Institoris and Sprenger begin their analysis of witchcraft by observing that for witchcraft to have any effect, three things must concur: the devil, the witch, and the permission of God. For them, as for us, the devil provides a convenient starting point, because the witchcraft of the *Malleus* depends upon an unusual conception of what the infernal side of the Christian pantheon is all about. Like so many late-medieval cultural icons, the inquisitors’ devil is not amenable to simple definition; nor is it easy to determine in what form and to what extent the devil was actually “present” in peoples’ minds. Jeffrey Burton Russell maintains that the sinister presence of the devil was medieval man’s ubiquitous companion, that “The eternal Principle of Evil walked in solid, if invisible, substance at one’s side and crouched when one was quiet in the dark recesses of room and mind.” At the same time, however, and with equal justice, Richard Kieckhefer can point to the evidence of witchcraft prosecutions themselves, which suggest that to most people the devil was not of any particular concern, appearing instead “more as a legendary figure of folklore than as the master of a demonic cult.” One might plausibly maintain that these divergent views were the products of different levels of culture, one clerical and the other “popular,” but the late-medieval devil was also to everyone a sort of chameleon, whose particular appearance was dictated more by circumstances and context than by anything else. Further, there was a considerable common ground between the conceptions of the diabolic held by learned inquisitors and those of their less educated informants. This partial consensus was possible because some clerics had come to accept a complicated and not wholly consistent vision of the devil, as at once a transcendent principle of evil, and at the same time as a being who was present daily in all manner of supra-normal encounters and phenomena. Certainly, the location of the transcendent in the immanent corresponds with a general tendency in late-medieval religion, but in the devil’s case it also created difficult problems: where a transcendent God could manifest himself in the mundane world...
through a variety of mediating agents, a transcendent devil was traditionally not so well equipped. While God was represented in the various manifestations of the Trinity, and had as well an array of angels and saints, to say nothing of the Church, the devil had only a multitude of demons to carry out his will on earth. Because all demons were perceived as beings of essentially the same type, not obviously distinguished from their master, the mere existence of minor demons could potentially lead to Satan’s trivialization. To reconcile the apparent ubiquity of demonic power with a transcendent principle of evil, some clerics began to insist upon the necessity for human mediation of the diabolic side of the supernatural.

Such a striking dislocation of diabolic agency from the being of the devil stands in stark contrast to the thinking of earlier ages, and requires some explanation. The basic Christian devil of the Fathers had been a relatively coherent, consistent figure, who competently played out his well-defined role in God’s creation. This is not to say that the conception of the devil had ever been simple, but in the earlier Middle Ages most clerics would probably have accepted as their starting point Augustine’s view of a powerful but strictly limited devil. This orthodox Christian demon was a fallen angel, who retained his angelic nature despite the loss of grace, and whose aerial body, superhuman intellect, and vast experience enabled him to do wonderful things. He was, however, entirely separated from the divine, and could not perform true miracles or do anything truly supernatural: a demon was simply a creature created by God, differing from the birds and beasts only in degree, and not in kind. Because the devil lacked the capacity for moral goodness, he was man’s superior in neither a moral nor an absolute sense, and, despite his remarkable physical and intellectual powers, he could always be overcome, albeit with difficulty, by pious minds turned entirely toward God.

Demons had a job to do, however, and that was to make life miserable for people on earth by tempting them to sin and by afflicting them with injuries. Tempting men came easily to demons, for their powers of observation revealed our weaknesses and inner characters, while their spiritual natures allowed them to beguile surreptitiously those already prone to succumb. Demons had considerable influence over such unlucky souls, and were able to persuade them to sin

in marvelous and unseen ways, entering by means of that subtlety of their own bodies into the bodies of men who are unaware, and through certain imaginary visions mingling themselves with men’s thoughts, whether they are awake or asleep.

This connection between demonic activity and human sin was responsible for the prominence of the devil in Augustine’s thought. Not only was man’s
own fall the direct result of a failure to resist the devil’s lure, but the temptations of the fiend continued to inspire all manner of sins and create countless roadblocks on the way to paradise. For Augustine, “evil” was first and foremost moral evil and an expression of sin; when Augustine’s devil did evil in the world, his presence was known principally by human behavior and not by mischance or misfortune.7

In comparison, the devil’s power to cause physical harm was of almost trivial concern. It was true, Augustine admits, that the natural powers of demons enabled them to bring about physical harm – they might cause disease, for example, by rendering the air unwholesome – but, since any mundane injury was ultimately inconsequential when compared with the death of the soul, Augustine was interested in demons’ capacity for physical harm only when it complemented their ability to tempt man into sin. Black magic was an important example of this kind of behavior: demons used their powers to give efficacy to magicians’ spells not because they enjoyed causing suffering, but because by doing so they confirmed the efficacy of superstitious magical rites. Thus, men who longed to do evil were rewarded by God with the deception of demons. For example, when men used superstitious rites to discover the future,

many things happen for the diviners in accordance with their divinations, so that, enmeshed in them, they are made more curious and entangle themselves more and more in the multiple snares of a most pernicious error.8

The same principle applied when demons impersonated pagan gods, and bestowed benefits upon their deluded worshipers: by so doing they prevented the superstitious from turning towards true religion. Similarly, demons deployed their powers to do harm and to tempt in concert to lure people to have recourse to magical remedies:

How many wicked things [the devil] suggests, how many things through greed, how many things through fear! With these allurements he persuades you to go to the soothsayers, the astrologers, when you have got a headache. Those who abandon God and resort to the devil’s amulets have been beaten by the devil. On the other hand, if the suggestion is made to someone that the devil’s remedies are perhaps effective for the body – and so-and-so is said to have been cured by them because when the devil had received a sacrifice from him he left off troubling his body, having got possession of his heart; [one should say] “I would rather die than employ such remedies.”9

Yet no matter how terrible demons might be, everything they did, whether it was to tempt or punish the evil or to test the merit of the good, was done at the express command of God and by his will:
For [demons] can only act within the limits allowed them; and they are given liberty of action by the profound and just judgment of God most high, in accordance with the desserts of men, some of whom rightly endure affliction, but no more, at the hands of those demons, while others are, with justice, deluded by them, and brought under their sway.10

Demons remained morally culpable for the evil that they did, for they enjoyed it and did it freely, but ultimately responsibility for their actions lay in the just but inscrutable will of God. Under such circumstances, one should avoid the devil and shun his works, but one need not fear provided one had faith in God. Rather, one should say with Augustine’s imaginary headache sufferer, “God scourges me and delivers me as he wills.”11

This Augustinian conception of the devil was never entirely displaced during the Middle Ages, but by the twelfth century it was being amended in the course of new learned speculation about the devil and his role in creation.12 Though scholastic theologians, and Thomas Aquinas in particular, added little that could truly be called innovative to the conception of the devil, they did alter the ways in which he and his works were perceived, in such a way that they emerged more powerful, more independent, and more obviously present in the quotidian world than before.13

Systematization was the hallmark of scholastic demonology: Aquinas’s great achievement in this field was the creation of a theoretical framework in which the devils of Augustine, Dionysius, and the early Church could comfortably reside alongside their more contemporary kin.14 The mere existence of such a system, though, had an inevitable effect upon the subject being systematized. Aquinas followed Augustine in his insistence that demons were naturally created beings, but drew the logical conclusion that both demonic behavior and physiology were therefore legitimate objects of investigation and analysis. As created beings, demons obeyed the same physical laws which governed the rest of the universe; from the observation of demonically inspired effects, from knowledge gleaned from scripture and other authorities, and from reliable accounts of encounters with devils, Aquinas had at his disposal a body of evidence which he could interpret with reason, logic, and certainty according to Aristotelian precepts. Consequently, it was possible to know precisely the nature of demonic bodies, demons’ intellectual abilities and limitations, their speed and range of movement, the qualities of their will and emotions, and even their sexual proclivities.15 The ambiguity which had characterized previous descriptions of the devil was now lost: it was possible to know exactly who and what the devil was, and how he would behave under given circumstances. Further, Aquinas situated demons within an ordered hierarchy of creation, in which by their angelic natures they stood mid-way between God and man.16 For this reason, so far as Aquinas was concerned, all
demons were metaphysically superior to man just as they were man’s physical and intellectual superiors; from this derived a belief in diabolic potency that was correspondingly greater and more threatening than Augustine’s. This diabolic superiority was clearly expressed in the uniform insubstantiality of Aquinas’s demons, since unlike most previous writers, he insisted that demons lacked any sort of corporeal body whatsoever: demons were powers and intelligences rather than beings in a physical sense.17

There was no room in Aquinas’s universe for the ambiguously drawn demons of clerical exempla or the spirits of “folk-demonology,” mischievous angels who had fallen to earth midway between heaven and hell.18 Aquinas did not deny that trolls, fairies, incubi, and other sensible manifestations of the devil were encountered; he maintained simply that they were of the same order as the intangible beings who brought punishment and temptation. In all of their guises demons were essentially the same, fallen angels with angelic powers, whose proper dwelling place was hell, but who resided in the lower air by divine permission for the express purpose of carrying out the divine will.19 The problem was to make evidence based upon direct observation of sensible demons square with evidence of the devil’s unseen presence and with his theologically determined identity.

This is the difficulty Aquinas faced when addressing the existence of incubus demons. Although it was a necessary condition of their spiritual natures that demons could not generate human offspring, Thomas recognized that both authority and common experience reported otherwise. To reconcile this apparent contradiction, he constructed an elaborate and unconvincing scenario in which succubi received semen from their human partners and then used this as incubi to inseminate women.20 Normally, of course, human semen lost its _calor naturalis_, and hence its potency, when removed from the body, but the superhuman speed of demonic motion was sufficient to overcome even this obstacle. But if this provided a satisfactory explanation for how demons seemed able to generate human offspring, it did not really explain why they should want to do so in the first place. For unlike Guibert of Nogent’s demons, who sought intercourse with women for “sport alone,” the demons of the _Summa_ take no delight in carnal sins and looked only to lead men into perdition.21

This example illustrates how difficult it could be, even for Thomas Aquinas, to reconcile a theologically and metaphysically consistent demon with his earthly manifestations. Consequently, in scholastic demonology there is a perceptible dichotomy between the highly abstracted, impersonal, invisible devil of theory, and demons in their more concrete, personal, and sensible forms.22 This discontinuity in the devil’s nature is important, because it proved compatible with notions of witchcraft in a way that traditional conceptions of
the devil were not; witches could, for some theorists, occupy this gap in the
diabolic realm, mediating between the demons of theory and the world of
earthly misfortune. Thus, as a general rule, the less the demons of a late-
medieval treatise resembled the fallen angels of Augustine, the greater the
importance, power, and danger of witches.

For example, consider the comparatively conservative views of Felix
Hemmerlin, a Swiss reformer, who wrote extensively about demons in the
generation prior to Institoris and Sprenger.23 He was interested in the devil’s
immediate and physical appearances in the world, rather than as some abstract
principle of moral evil: his devil is mainly a cause of tangible misfortune rather
than of sin. But Hemmerlin’s demons are in other respects quite traditional;
they do not abdicate their responsibilities to their human followers, and when
there is mischief to be done, they do it themselves, for their own (or God’s)
reasons. When Hemmerlin discusses the relationship between man and devil,
it is the role of demon that is most important. For example, Hemmerlin
tells us that a woman of Erfurt had a demon, who spoke fluently in German,
Latin, and Czech. Institoris and Sprenger would doubtless have called her a
witch for this reason alone, and made her the focus of the narrative. For
Hemmerlin, however, she is of no further interest; instead, it is her demon
who claims center stage: this industrious devil bragged that he was the same
spirit who had seduced the Bohemians away from the true faith, and that he
then destroyed with hellfire the fortifications of the invading Catholic army,
because the commanding princes “did not hold God before their eyes but
divided the territory of the kingdom among themselves before victory had
been achieved.”24 Not only does Hemmerlin’s devil act without human medita-
tion, his activities are securely determined by a conventional moral order: he
punished the Catholic army because of the sins of its leaders.

Hemmerlin also believed in magic. He knew, for instance, that peasant
women brewed poisonous herbs and roots together to cause storms. When the
pot was exposed to the sun, the fumes rose into the air and condensed into
violent storm clouds, apparently through a process partly natural and partly
diabolic.25 He describes a “mulier strega,” who could turn herself into a cat
and killed many infants in their cradle before she was burned, and observes
that “the world is full of this curse.”26 Yet for Hemmerlin, the devil had not
been eclipsed by witches, and demons retained a well-defined role in the pro-
duction of evil. Whereas misfortune in the Malleus is virtually the exclusive
prerogative of witches, Hemmerlin’s demons might still cause storms of their
own accord, and were even known to make off with a penis or two.27

Less consistent and less traditional spirits inhabit the work of Petrus
Mamoros, regent of the University of Poitiers, who wrote an interesting tract
on the subject of witchcraft at the request of the bishop of Saintes around
In this work, the Flagellum Maleficorum, Mamoris tries to line up the theoretical powers of demons with the most concrete examples possible, since there are, regrettably, certain persons who will concede nothing, "unless some gross and sensible example is given them." While his examples are certainly "gross and sensible," they also feature demons of unusually trivial appearance. Mamoris' demons included not only the shop-worn inhabitants of exemplary stories; they were also the products of his own extensive experience. Like Institoris, Mamoris was not a man of high birth — in his youth, he had worked as a shepherd — and his considerable first- and second-hand knowledge of demons would seem to accord with the views and experiences of most common people. He had encountered demons masquerading as ghosts and poltergeists, as well as the annoying spirits that disturbed the sleep of sheep and shepherds alike. He was also extremely credulous; not only was Mamoris prepared to accept almost any account of strange occurrences as substantially true, he also insisted upon interpreting ambiguous phenomena as demonic. In this he can be compared with another demonologist, the more traditional, and considerably more intellectually sophisticated, Johannes Nider (d. 1437). Where Nider contended, following William of Paris, that humans, and not demons, go out at night and put tangles in horses’ manes, Mamoris maintained that demons regularly did exactly this, and recommended giving one’s horses a splash of holy water as a remedy. Similarly, while Nider qualified his tales of stone-throwing devils, admitting that such things were often attributable to the frauds of wicked people, it did not occur to Mamoris to be so cautious. Nor do Mamoris’ narratives serve an obvious didactic purpose, as did Nider's more traditional exempla. They were simply intended as evidence of the devil’s nature and behavior, although the two do not always exist comfortably side by side.

The most impressive ability of Mamoris’ demons was their powers of local motion, for although they could not move anything in an absolute sense, as this power belonged to God alone, they could move objects relative to themselves. Through this power demons could alter the weather, cause disease, carry witches through the air, and so on. As an example, Mamoris relates that he once knew a nobleman who had a familiar spirit named “Dragon.” Dragon was a minor demon who had the bad luck to encounter another, stronger, demon who bound him in a ring, seemingly for no other reason than sheer malice. The stronger devil would take poor Dragon with him as he rummaged through people’s houses, leaving the ring stuck behind a door or in a hole until his business was finished. From this tale, Mamoris concludes that the devil was able to manipulate both Dragon, and Dragon’s tangible prison, by his powers of local motion: “For demons are of a nature superior to the rational soul which cannot move the body.” One cannot help but think that if little Dragon is of
a nature superior to that of human beings, the exact extent of his superiority is elusive indeed. Similarly unthreatening demons populate Mamoris’ accounts of stone-throwing devils, whose mischief also provided painfully direct evidence of the power of demons to move objects locally.¹⁵

Mamoris evidently thought in terms such as these when he envisioned the direct and unmediated influence of demons in human affairs. Demons were indeed commonly encountered, but their assaults were more likely to be annoying rather than really terrifying, of the order of broken windows rather than broken bones. He does not deny that devils can do much greater things, and readily admits that since even certain stones have the power to turn the mind to love or madness, “so much more can the devil through transmutation of the blood and humors and in another subtle way horribly produce hatred in the mind and pain in the flesh.”³⁶ Yet it was also entirely characteristic of Mamoris to say this in reference to witchcraft rather than to any of the devil’s personal endeavors. Like Institoris, Mamoris saw witchcraft as the far more frightening aspect of diabolic power: witches were the ones responsible for infertility, madness, the slaughter of infants, infestations of werewolves, and plague.

In short, in direct, worldly encounters with the authors of demonological treatises and their informants, demons often seemed insufficiently imposing to carry plausibly the responsibility for the world’s ills. Nider, in his Formicarius, tells of a mildly troublesome demon who haunted the house of a priest living near Nuremburg,

...with hissings, whistlings, and blows, not very distinct, but audible; for sometimes he would beat on the walls of the house, and sometimes the joker would blow, as it seemed, on the various pipes of actors, and he would indulge in a lot of unrestrained behavior doing these sorts of things, that nonetheless do no harm.³⁷

The worst that this demon could do was frighten those unfamiliar with its antics, and hide articles of clothing in out of the way places. Similarly, the Franciscan, Alphonso de Spina, who around 1460 devoted the long final book of his Fortalitium Fidei to the attacks of demons, was likewise frightened in his youth by a noisy but seemingly harmless house spirit.³⁸ Such demons, he says, were responsible for beating on wine casks, and pulling off one’s covers at night, but could do no other harm. Many demonologists had similar experiences, and all had heard first-hand accounts of such things.

The extent to which conceptions of the devil in general were influenced by this sort of narrative depended upon the relative weight assigned to the evidence of eyewitness testimony. For Nider and Hemmerlin, although such narratives were important, they did not outweigh the importance of more
traditional *exempla* in which the devil retained a more traditionally “hellish” role. In the work of Mamoris, Spina, and Institoris and Sprenger, the testimony of personal experience was given proportionally more authority, and their characterizations of demons were more apt to reflect comparatively trivial encounters with various spirits.

As appearances of the devil in late-medieval demonologies become increasingly mundane, their authors become more apt to identify as demonic all manner of supra-normal encounters, and so to assimilate demons with various traditional spirits. This was nothing new: the process of assimilation had been going on ever since Christians first identified pagan spirits and deities with the devil. But because some fifteenth-century scholastics had come to accept appearances of a very concrete and material, but not awesomely powerful devil as representative, they were also able to accept narrative accounts of encounters with such spirits, or with demons sharing many of their characteristics, as substantially real and meaningful. In this way, as the demonological conception of the devil began to approximate that of more humble folk, demonologists were able to accept as true an increasing number of traditional, “popular” narratives, thus validating their increasingly “popular” conception of the devil. Hemmerlin reported that in his day, demons “appear frequently in Denmark and Norway, and there they are called trolls, and on account of their familiarity with people they are not feared, but people make use of their obedience.” One could argue that later demonologists suffered from a similar problem, as their devils began to assume the contours of a variety of familiar but not overtly demonic spirits.

Ghosts are a good example of this process, since there was no necessary reason why a spirit of the dead should be anything other than what it appeared to be. Jacobus de Clusa, a fifteenth-century expert on the subject, was in fact convinced that most apparitions around monasteries, churches, cemeteries, and houses were actually the insubstantial spirits of the dead. Jacobus explained that the reason exorcisms were so often ineffectual these days, a fact which Institoris and Sprenger ascribed to witchcraft, was that rites intended to drive off demons were being wrongly applied to the Christian dead.

While demonologists did not deny that ghosts existed, they believed that spirits claiming to be ghosts almost invariably turn out to be demons in disguise. Mamoris tells of a spirit which haunted a house with the usual cries and groans, claiming to the ghost of a dead lady:

Many people heard this spirit day and night, but saw nothing. He revealed many things which had been done in the past, and these revelations were found to be true. He also used to admonish the people of the house to do many good things.
Yet appearances were deceiving: the ghost interspersed certain *superstitiosa* along with his good advice, and on this basis a “wise man” was able to discover that the spirit was actually a demon. Such things, Mamoris concluded, happen all the time. By interpreting situations such as this as encounters with the devil, Mamoris and his colleagues succeeded not only in demonizing ghosts and similar apparitions, but also in giving their demons the characteristics of ghosts and nature spirits.42

This is most obvious where the actual appearance of the devil is concerned. The Christian devil is naturally a master of illusion, and when he was required to assume a shape for the benefit of mortal senses, the Church traditionally maintained that virtually any form was available to him. But as the character of the devil began to merge with those of other supra-normal beings, his physical appearance changed also. Like demons, traditional nature spirits could assume human form, but in their case it was customary to have some signal flaw or abnormality in their appearance so that their true nature might be known. Many European nature spirits, for instance, might appear as normal or attractive humans from the front, but were hollow when observed from behind.43 As early as the thirteenth century, Caesarius of Heisterbach reported that when a certain woman inquired why a demon always retreated by walking backward, the devil replied: “Although we may assume human form, yet we have no backs.”44 By the fifteenth century, similar ideas about the devil’s appearance were making their way into learned demonologies. Alphonso de Spina maintained that although the devil could transform himself into an angel of light, or even appear as Christ on the cross, through “diligent inspection,” a tail or some similar deformity would give him away.45 Thus for Spina, the traditional Scandinavian saying, “When the tail is seen, the troll is known,” could just as easily have been applied to the devil.46

Thinking of the devil as he appeared on earth in these terms encouraged demonologists to construct a two-tiered model of the demonic, elaborating upon the disjunction already present in scholastic theory between the devil in his abstract and his more material forms. The most dramatic example of this exercise is found in the fifth and final book of Spina’s *Fortalitium Fidei*, a lengthy discussion of the devil, his nature, origins, and works. There is a hierarchy of demons in hell, Spina tells us, and each is charged with oversight of some specific sin – Asmodeus rules lust, Mammon greed, Behemoth gluttony, and so on. There is, in addition, an army of invisible demons all around us, some responsible for specific places, others assigned to tempt particular people, and all of us can count on having at least one demon specifically charged with our own spiritual ruin. Fortunately, every demon is opposed by a particular good angel, and the two spiritual armies are constantly engaged in merciless warfare over the fate of human souls. Since the day of creation, Satan has turned all
his powers toward mankind’s destruction, and there is not a crime, a sin, an evil in the world, for which he is not somehow responsible.47

Thus far, Spina’s account of demons and their works is unusual only for its elaboration. As a Franciscan, Spina looked at demons in a traditional way, more as the source of sin than of misfortune. Undoubtedly demons did cause storms and disease, but more importantly, they excited heretics and Jews against the Church, and had built up a fortress of sin in opposition to the citadel of God.48 To delineate this earthly city of sin and its legions of heretics, Jews, and criminals arrayed against Christendom was Spina’s primary objective, and occupies the first four books of the treatise. Nonetheless, Spina concludes his text with an elaborate description of demons themselves, and, one is shocked to discover, that they are unambiguously the beings of folklore.49 They are the duen de casa, who break crockery, disturb sleepers and go bump in the night; they are incubi and succubi, who apart from their more direct assaults perch on sleepers’ chests and send them erotic dreams; they are the praelia, who comprise the phantom armies that appear at times to men; they are the nightmares who oppress men in their sleep; they are fates and familiar spirits; and finally they are the bruxae, demons who deceive old women into thinking that they can fly through the night with Diana and do impossible things. In short, Spina demonizes a host of traditional spirits, and grafts their characteristics uncomfortably onto a very traditional conception of the devil’s nature and duties. This sort of assimilation of folklore and Christian theory had been attempted before, of course, but usually in the context of exemplary stories intended to educate the unlettered about the “reality” that lay behind traditional beliefs. Spina, however, elevated this process to a formal enumeration of diabolic types, and in so doing brought into painful clarity the contrast between demons as they appeared visibly and as they operated invisibly in theory.

In the Malleus, this dichotomous and non-traditional conception of the devil is an integral part of the authors’ argument. Whereas they discuss the devil continuously throughout the text, they usually do so in terms of his powers and motives in the abstract. These are formidable indeed. Due to the fineness of their natures, the scope of their experience, and the revelation of higher spirits, demons had knowledge far surpassing man’s. Their will adhered immovably to evil, and they sinned always in pride, envy, and malice. Although they were intangible spirits, demons could nonetheless do marvelous things through the exercise of their intellect and will alone. The authors revealed to their curious readers the formidable extent of the devil’s powers:

They will discover how [the devil] knows the intentions in our hearts, how, too, he can transmute bodies, substantially and accidentally, with the assistance of a
second agent, how he can move bodies locally, and alter the inner and outer senses so that they perceive something else, and how he can, although indirectly, alter a person’s mind and will.\textsuperscript{50}

That demons used these powers tirelessly to the detriment of mankind, Institoris and Sprenger demonstrate through a catalogue of typical diabolic activities:

Rational in mind, yet reasoning without discourse, subtle in evil, desirous of doing harm, ingenious in deceit, they alter the senses, they corrupt dispositions, they agitate people while they are awake, and disturb sleepers through dreams, they bring disease, they stir up storms, transform themselves into angels of light, they bear hell with them always, they usurp the worship of God to themselves through witches; through them they bring about the magic arts, they seek to rule over the good and attack them further as much as possible; to the elect they are given as a trial, and always they lie in wait for a person’s ruin.\textsuperscript{51}

This demonic agenda represents a considerable change from that assumed by earlier authors: where Augustine, for example, saw diabolic evil chiefly in terms of temptation and subsequent sinful human behavior, Institoris and Sprenger saw the work of demons rather in acts of material harm. While, to Augustine, the locus of the demonic threat was essentially interior, manifested in the impulse to sin, and resisted through the grace of God, in the \textit{Malleus} the operation of demons is conceptually outside one’s self; even when demons persecute a sleeper through dreams, the dreams are not his own, but have been sent, like an unwelcome psychic parcel, to the recipient. This change in the locus of demonic activity allows Institoris and Sprenger to make an analogical association between demons and witches: since the harm caused by demons resembles traditional ecclesiastical definitions of \textit{maleficium} very closely, and since demons and witches share similar goals and means, it was possible to elide the earthly presence of one in favor of the other.\textsuperscript{52}

The devil was, of course, still the power behind the witches’ magic: his was the aerial body that entered into men and inspired minds to love or hatred, his were the illusions that allowed old women to appear as cats or wolves, or that made beautiful brides look like disgusting old hags, and his was the power of motion that carried witches around on their brooms or that brought storms to damage crops and disease to injure men and animals. Yet in the \textit{Malleus}, the devil himself is strikingly absent in all of this. When a witch dips a twig into water and then sprinkles that water into the air, rain followed automatically, without any overt sign of the devil’s involvement. Similarly, when she pierces a wax image, the devil mechanically transfers the injury to the intended victim.\textsuperscript{53} In this, the devil is merely the efficient cause of the effect; he bears
no responsibility for the injury himself. He did not tell the witch whom to injure or whom to spare; he was not personally present at all. In fact, magical procedures were such a reliable conduit of demonic power that the proper use of diabolic countermagic could even induce the devil to injure his own witches. In one case, when women wished to determine who was responsible for cows going dry, they hung a pail of milk over the fire and beat it with sticks; a demon then came and transferred their blows to the witch. In short, the powers of the devil are utilized very much like any other natural force or property, without his overt presence being known in any way.

This view was not, of course, entirely original. Both Augustine and Thomas Aquinas accepted that the demonic component of magic was concealed, since the whole point was to trick people into sin. But in the *Malleus* this traditional perspective no longer makes sense: witches knew full well that their magic came from the devil, or else they were not really witches; instead, the devil seemed to act mechanically because either the pact or his own nature forced him to accept that role. Furthermore, magic was no longer simply a supplementary diabolic project; in the *Malleus* it has become the principal means by which demons work their harm in the world.

Incubus demons offer an illuminating specific example of Institoris and Sprenger’s thinking about demons and witches. Because they define witches as such through their personal relationships with the demons, and incubi in particular, these spirits had to appear to witches regularly and directly. Furthermore, as Institoris and Sprenger strongly imply, these are the devils who, while invisible, give potency to the witches’ magic. The relationship between witch and incubus, therefore, provides the point at which the theoretical powers of demons are realized in the form of the witch’s diabolic magic.

Despite this, incubi are in some ways less than completely formidable creatures. The incubi and succubi of Christian tradition were originally minor spirits (almost certainly demonized forms of traditional nature spirits, poltergeists, and house spirits), and, although the association of witches with incubi was a necessary component of witchcraft in the *Malleus*, the only first-hand accounts of such associations came from the witches themselves, who confessed to such liaisons under torture or its threat. Their descriptions of their demon lovers were colored by their own traditional or “popular” perceptions of supra-normal encounters, demonic and otherwise, and these, in turn, informed the inquisitors’ conception of the witches’ devil. The outgrowth of this dialogue was a demon that retained many characteristics of traditional spirits, and whose very lack of a forcefully diabolic nature served to emphasize the witch’s own guilt and responsibility.

In the experience of Institoris and Sprenger, for example, it was rare for a demon to recruit a witch directly; more often, witches themselves acted as
the devil’s agents. The authors had extensive personal knowledge of this procedure, and refer to it at least four times. In one instance, they had heard the confession of a young repentant witch from Breisach, who confessed that her aunt had brought her upstairs to a room filled with fifteen young men, dressed in green, after the fashion of knights, and demanded that she take one of them as her husband. The girl was beaten until she consented, whereupon she was initiated into the society of witches. Witches did not always enjoy such luck, however, and these stories could end more happily. In an analogous narrative, Institoris and Sprenger relate that in order to seduce a certain devout young virgin, a wicked old witch took her upstairs to a room full of beautiful young devils, warning her first not to make the sign of the cross. But because the girl secretly did so anyway, “the demons in that same place were unable to reveal their presence to the virgin in their assumed bodies,” and she escaped with nothing worse than the witch’s impotent malediction.

In these narratives, the incubus plays a markedly passive role. It is the witch, and not the devil, who is responsible for luring victims to the erotic rendezvous, and it is the witch who must spell out the terms of the encounter. Nor is the devil once found very “devilish”: the young knights dressed in green suggest fairies more than demons, as does their meeting place on liminal ground – in rooms above stairs or ladders. The liminal nature of the demon likewise emerges in his choice of season, for, as Institoris and Sprenger remark, these encounters typically coincide with periods of sacred time: Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. For the witch, herself a liminal figure, the devil is present at all times; for the rest of society, the devil was truly “near” only under certain special conditions, such as those arising from the person or operation of a witch. For a witch, an upstairs room on a feast day could be filled with demons, and she could bring guests into their presence; for those fortified with the sign of the cross, on the other hand, the demons were quite absent – they did not really “exist” at all.

To Institoris and Sprenger, witchcraft depended upon this intimate bond between woman and demon, close even to the point of identity. In the *Malleus*, the account of Institoris’ prosecutions of witches in Ravensburg describes precisely how this relationship was determined. They report that about twenty-eight miles southeast of the town, a very severe hailstorm had damaged the fields and vines in a swathe a mile wide, so that for the space of three years scarcely anything would grow there. The people of the town suspected witchcraft, “and clamored for an inquisition.” Institoris was duly summoned, and, after careful investigation, he seized two suspects, a bath-woman named Agnes and Anna of Mindelheim, whom he imprisoned separately. Agnes was interrogated first, but she stoutly proclaimed her innocence through “very light questioning.” This clearly showed that Agnes, like many witches, was provided...
by the devil with maleficium taciturnitatis, the preternatural ability to withstand torture in silence, so it was undoubtedly due to the miraculous intervention of God that Agnes confessed, and Institoris happily recalls that when she “was suddenly freed and released from her chains, although in the place of torture, she laid bare all of the crimes which she had perpetrated.” Not only did she confess to works of maleficium, but under the questioning of an inquisitorial notary, “she publicly confessed to everything else she was asked about the renunciation of the faith and her filthy, diabolical pacts with an incubus demon.” In Institoris’ mind, if Agnes was indeed a witch, as she manifestly was, she had also to be guilty of these crimes, for this was what witchcraft was all about. That there was no evidence that she had done these things was unsurprising, because Agnes, like all witches, had been “most secret” in her dealings with the devil; proof of her guilt, therefore, depended upon her thorough confession. But it is characteristic of the inquisitor’s thought that Agnes’s interrogation about the details of her liaisons with the devil had to be completed before she was questioned about her use of destructive magic.

Agnes claimed that she had been lured into the sect by another witch, who had brought her to her home to meet the devil in the guise of a young and handsome man. Having been seduced sexually, Agnes was apparently unable or unwilling to do without her demon again, and had been with him for some eighteen years. When asked about the hailstorm, she confessed that one day at about noon, a demon had come to her house and asked her to bring some water out to the plain, because he wanted to make rain. As she was told, Agnes met the devil standing under a tree. There she dug a little hole in the ground and poured the water into it. She then stirred the water with her finger “in the name of the devil and all the other demons,” at which point the water disappeared and the devil rose up into the air to produce the hailstorm.

Under questioning, Agnes described a world filled with demons, who were her lovers, companions, and supervisors. Under their guidance and tutelage she worked her magic and evil deeds, while they rewarded her achievements and punished her failures – all of this completely invisibly to her neighbors, who suspected her simply of harmful magic. The notary had first questioned her about the charges brought against her, that she had done harm to man and beast through witchcraft, “since no one had testified against her concerning the renunciation of the faith and carnal depravity with an incubus demon.” To make good this lack was the inquisitor’s objective.

Agnes was not, however, quite alone in this world of demons, and she implicated a confederate, Anna of Mindelheim, in her crimes. “But this was remarkable,” says Institoris, that “when on the following day the other woman had been exposed for the first time to the very lightest questioning, in as much as she was hung by her thumbs scarcely clear of the ground” she freely con-
fessed to everything without the least discrepancy between her testimony and that of Agnes. According to the devil recruited Anna directly, without any intermediary. According to Institoris, the devil appeared to Anna in the guise of a man, as she went to visit her lover, “causa fornicationis,” and made her a proposition:

“I am the devil, and if you wish, I will always be ready at your good pleasure, nor shall I desert you in any necessity whatsoever.”

This initial unmediated intimacy with the devil was reflected in Anna’s character, for, as Institoris notes, Anna was a much worse witch than Agnes, for she had been the sexual slave of the devil for longer, had done more harm, and, unlike Agnes, was unrepentant when she was burned. Of course Anna’s “confession” was contingent upon that of Agnes, who had the benefit of giving her story first, and had also the comparative luxury of negotiating her confession with her interrogators. Agnes was thus able to shift her burden of moral responsibility onto the unseen and ghostly presence of her demon; the inquisitors interrogated Anna with a script ready to hand, and so it is unsurprising that her relations with the devil should be more intimate than those of her colleague.

Institoris and Sprenger are fully aware that by making the witch the focus for demonic encounters on earth, they are suggesting a new paradigm for diabolic behavior. It is true, they grant, that there had always been incubus and succubus demons to plague mankind, but their traditional role had now changed. In the past, their mode of attack and their motives were sexual: they most often persecuted those whose sins were of a particularly sexual nature, and their diabolic rape was intended to be neither pleasant nor welcome. This destructive sexuality Institoris and Sprenger now attributed to witches: whereas, “in times gone by, incubus demons infested little women against their own wills,” nowadays “they subject themselves to a wretched servitude for the sake of carnal pleasure, a most disgusting thing.” Incubi and succubi now followed a precise order of attack, determined by the willingness of their human partners. To those women wholly willing to have them they came freely; to those who were unwilling they had to be sent – and this was the work of witches.

Institoris and Sprenger illustrate this new order of demonic sexual assault with the story of a man of Coblenz, who was prone to strange and debilitating sexual fits. Although no other person seemed to be present, the man would begin to move as if copulating, until, “after enduring fits of this kind for a long time, the poor man fell to the ground, destitute of all his strength.” The man claimed to be completely unable to resist these spasms, and blamed a woman who had returned some offense with curses for bewitching him.
Compare this story with the roughly contemporary narrative of the Dominican theologian, Jordanes de Bergamo. Jordanes tells of a demon who assumed the likeness of a beautiful girl in order to seduce a hermit:

When he was done and had arisen, the demon said to him, “behold what you have done, for I am not a girl or a woman but a demon,” and at once he disappeared from view, while the hermit remained absolutely astonished. And because the demon, with his great power, had withdrawn a very great quantity of semen, the hermit was permanently dried up, so that he died at the end of a month’s time.  

Although the demons in each story afflict their victims with a kind of non-productive sexual excess, the incubus of the *Malleus* acts at the behest of the witch. Jordanes’ more traditional spirit both tempts and punishes sin. Jordanes’ demon is tangibly present, and explains his performance to his victim; the demon of the *Malleus* is invisible, without physical presence or hint of personality, existing only as the bearer of an affliction and the instrument of a witch.

In a sense, Institoris and Sprenger’s witch is Jordanes’ demon transformed: an obviously feminine, insatiably sexual creature, in whom an excess of sexuality corresponds with the destruction of sexuality in others. Indeed, in the *Malleus*, at times the two are not even distinguishable. On one occasion, the authors tell us, a man was harassed by “a demon in the form of a woman,” who persistently sought sexual intercourse. The creature was eventually banished with the help of the sacramentals of the Church, “Whereby,” we learn, “the devil had either been present in his own person in the form of a witch, or with the actual body of a witch, since, with God’s permission, he is able to do both of these things.” This demon, whose behavior was entirely suggestive of a succubus, thus appeared to his victim, “as a witch”; the witch, whose form or whose body the devil appropriated, was, in turn, identified in appearance and behavior with the succubus herself.

Although in their confessions, witches often sought to portray themselves as tools of the devil, Institoris and Sprenger consistently rejected this possibility. The work of demons, in their view, depended upon the guiding malice of witches, and this applied not just to traditional manifestations of *maleficia*, but to other more definitively demonic behaviors, the most remarkable of which was diabolic possession. Prior to the *Malleus*, possession was an entirely characteristic occupation of the devil, having little, if anything, to do with witchcraft. Institoris and Sprenger, however, are entirely consistent in their subordination of the demons’ earthly activities to the agenda of their human minions. Granted, demons were capable of possessing people any time God should require; but, Institoris and Sprenger contended, demons usually
possessed their victims at the instance of witches, since God granted demons more latitude when acting through witches than otherwise. Although they cited various traditional cases of demonic possession, it is clear that they considered possession through witches a relatively more serious threat.

Institoris and Sprenger illustrate their understanding of demonic possession with a long story — in fact, the longest single narrative account in the *Malleus*. It is taken from Institoris’ own experience: while a young man in Rome, Institoris encountered a priest possessed by a demon. Although usually lucid, the priest lost his senses whenever he wished to visit holy places or spend his time on anything divine; just as bad, he stuck out his tongue involuntarily whenever he passed a church or knelt for the salutation of the Virgin. Though such behavior was not uncommon for demoniacs, the cause of his affliction gave reason for comment: he claimed that

"...a certain woman, a witch, brought this infirmity upon me; for when chastising her on account of a certain disagreement about Church rules, while I was chiding her rather harshly, because her will was stubborn, she said that after a few days I would be afflicted with these things which then befell me. But the demon dwelling in me also reports this: that a *maleficium* has been placed by the witch under a certain tree, and that unless it is removed, I cannot be freed, but he is unwilling to point out the tree."
Under other circumstances, a young man possessed by a demon, raving presumably about sodomy, would have at least raised eyebrows. Because sin so often provided the occasion for possession, a demon’s dialogue with its exorcist, and especially its commentary upon the spiritual state of the possessed and of others, was naturally of considerable interest, yet, to Institoris, the words of the demon do not pertain to the subject at hand — witchcraft. Hence he reports them merely as curiosities; the cause of possession, Institoris seems to suggest, is found buried under trees rather than buried in the soul.

For Institoris and Sprenger, witchcraft is the key to understanding the demonic, and not the other way round. The devil exists in two almost completely autonomous forms: the powerful, largely theoretical demons who invisibly moved men to sin and caused calamities on earth, and the minor spirits who haunt houses and crossroads. The witch, defined by her relationship with an incubus demon (itself mid-way between these extremes) provides a necessary intermediate term in this system, allowing the awesome power of the devil to operate on earth without the incongruous presence of decidedly unimpressive demons as agents. The witch thus becomes a human extension of the diabolic realm, at times capable of assuming the characteristics, motives, and behaviors of demons, while still retaining those of women. Further, because Institoris and Sprenger identify witches with actual women, they locate responsibility for misfortunes in the witches’ own real, socially constructed, moral evil, rather than in some abstract, dualist principle of evil or in the malice of nature spirits and preternatural beings. This kind of conception of the demonic, I would suggest, corresponds closely with a level of anxiety in witch-beliefs that is at least in part responsible for sustained witch-prosecutions in the late fifteenth century: on the one hand, it accurately mirrored notions of maleficium and the harmful occult powers of humans found in traditional European peasant communities; on the other, it provided a context in which these beliefs could be embraced by a learned clerical elite.

As a point of contrast, let us consider the somewhat earlier work of Nicholas Jacquier, an inquisitor in France and Bohemia. In his treatise, the Flagellum Haereticorum Fascinatorum, witchcraft is largely compatible with that of the Malleus, but Jacquier takes a more traditional view of the devil and his role. Jacquier conceives of witchcraft principally in terms of a heretical cult: to him it is the “abominable sect and heresy of wizards,” in which demons, not witches, play the leading roles. Whereas other heresies may have been instigated by the devil, with their perverse doctrines being handed down from one generation to the next by men, here, “this worst of sects and most infamous of heresies is handed down personally through demons themselves.” In consequence, where the Malleus begins with a discussion of the devil’s theoretical powers, Jacquier takes as his point of departure the devil’s ability to appear
actually and sensibly to men.\textsuperscript{82} Jacquier’s devil is the leader of his cult: he appears visibly to men to induce them to renounce God and the Church, and to take him instead as their lord; he instructs his followers in evil, providing them with poisons and magic potions, as well as with specific instructions concerning how and where to use them; and he demands offerings from his sectaries – food and drink were acceptable, human semen was better, and the blood of innocents was the best of all.\textsuperscript{83} In sum, the devil of the \textit{Flagellum} is far more personally responsible for the activities of witches than is his counterpart in the \textit{Malleus}.

Jacquier’s conception of the relationship between the devil and his sect appears much influenced by a number of stories current in mid-fifteenth-century France. These accounts emphasized the devil’s desire to usurp the cult of God, and hence emphasized the devotional, quasi-religious nature of the bond between witches and the devil. Most important to Jacquier was the celebrated case of William Adelmo, prior of St. Germain-en-Laye, doctor of theology, and a man whom Jacquier knew quite well. In 1453, Adelmo publicly confessed that he had renounced the faith, entered into the sect of witches, and had worshiped the devil. He further confessed that

When he was introduced into said sect, the devil proposed that Master William might well, if he wished, be able to increase the devil’s domain, and instructed the same Master William to preach that sects of this kind were nothing except illusions.\textsuperscript{84}

The devil in Adelmo’s account appears as the subtle master of a secret society whose members lurk concealed in all walks of life. In the \textit{Flagellum Haereticorum}, it is the existence and membership of this society, which the devil so cleverly wished to keep secret, that is at issue, and not \textit{maleficia per se}. Although the \textit{fascinarii} are sorcerers who deploy diabolic magic by the devil’s will, they derive their unique character from their personal dependence upon the devil and their membership in his cult, not from their occult powers. Indeed, Jacquier recognized that \textit{maleficia} had nothing necessarily to do with this heretical sect; since malign magic could function regardless of whether one worshiped the devil or not, there were doubtless many \textit{maleficii} who were not \textit{fascinarii}.\textsuperscript{85} Such persons must, or course, be linked with the devil by some sort of pact, either tacit or explicit, but this could easily be an individual, personal arrangement that did not imply membership in the devil’s organized cult.

This posed a problem for Jacquier’s conception of the \textit{fascinarii}: since \textit{maleficium} was not in itself direct evidence of membership, an inquisitor had to look, not for the ambiguous presence of harmful magic, but for witnesses to the Sabbat and evidence of the demonic cult itself, which, as Institoris’ expe-
rience with Agnes and Anna suggests, could be very hard to come by. Direct and immediate commerce with the devil, although necessary to witchcraft, was likely to be secret and hidden, to be revealed only through torture and interrogation once suspects had already been identified on other grounds. While Institoris and Sprenger’s construction of witchcraft could readily translate ideas about malign magic from a popular idiom to the more learned environment of the inquisitors, Jacquier’s could not. His was a model much better suited to the testimony of a fallen doctor of theology than to a village brew-wife. Certainly, once prosecutions had begun, it was easy to extract the names of confederates from accused witches through torture, and Jacquier was at pains to defend the legal validity of such tactics, but because his conception of the witch was dependent upon heresy and the devil, initial accusations were not easy to obtain.86

Moreover, because Jacquier had a much more unified, conception of the devil, in whom power and personality were closely joined, he had no way to determine if the blame for any given misfortune lay with a witch or with the devil. Where Institoris and Sprenger subordinated the operation of demons on earth to the power of witches, blaming supernatural harm on witches as a matter of course, Jacquier was more cautious, noting that whatever demons did through witches, they could and would do of their own accord.87 As a result, while many of Jacquier’s ideas about witchcraft would be accepted by theorists of the following century (his notions of the diabolic Sabbat in particular), his construction of witchcraft failed to provide the consensus within the community of witch-believers – including learned theoreticians, magistrates, and inquisitors as well as unlettered peasants and townsfolk – necessary for sustained witchcraft prosecutions. For a well-defined, fully threatening witch-figure to emerge, the devil as a personality had to be divorced from the day-to-day operations of witchcraft. Such a separation would enable demonologists to accept a more remote, “god-like” conception of Satan, more in accord with current theological trends, as well as the ideas of both Protestant and Catholic writers of the next century. It was just this consensus that Institoris and Sprenger’s model of the demonic would provide.

Notes
2 Richard Kieckhefer, European Witch Trials (Berkeley, University of California, 1976), 36. See also David Gentilcore, From Bishop to Witch (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 248.
3 For the late-medieval tendency “to grasp the transcendent by making it immanent,” see Carlos M.N. Eire, War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 11 and passim.


7 For one example among many, see Augustine’s sermon on John the Baptist: “The ancient enemy is always on watch against us; . . . He sets lures and traps, he insinuates evil thoughts; to goad people to ever worse kinds of fall he sets out advantages and gains, it is painful to reject his evil suggestions and willingly accept death as we know it.” Augustine, *Sermons*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle (Brooklyn: New York City Press, 1992), pt. 3, vol. 4, sermon 94A, p. 20.


10 Augustine, *City of God*, 7.35. See also 8.24.


14 Hopkin, 177.

15 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. Instituto Studiorum Medievalium Ottaviensis (Ottowa: Studii Generalis O. Pr., 1941), pt. 1, qu. 50–64; *Postilla in Job*; *De Malo* and *De Potentia in Questiones Disputatae*. At the same time, a similar scholarly project defined the character and capacities of angels: “Scholastics explored with great logical rigor and tenacity the angels’ intellectual and emotional capacities, their personhood, their simplicity, their problematic relationship with time and space, and even the metaphysical bases for their being. Indeed, at the university they developed what may properly be called an ‘angelology,’ a science of angels.” David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 74.

16 See, for example, *Summa Theologiae*, pt. 1, qu. 64, art. 4.


18 In the late twelfth century, Walter Map recorded an interview with one of these lesser spirits, one of the angels who, “without assistance or consent to Lucifer’s crime, were borne by foolishness to wander after the accomplices of sin” (“qui sine coadiutorio uel consensu culpe Luciferi vagi post fautores scelerum fatue ferebamur”). He and his fellows, he claimed, had no desire for the ruin of cities or the blood and souls of men; rather, they were apt to play jokes and make Risible illusions with their powers. “Everything that we can, we do for laughter, and nothing for tears.” (“Omne quod ad risum est possumus, nichil quod ad lacrimas”). *De Nigio Curialium*, ed. M.R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), dist. 4, c. 6, lines 8–17.
19 *Summa Theologiae*, pt. 1, qu. 64, art. 4.
20 Ibid., pt. 1, qu. 51, art. 3; *De Potestate, Questiones Disputatae*, qu. 6, art. 8; and Hopkin, 
77–9.
21 Although one may wonder how tempting such necessarily hurried couplings could possibly have been. Guibert of Nogent, *De Vita Sua*, *Patrologia Latina* 156, 958: “Sunt quoque quedam in nequitiis infligendis atrocia, aliqua vero solis contenta ludibriis.” See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, pt. 1, qu. 63, art. 2.
24 “Nam dicti Principes non proposuerunt deum ante conspectum suum sed inter se 
diviserunt regni terminos terrarum ante Triumphum.” Felix Hemmerlin, *Tractatus de 
Credulitate Daemonibus Adhibenda*, in Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus 
Maleficarum* (Frankfurt, 1600), 2:431.
26 “hac maledictione plena est terra.” Ibid., 110–11. The woman is Finicella, burned in 
Rome in 1424.
27 Hemmerlin, *Tractatus*, 429. A devil in the guise of a holy man removes a sinning priest’s 
male member which has been the cause of all his difficulties. Naturally, it returns to 
view, even larger than before, at the worst possible moment.
29 “quod numquam de talibus aliquid concederint, nisi proponeretur eis aliquod grossum 
exemplum sensibile.” Petrus Mamoris, *Flagellum Maleficorum* (Lugdunum [Lyon], 1621), 12.
31 Johannes Nider, *Praeceptorium Legis s. Expositio Decalogi* (Strassburg: Georg Husner, 1476), 
1.11, p; Mamoris, 45.
32 Nider, *Praeceptorium*, 1.11, s; Mamoris, 19 and passim.
33 “Non enim coelum vel aliquod totum elementum mouere potest, quia destrueretur ordo 
Vniuersi, quem Deus instituit: sed potest mouere corpora sibi proportionata.” Ibid., 
16.
34 “Sunt enim diaboli superioris naturae ad animam rationalem, quae non potest mouere 
corpus.” Ibid.
35 Institoris and Sprenger use a similarly trivial, not to say humorous, example of demons’ 
powers of local motion in the *Malleus*. A priest, and a friend of one of the authors, was 
fortunate enough to witness a man being bodily transported through the air for some 
distance by a demon. The victim was a student who had been drinking beer with friends, 
and when an associate declined to fetch more, on account of an ominous thick cloud 
blocking the door, he unwisely declared that “Even if the devil were there, I will go to 
get a drink” (“Etsi diabolus adesset potum apportabo”). When he went outside, the devil 
36 “Multo plus potest daemon per transmutationem sanguinis et humorum et alio subtili 
modo horrorem incutere, in mente odium, et in carne dolorem.” Mamoris, 32.
37 “stremitibus et sibilis [sic] ac pulibus, non multum excellentibus sed manifestis; ali-
quando enim ad parietes percutiebat; aliquando vero ioculator varias mimorum fistulas 
ut videbatur flabat, et talia non noxia multum gestiebat.” Johannes Nider, *Formicarius* 
38 Alphonso Spina, *Fortalitium Fidei* (Lugdunum [Lyon]: Gulielmus Balsarin, 1487), book 
5, consideration 10.
39 “Et his diebus taliter apparat frequenter in Dacia et Nortuvergia, et ibidem Tolli dicuntur; 
et propter assestudinem ab hominibus non timentur, sed homines ipsorum obsequii 

41 “Qui quidem spiritus auditentibus multis die et nocte, et nihil tamen videntibus, multa in tempore praeterito facta revelavit, quae fuere cognita vera fuisse, et ad multa bona facienda gentes domus admonēbat.” *Mamoris*, 20.

42 A great many more examples might be given, but an interesting one is Nider’s insistence that the bestial men and women sometimes encountered in the forest are not real “wild men,” but demons who appear to deceive the unwary. Nider, *Præceptorium*, k (qu. 6).


45 Spina, consid. 11.


47 Spina, consid. 1–6.


50 “Inveniunt etiam qualiter cognoscit cogitationes cordium nostrorum qualiter etiam possit transmutare corpora in minuculo alterius agentis substantialiter et accidentaliter, qualiter etiam possit movere corpora localiter immutare etiam sensus exterior et inteiiores a quo cogitandum qualiter etiam possit immutare hominis intellectum et voluntatem licet indirecte.” *Malleus*, pt. 1, qu. 3, p. 22.

51 “[Enim sunt humani generis inimici,] mente rationales absqua tamen discursus intelligentes, in nequicia subtilis nocendi cupidus semper in fraude novi, imminet sensum, inquinant affectus, vigilantes turbant, dormientes per somnia inquietant, morbos inferunt, tempestates concitant, erga malificos divinum cultum sibi usurpant, magico artes per eos fiunt, super bonos dominari appetunt et amplius proposse infestant, electis ad exercitium dantur, semper fini hominis insidiantur.” *Ibid.*, pt. 1, ch. 1, p. 94.


53 *Malleus*, pt. 2, qu. 1, ch. 11, p. 132.


56 One may compare, for example, the incubus reported by Caesarius of Heisterbach, who reverted to an annoying house spirit when rebuffed, throwing things and changing food on plates to filth, or that of Gobelinus Persona, who “talked freely with all comers, played delicately on a musical instrument, played at dice, drank wine, but never allowed himself to be seen except his hands which were slender and soft.” Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum* 3.6; Gobelinus Persona, *Cosmodromium*, aet. vi, c. 70, in Lea, *Materials*, 1:286.


59 Demons do this, Institoris and Sprenger explain, so as to mock and offend God. *Ibid.*, pt. 2, qu. 1, ch. 4, p. 110.

60 Institoris and Sprenger maintain that each of us is assigned to the care of two angels, one good and one bad. For the normal run of humanity, the angels are “present” only in a highly abstract way, for example as the voice of temptation or of conscience; the witch, on other hand, will regularly eat, chat, and have sexual relations with her demon. *Ibid.*, pt. 1, qu. 3, p. 25.


63 “Cetera omnia de fidei abnegatione et spurious diabolicis cum incubo demone pactis interrogata publice fatebatur.” *Ibid*.


65 Perhaps to demonstrate that he is not leading his witness, Institoris relates the exchange between Agnes and the notary as a literal interrogation. In this instance Agnes “was asked ‘With what words or in what ways did you stir the water?’ She replied ‘I stirred it with my finger, but in the name of that devil and of all the other devils.’” (“Interrogata demum quibusverbis aut modis aquam mouisset. Respondit digito quidem moui, sed in nomine illius diaboli et omnium aliorum demoniorum.”). *Ibid.*, pt. 2, qu. 1, ch. 15, p. 146.

66 “Cum nemo testis de fidei abnegatione ac carnali spurious citia cum demone incubo aduersus cam deposisset, [eo quod illa secretissima sint illius secte cerimonialia.]” *Ibid*.

67 “Sed et hoc mirabile cum sequenti die altera questionibus etiam leuisimis exposita primo fuisse digito vix a terra elevata post libere soluta, praefata omnia non discrepando in minimo.” *Ibid*.


70 Although men too might succumb to the wiles of an attractive succubus, Institoris and Sprenger add “not so actively of their own will,” since “from the natural force of reason which is stronger in men than in women, they shrink more from such practices” (“Non ita voluntarie practicatio reperitur cum ex naturali vigore rationis quo viri mulieribus praeceminent talia plus abhorrent”). *Ibid.*, pt. 2, qu. 2, ch. 1, p. 159.

71 “Post diutinas huissmodi vexationes pauper ille collisus in terram omnibus viribus destituit.” *Ibid*.

72 “Quo facto cum surrexit, dixit illi demon: Ecce quod egisti; non enim sum puella sive mulier, sed demon, et statim disparuit ab oculis eius; ille vero attonitus remansit. Et quia demon maximam seminis habundantiam virtute eius attraxerat, continue heremitata ille desiccatus completo mense defunctus est.” Jordanes de Bergamo, *Questio de Strigis*, in Hansen, *Quellen*, 198. Hansen gives a date of around 1460 for the treatise, but Lea (*Materials*, 1:301) has it composed in 1470–71. Jordanes seems otherwise unknown.


74 Similar blurrings of the lines between witch and demon can be found in German witch-trials, where *unholda* is at times used as a synonym for the devil. In one trial, cited by Hans Peter Duer, the devil is referred to as “the old Perchtl,” a word which, like *unholda*, was more often used of witches or evil spirits. Duer, 5.


76 As the title of their chapter makes plain: “Concerning how demons sometimes sub-
stantially inhabit people through the operations of witches” (“De modo quo demones per maleficarum operationes homines interdum substantialiter inhabitant”). Ibid., 125.

77 “Mulier inquit quaedam malefica hanc mihi infirmatem contulit; briganti enim contra eam ratione cuiusdam displicentie circa regimen curie cum eam durius increpassem quia cervicose voluntatis erat dixit: quod post paucos dies haberem intendere his que mihi contingerent. Sed et demon in me habitans hoc idem refert quod maleficium sub quadem arbores posetur sit a malefica, quod nisi amoveatur non potero liberari, sed nec arbores vult indicare.” Ibid., pt. 2, qu. 1, ch. 10, pp. 127–8.

78 “Nolo exire. Et cum interrogaret, qua de causa, respondit propter lombardos. Et interrogatus denuo, cur propter lombardos egredi nollet, tunc respondit in ytalica lingua cum tamen infirmissmus sacerdos illud ideuma ignoraret dicens, omnes faciunt sic et sic, nominando pessimum vitium luxurie.” Ibid., 128.

79 Jacquier wrote the Flagellum around 1458, and remained an inquisitor until his death in 1472. Hansen, Quellen, 133.

80 The phrase, “secta et haeresis maleficorum fascinariorum,” appears repeatedly throughout the text. For a summary description of the sect’s activities and organization, see Nicholas Jacquier, Flagellum Haereticorum Fascinariorum, ed. Ioannes Myntzenbergius (Frankfurt am Main: N. Bassaeum, 1581) ch. 7, pp. 36–51: “De differentia inter sectam et haeresin fascinariorum modernorun, et illusionem mulierum de quibus loquitur c. Episcopi.”

81 “Haec pessima sectarum et haeresum nefandissima, traditur per ipsosmet Daemones.” Ibid., 44.

82 Ibid., 7.

83 Ibid., 50–2.

84 “Quod quando ipse fuit introductus ad dictam sectam, Diabolus asserebat, quod ipse Magister Guilhelmus bene posset si vellet, augmentare eiusdem Demonis dominium, praecipiendo eidem Magistro Guilhelmno praedicare, quod huiusmodi secta non erat nisi illusio.” Ibid., 27. Mamoris also knew Edeline, and tells substantially the same story, 67–8.

85 For example, Jacquier observes that “all witches generally, and especially the heretical fascinarii, are betrayers and accustomed to lying in the perpetration of their evil deeds” (“Omnes enim malefici communiter, presertim heretici fascinarii sunt prodiotores et fictionibus assueti in maleficiorum perpetratione.”). Jacquier, 111.

86 Of course once prosecutions had begun, it was easy to extract the names of confederates from accused witches under torture, and Jacquier is at pains to defend the validity of such procedures. Ibid., 173–4.

87 Ibid., 117.