it for this purpose a human soul which has been separated from its body. Only God can do such a thing. But an evil spirit can, with God's permission, introduce a damned soul into the body to move it and make it perform certain actions. Because of the pact they have made with evil spirits, magicians (*magi*) can use superior demons to compel inferior demons to do their bidding, with the intention of making them enter a body and cause it to move. (Example from Agrippa.)]

Section 2

[This section consists largely of references to ancient literature on the subject of resuscitation, and then a long quotation from Rémy.]

From these examples of the evil spirit's fraudulent work is born a particularly

ridiculous belief among witches (*striges*). They hold that sometimes the oxen or the rams which they have killed, boiled or roasted, and then eaten are sometimes brought back to life afterwards in the twinkling of an eye by the evil spirit. It is not difficult to discover the various ways the evil spirit is able to do this.

First, he can close the eyes of witnesses by sending into them a humour or some other sense-impression, or by agitating the spirits in the imaginative faculty and bringing them in this state to the senses in general and to the organs of the external senses, whither images and semblances impressed thereon by agitation of the spirits and the object of the sense-impression, normally descend. There, these semblances are usually held back, and when the process of apprehending them has once started, it is shifted about so often that the exterior sense thinks it is equally affected and genuinely altered as though by an external object. It is the kind of thing which usually happens to a sleeper in his dreams, but the Devil can make it happen to people while they are awake, because the physical organs obey incorporeal substances as far as local motion is concerned. (See Saint Thomas Aquinas.)

Secondly, he can do this by substituting one thing for another. For what prevents the evil spirit from taking away the dead ox, along with its skin and bones, and putting a live ox in its place, and doing this so quickly that the speed of the exchange is not seen by the bystanders? Meanwhile, as he is taking away the corpse and replacing it with another ox, he can interpose a cloud or some other piece of trickery so that the bystanders do not see that the place is empty and the ox has been taken away.

Thirdly (as Spina says is confessed by several witches [*striges*]), he can bring it about that when the King or Queen of the journey or assembly⁶⁸ takes a stick and strikes the pelt in which the bones have been collected and piled up, all of a sudden some evil spirit gets underneath the skin, joins everything together, assembles the pieces, alters the skin so that it assumes the shape of the ox, lifts it up in the air, and then guides its movements so that it looks as though the original ox has been resuscitated.

Fourthly, he can form a complete ox's body from air, with new skin and new bones; or he can put together another body from air along with the remaining bones and attach it to the rest of the skin, and when it is required he can keep it intact under the skin, move it, and make it walk and low. When necessary he can also withdraw from it, and then it will look as though the ox has collapsed and died. 'This is why', says Spina, 'witches (*striges*) maintain, as a group, that after such oxen (which they believe have been resuscitated) are brought back to their masters' byres by command of the Lord or Mistress of the journey, they die within three days, as if some wasting disease were shrivelling

⁶⁸ I.e. the leader of the witches during their transvection or at the sabbat.

them up in a matter of hours, and that after a while what seemed to be quivering flesh quickly breaks up into the material it was before'. (*Quaestio de strigibus*, chapter 7).

[A final word on miraculous resuscitations.]

Question 30: What power does magic have over the evil spirits (*cacodaemones*) themselves?

Section 1

[Ancient books on this subject have perished. In the case of good spirits or angels, Del Rio thinks they have some natural power to coerce, or at any rate restrain wicked spirits. But they cannot do this indiscriminately in the case of demons inferior to themselves, and when it comes to demons of equal or superior rank, they can act only upon God's command or with his permission. The same can be said of the power wielded by one set of evil spirits over another. (References.) But whereas good angels submit to their superiors, evil spirits do not submit to theirs except perforce and with ill grace because, although there is rank and degree among them, it lacks that formal structure which allows an efficient, effective chain of command to operate. (References.) Magicians who wage magical war against each other in an attempt to damage or destroy each other rely upon the power of evil spirits, and their battles are similar to those waged between such spirits. (Illustrative anecdotes follow.)]

Section 2

Holy people have very often received from God an extraordinary power to keep evil spirits under control, as is attested by innumerable miracles whereby they have conquered and crushed them. The same power has always invested the sacraments, sacramentals, and exorcisms of the Catholic Church.

[The rest of the section illustrates these points with reference to a wide variety of literature.]

Section 3

There is no physical thing which has the power directly and of itself to coerce an evil spirit to appear, come, depart, do anything, or cease doing something. For no physical thing can equal the strength of substances which are both spiritual and separate. Therefore evil spirits cannot suffer anything from these naturally, although they can do so supernaturally. Hence I do not agree with magicians when they talk about various natural remedies against evil spirits, as Hermes [Trismegistus] does when he tells us that evil spirits are brought

together by means of a suffumigation of aloe wood or whale-sperm, or made to flee by a suffumigation of sulphur. (See also Porphyrius and Proclus who pass on many similar pieces of nonsense, and someone quoted by Hippocrates, who records even more inane foolishness.) I do not agree with heretics who say that exorcisms and consecrated objects have no supernatural power, and make a great fuss about them.

But neither can one approve of the credulousness and superstitious behaviour of certain Catholics who ascribe supernatural power to things which have not been consecrated, such as *hypericum*,⁶⁹ rue, horn, goat's dung, baths, and whippings, and think that if they use these the evil spirit is adversely affected and thus he is annoyed or driven away. Whipping the body in this fashion may well cause, and intensify, an illness; so someone who is sick will just make himself worse. What is more, anger and sadness serve to increase those states of melancholia, which the evil spirit wishes to encourage. So while stupid people want to harm the evil spirit by doing things like this, they actually give him help.

[There is nothing in any of these 'remedies' which can distress an evil spirit. When the saints flogged themselves, they had an effect because they were permitted to work a miracle. Baths may help because they purge the melancholic humour. Rue and *hypericum* are extremely useful for treating wind. Dung and goat's horn dispel wind, too, because their smoke is acrid. Evil spirits often possess people who have too much black bile. Consequently certain mineral or herbal remedies may have an effect. (Examples and references.) The Biblical story of David's calming Saul by playing the harp does not provide a precedent. The music soothed the agitation of Saul's humours and thus rendered him a less suitable object for demonic possession. Nor can evil spirits be caught and trapped in bottles or rings, as poets would have us believe. (References.) Del Rio then quotes Alonso Tostado to the effect that evil spirits cannot be coerced by human beings into doing anything, the only exception to this being ecclesiastical exorcisms, and the section ends with quotations and references designed to illustrate these points.]

⁶⁹ The name of various species of St John's wort.

BOOK 3

Harmful magic and superstition

Part 1: Harmful magic

Question 1: What is harmful magic, and how many different kinds are there?

I am not arguing about whether it exists or not. I take for granted that it does. Those who deny this are contradicted by the precepts of Holy Scripture, canon and civil law, and by historians, poets, common belief, and the testimony of all past ages. No branch of magic delights the evil spirit more because, as Synesius says, 'the disasters of humankind are food and drink to evil spirits'. By the word *malefice*,¹ however, I do not mean just any kind of injury or sin, but rather a magical, superstitious sign or effect. The person who employs malefice is called *maleficus*, and the person who is injured by it is called *maleficiatus*. So it can be described as follows: 'Malefice is a type of magic by which an evil spirit intends to harm another individual'.

I have said 'a type of magic' in order to restrict what is rather a broad term to this kind of harmful activity, and I have added 'by which some evil spirit' because if a pact or a treaty with the evil spirit were lacking, there would be no point in the subject's appearing in this treatise, any more than murder, rape of a virgin, theft, or larceny. Malefice can be subsumed under two headings: 'Intention' and 'Efficient Cause'. By 'efficient cause', I do not mean 'the permission granted by God', or 'the evil spirit who carries it out', or 'the depraved free will of the evil magician who agrees to receive help from an evil spirit and co-operates with him', because these three things always go together in every act of malefice. For not a hair of one's head can fall with God's permission; nor can an evil spirit do more harm than God allows; nor can he bring to a conclusion what he is allowed to do unless the worker of harmful

¹ This technical term will now be employed instead of 'harmful magic'. It translates the word *maleficium* which is often employed for 'witchcraft' as, indeed, Del Rio very frequently employs it here. But since he is discussing magic as a whole, I have preferred to use a technical term which includes witchcraft but also permits the reader to refer it also to the wider concept of harmful magic.