

MARTÍN DEL RIO



INVESTIGATIONS
INTO MAGIC

P. G. Maxwell-Stuart

MARTÍN DEL RIO



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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

Series editor

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INVESTIGATIONS INTO MAGIC

Edited and translated by
P. G. Maxwell-Stuart

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Contents

Series editor's foreword	vii
Acknowledgements	xi
Introduction	i
Notes on the editing and translation	24
Prologue, explaining why this treatise has been difficult to write, but why it was necessary to do so	27
Book 1 Magic in general, and natural and artificial magic in particular	31
Book 2 Magic involving evil spirits	68
Book 3 Harmful magic and superstition	117
Book 4 Divination	148
Book 5 The duty of judges in dealing with workers of harmful magic: or, the judicial process in relation to the crime of magic	189
Book 6 The duty of a confessor	240
Select bibliography	283
Index	285

Series editor's foreword

The traditional picture of the early modern European witch-hunt where hundreds of thousands of innocent souls were condemned by both Catholic and Protestant authorities, religious and secular, to a fiery fate has now been radically modified. This does not mean however that beliefs in witchcraft, magic, demons, astrology and other superstitions were any less prevalent or important for the society of that time. From Augustine to Thomas Aquinas and beyond, intellectuals had debated the limits and dangers pertaining to magic, seen as the effecting of preternatural control over nature with the assistance of demons. The Church itself could not deny the existence of demons for to do so it would also have to deny the reality of spirits, both good and bad, upon which so much doctrine relied. There were also significant problems posed by natural magic which could call into question the miracles of Christ. Indeed the Catholic demonologists were also aware that the very ceremonies and sacraments of the Church needed defending as they could be, and were, seen as having strong links with magic.

The early Church had set out the distinctions between white and black magic and had proscribed sanctions for those found guilty of *maleficia*. Pronouncements stressed the dangerous illusions perpetrated by demons in order to turn Christians away from the path of the true faith. The penalties were restricted to confession, repentance and charitable work. In the Middle Ages the war against heresy led to the setting up of the Inquisition and the eventual linking of witchcraft to heresy, with the emphasis on the weakness of women which made them particularly susceptible to such activities. Pope Innocent VIII in 1484 gave authority to prosecutions for witchcraft with the bull *Summis desiderantes affectibus*. Two years later saw the publication, in Cologne, of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of Witches), a handbook for inquisitors by Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Institoris (Kramer). This gave a legal framework linked to demonological theories with a codification of procedures. The reasons for the witch-hunts that followed are complex and did not affect all parts of Europe in the same way.¹

¹ See: *Witches, Devil and Doctors, in the Renaissance*. Johann Weyer, *De praestigiis daemonum*, New York, 1991. pp. xlvii–lv. Brian Easlea, *Witch Hunting, Magic and the New Philosophy*, Brighton, 1980. C. Lerner, *Witchcraft and Religion. The Politics of Popular Belief*, Oxford, 1984. For the cultural and social dimension see *The Devil, Heresy and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* ed. Alberto Ferreiro, Leiden, 1998.

The demonologists, both Catholic and Protestant, brought immense erudition to bear on such vexing questions as: what evidence was there that magic existed, what were the limits to the power of demons, from whence did such power come?² In order to understand the thought processes involved one cannot investigate these topics in isolation. They must be seen within the wider context of current theories of natural philosophy (science) and as integral, fundamental, and indivisible components of rich theological and philosophical traditions inherited and venerated by early modern thinkers, both religious and secular.³ With regard to natural magic a number of important studies by Brian P. Copenhaver have pointed out how the philosophical theory of natural magic was part of a larger system of natural philosophy, and that 'to discredit occult qualities required a complete repudiation of traditional physics of its metaphysical context'.⁴ There was a close relationship between traditional magic, experimental science, Aristotelianism, and Platonism which gave rise to differing and ever-changing conceptions of nature. The popular Hermetica, the revival of Neoplatonic philosophy in fifteenth century Florence, Marsilio Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's studies of the Cabala represent a body of writings that provided both physical and metaphysical support for beliefs in magic. Magic played a significant role in the history of science and its importance should be acknowledged and understood rather than passed over in embarrassed silence. Belief in the occult existed at every level of early modern society. It informed learned debate in theology, philosophy, medicine and science and was the basis for many civic rituals and political and dynastic propaganda. It was in no way inconsistent for members of the Royal Society such as Henry More and Joseph Glanvill and even the great Dr Samuel Johnson to accept the notions of the spirit world and witchcraft.⁵

One of the main problems for the demonologists was the debate on the natural and demoniacal character of magic. On how to distinguish natural magic (which was good) from witchcraft and magic of demons (which was evil). This

² For the various approaches to demonology see: Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, Oxford, 1997.

³ For reasons for beliefs in magic see: Brian P. Copenhaver, 'A tale of two fishes: magical objects in natural history from antiquity through the scientific revolution', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52, 1991, pp. 373-98; Id. 'Did science have a Renaissance?' *Isis* 82, 1992, pp. 1-21; Id. 'Natural magic, hermetism, and occultism in early modern science', in *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Robert S. Wiseman, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 261-301.

⁴ See Copenhaver, 'A tale of two fishes', p. 386.

⁵ See A. Rupert Hall, *Henry More, Magic, Religion and Experiment*, Oxford, 1990. For a review of different critical approaches see Patrick Curry, 'Revisions of science and magic', *History of Science*, 23, 1985, pp. 299-325.

SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

translation by P. G. Maxwell-Stuart of the lengthy *Disquisitiones Magicae* written by the Jesuit Martín Del Rio at the end of the sixteenth century makes accessible the most significant Catholic contribution to the debate on witchcraft and magic. The sheer weight of Del Rio's erudition where philosophy, theology and the law are conscripted in battle against Satan and his followers gave his treatise, which deals with both theory and practical matters, great authority. Del Rio took witchcraft seriously and linked all kinds of magic (including witchcraft, astrology, alchemy, divination, and prophecy) to heresy. It represented a turning away from God and an alliance with the forces of evil. As Dr Maxwell-Stuart points out the *Disquisitiones Magicae* is more than a handbook on witchcraft, it is also a polemical religious work which gives an insight into the concerns of the post-Tridentine Church. Though he accepted, without question, the existence of witches, Del Rio called for balanced judgement. He demanded scrutiny of all accusations and evidence lest injustice be done to the innocent.⁶

This judicious selection and translation of Del Rio's writings will no doubt form the basis for further research into the theories of witchcraft, demonology, the distinction between supernatural and preternatural powers and the Catholic/Protestant warnings of the particular perils inherent in following superstitious practices. Although, due to the length of the *Disquisitiones Magicae*, it has not been possible to translate the whole text, the introduction includes a précis of all the topics in the book which allows one to appreciate the structure and subject matter of Del Rio's compendium.

⁶ The desire for correct procedure can be seen in J. Tedeschi, 'The Roman inquisition and witchcraft. An early seventeenth-century "Instruction" on correct trial procedure', *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 200, 1983, pp. 163-88.

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Introduction

It is a remarkable whim of history that of all the major demonologists of the early modern period Martín Del Rio is the least studied and the one whose work still remains more or less untranslated and therefore increasingly inaccessible. This is not because the *Disquisitiones Magicae* has nothing to say, or says little at tedious or repetitive length. On the contrary, Del Rio's review of astrology, alchemy, magic, divination, superstition, and witchcraft is not only detailed and comprehensive, richly illustrated from an immensely wide reading in history, theology, medicine, law, and demonology itself, and carefully argued (as one might expect from a Jesuit scholar), but the whole is also laced with wit, vituperation, and personal reminiscence with the result that his *magnum opus* provides not only an encyclopaedia of contemporary demonological theory and a reference work for theologians, lawyers, doctors, and scholars – Del Rio's declared audience – but also a work of instruction and entertainment for any other reader who enjoys sufficient command of Latin to be able to benefit from the author's expansive erudition.

Indeed, so attractive was the *Disquisitiones* and so influential, that Del Rio became a major (perhaps the major) Catholic authority on magic and witchcraft as soon as the book appeared. He was praised by Pierre de Lancre who said that of all those who had written about the subject, he had done so 'le plus sainement et le plus iudicieusement,' and that he was 'le plus grand, le plus rare, et le mieux censé qui ait jamais esté sur ce subiet';¹ and his fellow-Jesuits Justus Lipsius and Heribert Rosweyde offered him laudatory poems which were printed at the beginning of Book 1. While he was still alive, his opinion was sought by civil authorities in Germany, and after his death he was quoted and referred to as far afield as Scotland where, for example, Sir George MacKenzie in *Pleadings in Some Remarkable Cases* (1672) and *Laws and Customs of Scotland* (1678) regarded him as a prime source of information on witchcraft, and the defence advocate in the trial of Christian Shaw (1697) used the *Disquisitiones* to

¹ *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et démons* (Paris 1612), 485. *L'incrédulité et mescreance du sortilège plainement convaincue* (Paris 1622), 527. Protestant theologians also used and quoted from him: for example, Bartholomäus Anhorn (1616–1700) in his *Magiologia*.

support his arguments in favour of his client.² Even as late as the mid-eighteenth century his opinions could still be quoted (though with reservations), in J. J. Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon*.³

Life

Martín was well connected. His father, Antonio, came from a noble Castilian family and his mother, Eleonora Lopez, from wealthy Aragonese lineage. Antonio, however, spent a good deal of his working life in the Spanish Netherlands and so it was there, in Antwerp, that Martín was born on 17 May 1558. In due time a brother, Jerónimo, followed.

The Del Rio family background was one of political intrigue, violence, bitter personal hostilities, and sudden reversals of fortune. Both Martín's father, and his uncle Luis Del Rio, were caught up in the turbulence which visited the Spanish Netherlands during the period of John of Austria's attempt to re-impose Spanish control over the province, and as loyal supporters of Philip II, both Antonio and Luis suffered arrest and confinement, Luis in 1576 and Antonio the following year. Luis did not long survive the experience, dying of fever in 1578, but Antonio managed to retrieve his fortunes a little and went into a kind of honourable retirement in Portugal until his death in Lisbon in 1586.

For the first 25 years of his life, however, Martín could rely on the comfort and privilege afforded by membership of a rich, influential family and was given an excellent education to fit his evident intellectual abilities. This began at Lierre in Brabant where, in addition to Greek and Latin, he either learned or made rapid progress in Hebrew, Chaldee, Flemish, German, Spanish, Italian, and French. From Lierre he went to Paris where, at the Collège des Trois Langues, he continued his Classical studies under the tutelage of Denis Lambin, Royal Reader in Greek from 1560 to 1572 and famous for his editions of Latin authors, and at the Collège de Clermont (later the Collège de France), where he studied philosophy under the Jesuit Juan Maldonado, Professor of Theology there from 1565 to 1574. One presumes that it was during this period, too, that Del Rio

² Isabel Adam: *Witch Hunt, the great Scottish witchcraft trials of 1697* (Macmillan 1978), 165-7, 169.

³ Behringer: *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria*, 259, 300, 322, 331, 344. His fame as a scholar lasted apart from the association of his name with the *Disquisitiones*. At the end of the seventeenth century, André Baillet was happy to include him in his list of 'enfants celebres par leurs etudes', commenting, 'Il faisoit paroître dans ses premières années une vivacité d'esprit admirable, un génie aisé, une conception pénétrante, une humeur docile et très-douce, beaucoup d'amour pour le travail, et d'aptitude pour les Lettres', *Jugemens des savans sur les principaux ouvrages des auteurs*, 2nd edn, 8 vols, published in 17 vols (Amsterdam 1725), 10.182.

INTRODUCTION

learned mathematics from Johann Stadius (1527–1579) about whom he later remarked that the man was given to a quite extraordinary faith in electional astrology, an enthusiasm of which, quite clearly, Del Rio did not approve.⁴

From Paris he went to Douai, founded in 1562 by Philip II, where he met the Flemish philologist and juriconsult, Louis Carrion, later Rector of the University of Louvain, and it was in Louvain that Del Rio finished this stage of his education by obtaining his bachelor's degree in civil law, and there met two people who were to become both friends and admirers, Justus Lipsius and Pierre Dheure. Here Del Rio studied under Cornelio Wauters [Cornelius Valerius], the Professor of Classical languages, and it is perhaps no accident that his first book, a commentary on the works of the third century AD epitomist Julius Solinus (1572), was a corrected version of a manuscript from Lipsius's library with Del Rio's own notes and comments upon comments thereto by Cornelio Wauters. A similar volume of notes on Claudian, perhaps the last great pagan poet, which he dedicated to his father, was produced in the same year, the text having been published in 1571. But these were not the only fruits of this period, for since 1569 he had been annotating the plays of Seneca, and in 1574 he published the results, dedicating the book to his uncle Luis in gratitude for the royal favour Luis had caused to be shown to the family.⁵

In this year, too, Del Rio obtained his doctorate from the University of Salamanca, and it was during this time in Spain, specifically while he was living and working in Madrid, Del Rio tells us, that he came across manifestations of popular magic. 'I remember in Madrid in 1573 there was a trial of a notorious prostitute. Near her house they found a young donkey with its brains removed, and the woman confessed under torture that she had used them for a magical potion. She was flogged and sent into exile';⁶ and in 1575 he met a young *Zahuri*, a water diviner, visiting him more than once. These people claimed to be able to see objects buried deep in the earth, water-channels, deposits of

⁴ *Disquisitiones Magicae* (Investigations Into Magic) Book 4, chapter 3, question 1 (p. 294). Stadius was interested in astronomy and published ephemerides for 1554–1570 (Cologne 1556), revised to 1554–1660 (Cologne 1570), as well as a history of astronomy (n.p. 1580). His interest in occult science, however, can be seen in his translation of the medical astrology of Hermes Trismegistus (n.p. 1584). It was probably during this time in Paris that Del Rio saw, in the Church of Saint Médard, a stained glass window depicting the Last Judgement, upon which he commented later, *Disquisitiones* Book 3, question 7, section 1 (p. 223).

⁵ He did not altogether abandon his interest in the subject after this, for *A Collection of Notes on Latin Tragedy* appeared in 1593–1594 and this was still being used by at least one Classical scholar at the beginning of the twentieth century. See Nonius Marcellinus: *De compendiosa doctrina*, ed. W. M. Lindsay, 3 vols (Leipzig 1903).

⁶ *Disquisitiones* Book 5, section 4, no. 14 (p. 380).

precious metals, and corpses beneath their tombstones.⁷ Why was Del Rio so interested? Was he indulging his intellectual curiosity, or was he actually consulting the child professionally? He does not say, and although the latter is not out of the question, the former supposition is perhaps the more likely. It was not the first time Del Rio had shown interest in the workings of the occult world, for he and Lipsius used to talk about dreams while they were fellow-students in Louvain, and on one of these occasions Lipsius told him a story about a cobbler's wife in Brussels, whose dreams had a habit of turning out to be true to the last detail.⁸

1576 saw the arrest of his uncle Luis⁹ and the following year that of his father. But Martin's legal expertise had caught the eye of Philip II and, after being co-opted on to the Senate of Brabant at the King's instance, in 1577 he was appointed Attorney General and in 1578 Vice-Chancellor and King's Fiscal for Brabant.¹⁰ The death of his family's particular patron, John of Austria, that year, however, inevitably upset his prospects. What is more, he had already suffered a devastating blow in the loss of his own extensive library when rebel soldiers pillaged his father's mansion at Cleydael, a loss which perhaps added a certain edge to his endeavours to save books and manuscripts belonging to Justus Lipsius when these, too, were in danger of pillage after the battle of Gembloux (31 January 1578). It was all too much and, tired and disillusioned, he obtained permission from Alessandro Farnese, the victorious commander, to take an extended leave.¹¹ Not surprisingly, perhaps, he decided to return to his roots and so made his way back to Spain where he published the fruits of his legal experiences, a collection and interpretation of miscellaneous legal texts. Then, somewhat to his own surprise, it seems, on 9 May 1580 he entered the Jesuit novitiate in Valladolid.¹²

After two years as a novice, however, his studies were by no means over, for the Society required him to study theology and Biblical literature for three more years at Louvain and Mainz and it was during his return to the Spanish Netherlands, while he was laid up ill in the Jesuit house at Bordeaux, that he

⁷ *Disquisitiones* Book 1, chapter 3, question 4 (pp. 11–12).

⁸ *Disquisitiones* Book 4, chapter 3, question 6 (p. 308).

⁹ An incident he recalls with some bitterness, *Disquisitiones* Book 1, chapter 3, question 3 (p. 10).

¹⁰ He makes a reference to this period of his life in *Disquisitiones* Book 4, chapter 2, question 6, section 4 (p. 283).

¹¹ He makes a brief reference to Farnese's siege of Antwerp in 1585, *Disquisitiones* Book 2, question 16, section 5 (p. 134).

¹² Twenty years later he could still write, 'Who would have believed that after twenty years I would happily desert the law courts for the religious life?' *Disquisitiones* Book 5, Introduction (p. 366).

learned of his father's death.¹³ This news, allied perhaps to his own weakened state, had a profound effect. From this point until the end of his life, he became progressively more detached from worldly affairs and more devoted to prayer and scholarship – to such an extent, indeed, that he was in danger of losing his sight. Then, in 1591, he was allowed to take up a post as Professor of Theology at Douai, but almost immediately found himself put in charge of the teaching of moral philosophy at Liège where he remained for three years. The results of this period in his life later appeared in *Marian Blossoms* (1598), a collection of his sermons in praise of the Blessed Virgin. After a year in Tournai to complete his third probationary year as a Jesuit novice, he returned to Louvain and it was principally during these early years of the 1590s that he seems to have been gathering material for the *Disquisitiones*, although he went on revising and adding to them until the end of his life.¹⁴

His growing interest in magic can be glimpsed from various references he and others made to this period. Jean van Helmont, for example, was a student at the Jesuit college in 1594 and met Del Rio with whom he discussed the Kabbalah, although the conversations do not appear, at least in Van Helmont's case, to have been particularly fruitful.¹⁵ Del Rio himself records a conversation with 'a religious man, someone worthy of belief', who told him about a magically induced plague (*fasciaria pestis*) which had started in a village in Western Flanders and spread almost as far as the Oise.¹⁶

But the event of the period which can be seen to have stimulated most significantly his researches into witchcraft was the trial of Jean del Vaulx, a

¹³ It was here, he tells us, that he saw roses blooming in the garden during winter, a sign, according to popular belief, of plague to come. *Disquisitiones* Book 4, chapter 3, question 2 (p. 299). This may also be the time he stayed in Calais, although his reference to it is somewhat puzzling, *Disquisitiones* Book 5, section 3 (p. 373). See also *infra*, pp. 196–7 and note 7.

¹⁴ The short biography by Rosweyde says that Del Rio did not publish the *Disquisitiones* straight away upon completion, but left the work for three years before beginning to make improvements to it, *Martini Antonii Del Rio Brevi Commentariolo Expressa* (Antwerp 1609), 38. One can see constant evidence of these revisions, too. For example, 'Since I wrote this many years ago, now in 1606 I have come across the following anecdote in *Historica Anatomica* by André du Laurens', *Disquisitiones* Book 2, question 22 (p. 105); the lengthy rebuttal of Tooker's book on the royal gift of healing, which was published in 1597, *Ibid.* Book 1, chapter 3, question 4 (pp. 13–15); or the reference to Torsellino's *History of Loreto*, published in 1600, *Ibid.* Book 6, chapter 2, section 3 (p. 520). But the revising is not simply a question of adding references and further illustrative anecdotes. Del Rio re-wrote large sections of the work, a good example being Book 1, chapter 3, question 3 (pp. 7–10) which in the 1608 edition is almost completely different from that of 1599 as well as being substantially longer.

¹⁵ See *Biographie Nationale de Belgique*, 8.902–3.

¹⁶ *Disquisitiones* Book 2, question 18 (p. 98).

monk in the Benedictine abbey of Stavelot. This took place in 1597, just at the moment when Del Rio himself was staying in Liège on his way back to Louvain overland from Tournai. The events which gave rise to the trial had begun in 1592 when many of the monks fell sick and began to die. The cause was imputed to poison and to magic, and when the elderly prior died suddenly at the beginning of February, the blame for his death and for that of all the others fell upon Jean del Vaulx who was thereupon arrested, shut up in a dungeon, and left there on a diet of bread and water. It was not until three years later, during which the monastery had continued to be troubled by manifestations of witchcraft, that the abbey's administrator, Prince-Archbishop Ernst of Bavaria, was informed of Del Vaulx's imprisonment and sent his vicar-general, Jean Chapeauville, to investigate. Quite unexpectedly, and giving evidence of great emotion, Del Vaulx confessed to everything and related a tale of service to the Devil going back to when he was a child, a confession which evidently warranted further investigation, for the Prince-Archbishop sent a further delegation consisting of a bishop, Jean Chapeauville, and a secretary, to question and re-question the garrulously co-operative monk.

Their investigations were long and protracted, and at one point involved other people, including an old friend of Del Rio's from their days at Louvain, the juriconsult Pierre Dheure, who was now Deputy Burgomaster of Liège.¹⁷ Del Rio records a curious incident which happened to these investigating officers at the beginning of January 1597 while they were on their way to Stavelot. Their carriage suddenly overturned and broke in two. No one was hurt but when they arrived at the monastery, Del Vaulx indicated to them that he knew they had had an accident because his attendant spirit had told him all about it.¹⁸ It was a strange admission of guilty involvement with diabolical forces, but Del Vaulx was nothing if not co-operative and continued to pour out information about meetings with Satan, orgies, and magical incantations, all interspersed with the names of his companions and accomplices.¹⁹

On 10 January 1597 Del Vaulx at last came to trial with the judges almost overwhelmed by the quantity of evidence with which they had to cope, and it took until 2 April for judgement to be made and sentence passed. This was that Del Vaulx should be degraded and handed over to the secular arm for punishment, but his two secular judges, Pierre Dheure and Jean Molempeter, decided he should not be burned but, rather, beheaded, a sentence which was carried out forthwith.

¹⁷ Or *Petrus Oranus*, as he appears in Del Rio's text.

¹⁸ *Disquisitiones* Book 5, section 7 (pp. 385-6).

¹⁹ *Disquisitiones* Book 2, question 16 (pp. 90-1). 'I have read documents [describing this], written in the hand of a very famous practitioner of harmful magic', says Del Rio, and the likelihood is that he is referring to Jean del Vaulx.

INTRODUCTION

Clearly this case had a remarkable effect in stimulating Del Rio's researches into magic in general and witchcraft in particular. For one thing, Del Vault's garrulousness over many months provided him with a wealth of material; secondly, he was able to gain free access to it through his friendship with Pierre Dheure;²⁰ and thirdly, the reliability of the material was confirmed and proved by the confessions of other magicians and diviners.²¹ Moreover, this was not the only case of sorcery in which Pierre Dheure was involved, and therefore the two men were certainly able to discuss the subject to Del Rio's evident advantage.

Del Rio remained for several years in Louvain and there he made his final vows as a Jesuit in 1600.²² But a new university had opened in Graz in 1586 and to this Del Rio was transferred in 1601 (stopping for a while in Mainz), and taught theology there for three years until his declining health obliged him to seek the warmer climate of Salamanca.²³ This period saw him produce three books – *Commentarios de las alteraciones de los estados de Flandes* (1601);²⁴ a text of a commentary upon some of the poems of the seventh century English bishop, Saint Aldhelm (1601);²⁵ and a commentary on the *Song of Songs* (1604) – and take part in a learned debate about witchcraft, which was being conducted between various Catholic universities from c. 1601–1604.²⁶ The occasion was a struggle for power in Munich. Johann Wagenreckh, Ecclesiastical Councillor since 1593, was spokesman for those who were keen that witches be persecuted to the uttermost. As a skilled lawyer and a man of fervent conviction, Wagenreckh

²⁰ Del Rio records extraordinary details, such as the occasion when Pierre Dheure stood behind Del Vault, traced the silhouette of a dog in the air with his finger, and watched Del Vault suddenly begin to twist and turn in agony, *Disquisitiones* Book 2, question 21 (p. 103).

²¹ *Disquisitiones* Book 5, Appendix 1 (p. 425).

²² He had arrived there at some point in 1597 since one of his personal anecdotes begins, 'this year, here in Louvain', *Disquisitiones* Book 6, chapter 2, section 1, question 1, no. 18 (p. 484).

²³ It was while he was in Graz that he read a detailed manuscript account of a long, difficult exorcism which he describes in *Disquisitiones* Book 6, chapter 2, section 3, question 3 (pp. 513–15); and he makes further references to his time there in Book 4, chapter 1, question 3, section 2 (p. 263), and *Ibid.* section 4 (p. 267). He was in Salamanca by 24 July 1604, as he himself tells us in a note at the end of his second appendix to *Disquisitiones*, Book 5 (p. 466). Not long after this, he will have met the theologian Basilio Ponce de León (1569–1629) who had studied at Salamanca and returned there in 1605. Del Rio speaks highly of his 'elegant erudition', *Disquisitiones* Book 3, part 2, question 4, section 5 (p. 236).

²⁴ A Spanish translation of the Latin original. The Latin text, written under the pseudonym Roland Mirteus, was not published until 1869.

²⁵ A work Del Rio completed during his stay in Mainz.

²⁶ For details, see Behringer: *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria*, 236–66.

was opposing with all the vigour at his command anyone who tried to argue against such persecution, and in the hope that some definitive opinion might emerge from the maelstrom of claim and counter-claim, the two greatest contemporary authorities on witchcraft, Del Rio and Nicholas Rémy, were asked to express their views.²⁷

In Spain, Del Rio continued to teach and to write. An epitome of Livy's histories (1606), to which Del Rio contributed only a few pages, was followed by *A Work About Mary (Opus Marianum)* and a defence of Dionysius the Areopagite against the animadversions of Scaliger (both 1607). He also put in hand a commentary on *Genesis*, which was published in 1608 along with two other devotional works, a commentary on *Lamentations* and *A Lighthouse of Holy Wisdom (Pharus sacrae sapientiae)*. But the Society decided to recall him to the Spanish Netherlands and so on 18 August 1608 he set out on what proved to be a long a difficult journey, for he did not arrive in Brussels until two months later. Even then he was allowed no rest and set off at once to Louvain where the Society's Provincial was waiting for him. But this extra jolting along ill-kept roads in public transport turned out to be too much for his fragile health and, having arrived in Louvain on 18 October, he was immediately seen by a doctor, who gave him up for lost. At half past seven the following morning, he received the last sacraments and died later that same day. He was fifty-seven.²⁸

The *Disquisitiones Magicae*

Rosweyde's commemorative *Life* tells us that the *Disquisitiones* first appeared in Mainz in 1595 – Del Rio himself remarks that he returned to Spain 'four or five years after the first edition of this work'²⁹ – and was reprinted at least twenty-four more times, the final edition appearing in Venice in 1747.³⁰ It is dedicated to the Wittelsbach Prince-Archbishop Ernst of Bavaria, Administrator

²⁷ See *Disquisitiones* Book 5, Appendix 2 (p. 433).

²⁸ A few more works from his pen, edited and published by his brethren in the Society, continued to appear: another essay directed against Scaliger (1609), a collection of sayings and phrases from the Old and New Testaments (1610), a commentary on recent events in the Spanish Netherlands (1610), and a general *History of Belgium* [i.e. the Spanish Netherlands] (1611).

²⁹ *Disquisitiones* Book 3, part 1, question 3, section 2 (p. 195). It was here and on this occasion, he says, that someone showed him a book by the Jesuit Martín De Roa (1561–1637), *Singularium locorum ac rerum libri V* (Five Books Dealing With Unusual Places and Subject Matter), which was published in Cordoba in 1600. Rosweyde appears to have been mistaken about the date of the first edition. There seems to be no evidence that the *Disquisitiones* was published anywhere before 1599.

³⁰ For a study of these, see E. Fischer: *Die 'Disquisitionum Magicarum libri sex' von Martin Delrio als gegenreformatische Exempel-Quelle* (Hanover 1975).

INTRODUCTION

of the monastery of Stavelot, who had taken such a close interest in the Del Vaulx affair, although Del Rio is not so indelicate as to make direct reference to this in his dedicatory letter.³¹ Instead, he refers to the rapid spread of superstition which had been happening recently, a plague (as he calls it) diffused by humanity's inborn lust for collecting information. Such a plague, he says, needs a cure and it was the pressing necessity to remove and uproot Satan's poisoned/enchanted herbs (*venenatae herbae*) which were helping to spread it, and to provide a medicine for the disease, which stimulated him to write the *Disquisitiones*. He dedicates it to Ernst, he says, because the Archbishop is a pillar of the Church and a man fervent in zeal for the true religion.³²

The first edition of the whole work was published in three separate tomes between 1599 and 1600. Volume I (Books 1 and 2) received the approval of Del Rio's superiors on 6 July 1598 and of the censor on 8 February 1599, with Del Rio dating his dedicatory epistle from Louvain on 9 March 1599 and receiving the Archduke's *privilegium* on 17th. Publication took place in Louvain in 1599. Volume II (Books 3 and 4) received its approvals on 8 February and 17 March 1599³³ and was published in 1600. The dates of permissions and *privilegium* for Volume III (Books 5 and 6) were the same as those of Volume II, while its dedicatory epistle to Archbishop Ernst is dated from Louvain, 26 February 1600.³⁴ The title-page of the 1608 edition makes clear both the subject-matter of the work and the audience at which it is aimed. 'Six Books of Investigations Into Magic, wherein is contained a meticulous refutation of the inquisitive arts and idle superstitions; useful for theologians, jurisconsults, doctors, and scholars; by Martin Del Rio, Priest of the Society of Jesus, Bachelor

³¹ He includes, later in his work, an anecdote about a Westphalian lycanthrope, told by the Archbishop to Karl Billheus who then passed it on to Del Rio, *Disquisitiones* Book 5, section 9 (p. 388). Archbishop Ernst's interest in the occult sciences was well-known. He kept two astrologers in his palace in Liège, for example, and was very much interested in alchemy.

³² Dedicatory Epistle to Books 1 and 2. Del Rio uses the same medical terminology in the Dedicatory Epistle to Books 5 and 6. Archbishop Ernst had been appointed to the see of Cologne by Gregory XIII in 1583 after the deposition of its previous abjuring archbishop, Gebhard Truchsess von Walburg. The aim of the appointment was to secure north-west Germany for Catholicism, and since Ernst also held the sees of Liège, Freising, Hildesheim, and Münster and was a leading support of a vigorous Catholic counter-offensive to the spread of Calvinism both in Austrian hereditary lands and elsewhere in Europe, he was clearly an ideal candidate to hold key parts of northern Europe for the Church. Hence Del Rio's enthusiasm.

³³ This second date is printed XXVI Kalend. April, which I take to be an error for XVI.

³⁴ Making an adjustment for the leap year. On censorship, licensing, and *privilegium*, see L. Voet: *The Golden Compasses*, 2 vols (Vangendt & Co., Amsterdam 1969–1972), 2.255–78, and on production times, *Ibid.*, 302–5.

of Laws, Doctor of Theology, formerly of the University of Graz, now Public Professor of Holy Scripture in the University of Salamanca'.

The emphasis upon people's trying to get to know that which they should not, and the dangerous inadvisability of many quasi-religious or overtly magical practices in fact summarises very well the thrust of the *Disquisitiones*, since Del Rio is concerned to show that magic – the attempt to find out the secrets of creation, which God has kept hidden from humankind, and then to use the powers inherent therein either for one's own advantage or to another's detriment – is in its very nature a perilous subject for study and is best avoided. Should assistance greater than human be required for any purpose, an individual should turn to the Church which is the only repository of aids which are both safe and reliable (not to mention licit). Essentially, therefore, the *Disquisitiones* is a religious work aimed more at wayward Catholics than at heretics, although Del Rio does not hesitate, of course, to point out the latter's erroneous opinions on religion, magic, and other related subjects.

The six Books of the *Disquisitiones* are interrelated; they do not merely constitute six disparate essays on aspects of the same basic material. Del Rio begins with a general survey of magic and then examines its constituent parts: natural, artificial, delusory, and demonic (Books 1 and 2). Next, he discusses the various uses to which these different types of magic may be and indeed are all too often put (Books 3 and 4); and finally, he turns to the question of how to deal with people who practise the arts of magic, and how one may counteract the effects of the magic they have worked (Books 5 and 6). This general plan can be broken down as follows.

Book 1: Etymology of the word *superstitio* according to Isidore of Seville. Its use in various ancient authors and in Scripture. 'Superstition' refers (a) to forms of worship which are superfluous to the requirements of genuine religion, and (b) to expressions of an idolatry which may be explicit or implicit. All types of forbidden magic constitute implicit idolatry. The different branches of magic: that which pertains to nature (natural), that which is wrought by human ingenuity (artificial), and that which involves evil spirits (demonic). Its subdivisions: magic for a particular purpose, divination, malefice, and superstition. Hebrew, Greek, and Latin technical terms for practitioners of magic. *Natural magic*: a range of opinions on whether it is licit or illicit. There are two kinds, operative and divinatory. The influence of the stars and planets upon created things both human and non-human, and whether this contributes to the results obtained by magic. The creation of mental and physical images and the powers these are alleged to possess. A consideration of whether wounds can be treated and diseases cured by means of touch, sight, or the sound of a voice, by kissing,

INTRODUCTION

or by the simple application of a cloth. *Artificial magic*: this refers to the production of marvels by human ingenuity. A discussion of whether any magical power resides in written characters, sigils, numbers, or music. Can words or incantations cure the sick or cause extraordinary things to happen? Magical amulets and other objects people hang round their necks. *Alchemy*: the etymology of the word and alchemy's actual capabilities. Is alchemy one of the liberal or mechanical arts, is it a branch of magic, does it work, and is it a lawful or unlawful activity?

Book 2: The origin of the type of magic which involves evil spirits, its various types, and the books which describe or promote it. The basis of this kind of magic is a pact between the practitioner and the evil spirit, a pact which may be explicit or implicit. The means whereby one may recognise the results of such magic and distinguish them from natural effects and miracles, including discussions on the invalidity of Elizabeth Tudor's claim to possess the royal touch for scrofula, and the so-called miracles of Antichrist and the Calvinists. Evil spirits work marvels entirely by moving something from one place to another, by deceiving the senses, or by effecting alterations in different objects. A large number of examples, including illustrations drawn from ancient writers. Magicians cannot go beyond the laws of nature and the established order of creation, but within these bounds they can do a great deal. Further examples of the extent of magicians' real or supposed powers, especially in relation to good luck, enchantment of animals, and the production of mixed species such as half-human, half-animal monsters. Whether sexual intercourse with evil spirits is possible, and whether this can produce offspring or not. The meetings of witches at night and their transvection thither. Can an evil spirit enter a physical body, cause one body to be in two places at once, or two bodies to co-exist in one spot? Can magicians make animals talk intelligibly, and can they understand the language of animals? Whether an evil spirit can render a person insensible for long periods, or change one sex into the other, or make an old person young again. The powers of magic over the soul, the feelings, and the intellect. What power does the Devil exert over a soul which has been separated from its body? The extraordinary things which can happen in cases of ecstasy, or of dead bodies. Whether an evil spirit can cause the spirits of the dead to appear to the living, and why God would allow such a thing to happen. A long section of examples, stretching from the first century to the seventeenth. Contrary arguments resolved. Appearances of evil spirits and the emanations which evil spirits present to human eyes. The various kinds and types of evil spirits, and some opinions about them. Their names in various languages including Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Spanish, French, and Italian. How an evil spirit which by nature is invisible can render itself visible. Whether the Devil can really make a person

rise from the dead, and the extent of the power which magicians actually wield over evil spirits.

Book 3: This Book is divided into two parts, the first dealing with harmful magic (*maleficium*) and the second with superstitious practices (*vana observatio*).

Part One begins with a definition of malefice and a survey of its various types, and then discusses each of these: (a) malefice which puts people to sleep and allows workers of harmful magic to steal small children and kill them; (b) love-magic, the abuse of holy things which may play a part in this, and illustrations of its various practices, largely taken from Classical texts; (c) the different malefices one can direct against someone for whom one feels personal enmity – the evil eye (*fascinatio*), and the use of substances which may be poisonous (*venenaria*); (d) abortion, difficult birth, failure of mother's milk; (e) arrows, assassins, and the manufacture of images intended to convey the malefice; (f) various illnesses caused by evil spirits; (g) the extraordinary ingestion and vomiting of large, solid objects; (h) possession by an evil spirit; (i) various ways of causing impotence; (j) how to cause hatred between people; (k) how to set things on fire.

The kinds of people who are likely to fall victim to malefice, why God allows workers of harmful magic to misuse holy things, and why God allows the Devil such licence to roam in search of victims of malefice. The Devil is given his head because in the end his activities redound to the greater glory of God, human beings are given opportunities to increase their virtue, and the malefices act as punishment for their sins. Some of these sins are listed, accompanied by anecdotes to illustrate the relevant point: contempt for God, libidinousness, injustice and cruelty, fighting against what is self-evidently true, apostasy, blasphemy, cursing, usury, callous heartlessness towards the poor, mockery of the sacraments, the ceremonies, and the censures of the Church, plundering churches, deriding holy men and Church festivals, pettiness of spirit, despair, and curiosity. Why the Devil prefers to work through others when he could inflict harm himself.

Part Two defines the various types of superstitious practice, gives examples of when it is a mortal sin, a venial sin, and no sin at all, and indicates how one can tell whether a particular superstitious practice belongs to one of these categories or to another. How to tell whether the effect of a superstitious practice comes from God or not, and once this is decided, the various attendant circumstances which have to be taken into account. Can the effect be attributed to sigils, characters, pictures, or words? What about sacred words and pious actions which are misdirected towards false or futile ends? The divinatory arts known as 'Notory', 'Pauline', and 'Angelic'. Various other methods of divination.

INTRODUCTION

Superstitious practices concerned with curing the sick or keeping illness at bay. A refutation of Felix Haemmerlein's *Two Essays on Exorcism*.³⁵ Tasteless and unnecessary rites which are not approved by the Church. Various magical formulae using Hebrew words. Snake charmers are not tolerated by the Church. Asking an evil spirit to effect the cure of an illness is not permissible. How can promising to restore health or perform a miracle be reconciled with the Faith? How to deal with situations like this in which there is an element of doubt. In which circumstances can something be illicit and yet not sinful? Examples (a) of forms of words used in superstitious practices, and (b) of the superstitious use of various objects.

Book 4: The vocabulary of divinatory techniques. Various kinds of prophecy, and the remarks of Scripture, Plato and Aristotle on the subject. Does God always use angels to mediate prophecy? The subject-matter of prophecy. Saint Thomas Aquinas on the subject. There are two kinds of prophecy: (a) that which comes from priests, and (b) that which comes from prophets. A discussion of the Urim and Thummim.³⁶ The oracles delivered by the Prophets, and their division into those which were seen, those which were heard, and those which were dreamed. How to distinguish between a revelation which comes from God and one which comes from the Devil. What one must bear in mind about the person to whom a revelation is given: Catholic or heretic, character, way of life, physical constitution, behaviour, social status, age, gender, and the degree of his or her spiritual experience. Revelations made (a) to women who are not saints, and (b) to virgins and women who have been canonised or were famous for the holiness of their lives. What one should look for in the nature of the revelation itself and in the circumstances attendant upon it. Definition of 'divination'. The secrets which can be revealed by an evil spirit. How to tell the difference between divination and prophecy. The various categories of sin into which divination may fall; the many different kinds of divination, including necromancy. Types of divination in which a pact with an evil spirit is either implicit or latent. Foretelling the future; prognostications from the stars, elements, meteors, plants, trees, and animals; doctors' prognostications; physiognomy, chiromancy, interpretation of dreams, casting lots. Various ways, in ecclesiastical and in common usage, of discovering a person's guilt or innocence, including trial by fire and by water. Criticism of the German test of swimming persons

³⁵ Born 1389. He was a canon in Zürich and, according to Del Rio, was still alive in 1454.

³⁶ A means of obtaining oracles in ancient Israel. It is not known exactly what the Urim and Thummim were, but they were kept in the breastplate inlaid with twelve precious stones, which the Jewish High Priest wore over his ephod. See further *Jewish Encyclopaedia* 16.8–9.

accused of witchcraft, and a discussion of recent publications on the subject. Other methods in common use of testing someone's innocence.

Book 5: Considerations for judges presiding over trials for malefice. Can the usual criminal procedure be retained when trying this kind of crime? Circumstances which make this crime worse than others. When a judge can increase or diminish the statutory legal penalty, and the kind of consideration he must always bear in mind. A judge must not be restricted by ancient judicial usage but should act according to local custom. Details of the way in which this crime should be investigated, including those points which must be made absolutely clear, how long the investigation ought to last, and what kind of indications of the accused's guilt should precede formal investigation. The role of the ruling Prince in such matters. Who are competent judges of this crime, and what are the powers held by inquisitors in this regard? Can an investigation be instituted in the absence of the accused? A discussion of the best indications which allow a judge to proceed safely, and the nature of indications: (a) slight, (b) serious, (c) very serious. When slight indications are sufficient to warrant torture. The role of witnesses, including partners in crime, confessors, friends of the accused, children, and women. The person who denounces the accused must be questioned about relevant circumstances, the possibility of slander must be taken into account, and the evidence should be consistent and undeviating. The requisite oaths to be taken. Indications which warrant torture. The role of a good or bad reputation and the difficulties of establishing either. How to interpret the accused's running away or issuing threats, and the difference between a genuine threat and showing off.

Lesser indications, such as the accused's telling lies, being unsteady on his or her feet, dithering, or changing expression. Was he or she seen in the relevant spot with an instrument of malefice? How did he or she normally behave, and what were his or her reactions during investigation? Indications such as the bleeding of a corpse in the presence of the accused, his or her depraved parentage, everyday use of blasphemous or scurrilous speech, inability of the accused to shed tears, frequent change of domicile, ostentatious piety, and loss of the mark of baptism.

Denunciation and witnesses: a large number of weak or unreliable indications do not amount to a single, irrefutable indication. What should be done when accomplices retract their evidence after sentence has been pronounced, or when the testimony of witnesses varies. Trials for heresy provide a blueprint. Accusation: how this should be made, and the penalty for slander. Arrest and imprisonment: the circumstances of the accused's arrest and imprisonment, the kind of information which will lead to arrest, denunciation by a witness who is ill, whether the

INTRODUCTION

accused can be arrested in a church. Immunity from prosecution. What should be done about unjust imprisonment, and is it a sin for someone unjustly imprisoned to make his or her escape? The judge should be on the look-out for various superstitious practices by the accused, such as having magical objects concealed in his or her clothing. Why the Devil does not rescue the accused from prison.

Rules for the application of torture. Torture should not be used unless it is absolutely necessary. How many times torture may be applied. Should someone already convicted be tortured? The different kinds of people who may be tortured in connection with this crime. The different ways in which the evil spirit tries to ensure the accused stays silent. The usual safeguards a judge can use against malefices. Various points raised by Sprenger. The kind of confession which will condemn an accused. Confession by someone who is deaf and dumb. Confession which admits to working harmful magic but denies evil intention. Different kinds of suspicion, and the difference between 'suspicion', 'intellectual certainty of the accused's guilt', and 'presumption'. How abjuration should be made, under what circumstances, and the formulae of abjuration which may be used. When canonical purgation may be applied; its rites and ceremonies. When and under what circumstances an accused can be acquitted.

What is heretical in cases of sorcery (*sortilega*), and what is not. A discussion of differences in legal opinion on this point. Magicians who claim to work with astrological spirits are bound to them by a pact. A series of axioms relating to magical practices which smack of heresy. Wier's recommendation that one distinguish between various types of magical operator is mistaken. The appropriate punishments under canon and civil law for sorcerers who are (a) clerics and (b) lay people in cases which (a) involve and (b) do not involve heresy. Those who consult diviners or workers of harmful magic incur the same ecclesiastical penalties as the diviners and *malefici* themselves.³⁷ Further discussion of specific cases. Can a bishop hand over to the secular arm for punishment people convicted of this crime, who are penitent? Should witches (*lamiae sive striges*) who have not killed anyone be burned? When old age provides a sufficient warrant to lessen the punishment.

The crimes committed by witches (*sagae*) are not fantasies. Theologians, lawyers, physicians, and philosophers who have acknowledged the pact between

³⁷ Cf. the parallels and the differences between this and the 1563 Scottish Witchcraft Act: 'It is statut and ordanit that na maner of persoun nor persounis tak upone hand to use ony maner of witchcraftis, sorsarie, or necromancie; nor that na persoun seik ony help, response, or consultatioun at ony sic usaris or abusaris of witchcraftis, sorsareis, or necromancie under the pane of deid, alsweill to be execute aganis the usar-abusar as the seikar of the response or consultatioun', *Acts of the Parliament of Scotland* 2.539 (adapted and abbreviated).

evil spirits and witches (*lamiae*). Books about magic: who may read them and who may not. The punishments for possessing them. Those who write them or make copies of them. In many places it is not the custom to give the eucharist to those who are about to be executed. When this may be done. Extreme unction should not be given to such people. A discussion on what should happen to the body of the executed person; the case of those who die in prison; people who supply the condemned with the means of committing suicide; those who die before conviction and before sentence has been passed.

Book 6: The duty of a confessor in his capacity as judge. A catalogue of the crimes he should investigate; the seal of confession in this matter; cases when it is permissible to reveal what has been learned during confession. How confession should be made, and the circumstances attendant upon it. Differing opinions on whether it is a sure sign of impenitence that a person cannot shed tears. Who can and cannot give absolution in cases of this crime. The duty of a confessor in his capacity as physician of the soul. Examples of superstitious treatments or magical remedies for bewitchment. How to get witches (*sagae*) to confess by using threats, force, and blows; how they are accustomed to transfer their fate to other people; and how the evil spirit relieves them during their ordeal. Is it permissible to seek a remedy for bewitchment from workers of harmful magic; or to use superstitious methods or silly remedies to lift a malefice; or to consult for this purpose someone who is not the originator of the malefice? Is it permissible to destroy the physical sign or instrument of a malefice in order to stop the Devil from doing harm? Arguments on both sides. Natural remedies against malefices. Supernatural, divine, and ecclesiastical remedies. These include the sacraments of the Church, the prayers of holy people, exorcism, works of reparation and charity, invocation of the name of Jesus and of Mary, invocation of the saints, making the sign of the cross, the relics of the saints, holy water, other things blessed by Catholic ritual, holy amulets hung round the neck, and the sound of church bells. A refutation of remarks by Johann Godelmann. A summary of advice for confessors and penitents.

It is clear from this that Del Rio has several aims in view. He intends to argue that any practice of magic is potentially dangerous and should be avoided; only the Catholic Church can offer people safe and effective answers to their spiritual problems;³⁸ curiosity is a most perilous emotion and one which Satan is quick to exploit for his own advantage; some people are able to trick others

³⁸ As W. Shumaker says, 'A main reference frame for Delrio's judgement is Catholic theology and ... occultist claims are tested against Christian truths', *Natural Magic and Modern Science*, 90.

INTRODUCTION

into believing they have preternatural powers,³⁹ whereas they are merely dextrous, agile, or actually in league with an evil spirit; proving that someone has genuinely been able to work harmful magic is difficult and any investigation of such persons must be made with the most rigorous care. In other words, the *Disquisitiones* is a polemical religious work, a weapon (to use the Catholic reformers' own terminology) in the war which the Catholic Church was then waging against Satan who had stirred up virulent opposition to the Church in two principal forms – heretics and witches – and it can scarcely be coincidence that by the 1590s, learned debate on witchcraft had become polarised between those who accepted the elaborated theory of magic in all its aspects, and those who were willing to express a greater or lesser degree of reservation. Such polarisation did not necessarily show itself along confessional lines, of course, for there were both Catholics and Protestants at each end of the spectrum, but it is noticeable that the impulses of a new generation of theologians, lawyers, and philosophers, stirred by the aggressive, confident spirit of Catholic reformation, can be seen mirrored in increasingly bitter confessional conflicts in France, many of the German states, and much of the Low Countries where magical activity was increasingly re-interpreted as criminal witchcraft and therefore open to an increase in prosecution. As Clark puts it, 'Those who took up the attack on 'magic' and 'superstition', who demonised these sins and made them into witchcraft, and then sought to eradicate them, were responding not merely to intellectual but to evangelical imperatives ... Those [Catholics] who added, or preferred, an interest in the witchcraft of the sabbat were ... driven by considerations of purity in danger, the Church besieged by its enemies, and the need for a militant response. Thus Catholic demonology was characteristically a subject for Dominicans and Jesuits'.⁴⁰

Nor must we forget that the end of the sixteenth century witnessed the

³⁹ Del Rio is careful to distinguish between supernatural powers, which belong to God alone, and preternatural powers which produce effects so startling and unexpected that they may be mistaken by the careless viewer for the products of supernatural or miraculous powers, although in fact they belong to the natural order of things. See *Disquisitiones* Book 1, chapter 4, question 3 (p. 25).

⁴⁰ S. Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 539. See also pp. 479–502 wherein Clark discusses Catholic identification of magic with the sin of idolatry. Cf. Behringer, *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria*, 216–18 and R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal* (Cambridge University Press 1998), 148. It may also be no accident that Del Rio was one of a very large number of Jesuits concentrated in the Catholic Low Countries, for it was there that the religious fight against heretical opponents and the spiritual war against Satan's minions seemed, increasingly after 1595, to call for a concentration of Papal troops, Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal*, 64. Cf. W. V. Bangert, 'a martial air hung over the field of theology in the 1590s', *A History of the Society of Jesus* (Institute of Jesuit Sources, St Louis 1972), 140.

spread of a millenarianism which preached the coming of Antichrist, the end of the world, and the establishment of God's kingdom upon earth; listed the signs and portents which, it was said, indicated the imminent or present arrival of the apocalypse; and issued ever more strident calls to repentance. If the Last Judgement was indeed about to happen, if Satan had indeed been loosed from the chains in which Christ had held him bound for so long, then the visible and obvious increase in heresy and operative magic provided unmistakable evidences of that looming dissolution, and both Catholic and Protestant preachers and demonologists were in agreement not only on the essentials of that expectation but also on the signs which proved it valid.⁴¹

The context of the *Disquisitiones*, therefore, is one of urgent spiritual warfare in which theology, law, and philosophy must unite to repel the forces of Satanic evil. Hence Del Rio's striking remark in his Prologue that he sees the *Disquisitiones* as a study in which theology, law, and philosophy play an equal part rather than a work in which one of them has a particular (and, by implication, superior) role. In writing the *Disquisitiones*, then, Del Rio may have decided to concern himself principally with witches and magic rather than heretics and false doctrine, but he was acutely aware that the two categories of foe were almost certain to overlap.⁴² It should be emphasised, too, that he did not address himself to the problem of witchcraft alone. As his title says, he was drawing the attention of his Catholic readership to the perils of magic as a whole, along with those of its attendant related occult sciences, astrology and alchemy, and the practices of divination and prophecy; and he was much concerned with the prevalence of 'superstition', a discussion of which is placed at the beginning of the entire work. Modern interpretation of the word tends to stress the irrationality which informs the various behaviours called 'superstitious'. Del Rio and his contemporaries, however, regarded it with greater concern since by 'superstition' they understood essentially the worship of something or someone in place of God, or the displacement of a proper religious focus upon the person of God in favour of something or someone else. In other words, they looked upon superstition as a form of idolatry, the sin prohibited by the First Commandment.⁴³ There were, it is true, various degrees of seriousness with which one might regard the different manifestations of superstitious conduct, and the idolatry inherent therein might be implicit

⁴¹ See Clark, *Thinking With Demons*, 337–45. Cf. his remarks on the 'general circumstances in which Jesuits could intelligibly deliver sermons devoted to visions of the last days and Dominicans could legitimately expect demoniacs and witches to confirm that they had in fact arrived', *ibid.*, 429–30. See also J. Delumeau: *La peur en Occident* (Paris 1978), 213–25.

⁴² As he points out in his *Proloquium*, following the analysis of Juan Maldonado whose lectures he had attended long ago in Paris: 'Magic will always accompany heresy'.

⁴³ See further Clark: *Thinking With Demons*, 474–9. D. Harmening: *Superstitio* (Erich Schmidt Verlag, Berlin 1979), 33–42.