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2. Becoming Ethnographic:
Reading Inquisitorial Authority in *The Hammer of Witches*

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What kind of complicit relationships to "evidence" and to "truth" might contemporary microhistories of inquisitorial archives enjoy with late medieval/early modern inquisitorial discourse?¹ What do Carlo Ginzburg and Guido Ruggiero have to do with the Inquisitors of Modena and Venice, what has Bishop Jacques Fournier to do with Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie and Georges Duby? My essay poses these questions for the problems they raise about engendering and sexualizing authority and authorization both in late medieval inquisitorial practices and in contemporary disciplinaries of so-called "premodern" studies.

The authority of recent work by such microhistorians as Ginzburg, Ruggiero, Ladurie, and Duby rests on their research in inquisitorial archives, on their "having been there," on their work in the "field" of the archive. The archive functions like a good native-informant. Ginzburg has insisted on the "intrinsic dialogic" nature of inquisitorial trial transcripts, Ladurie on their "direct testimony," Ruggiero on their capacity as records to "speak from the past" for the "storyteller" of today; Duby hears in them the "sound of the authentic female voice" of the Middle Ages.² The Inquisitorial archive offers, too, just like the field, exotic, sensuous pleasures that exceed the documents themselves. These collections dazzle like Eldorado: "When I was admitted for the first time to the large room which housed in perfect order nearly two thousand inquisitorial trials, I felt the sudden thrill of discovering an unexplored gold mine."³

But what if the microhistorians' experience of "having been there" should turn out, with critical scrutiny, to be no authority at all but rather the pre-emption of the authority of the inquisitor? Where did the authority of the inquisitor come from? There is more to these questions than the thrill of vertigo. The discipline of ethnography/anthropology, upon which microhistorians eagerly draw, has over the past decade subjected its organizing tropes of the fieldworker, the practice of "having been there," to a historical critique of

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representation. According to such critique the fieldworker was no fieldworker at all but the effect of an elision of the multiple, power-charged relationships of writer and author in command of different optical, auditory, and rhetorical technologies designed to organize not only the ethnos, but the fieldworker, into a coherent, unified subject.⁴ The ethnos and the ethnographer become rhetorically necessary to each other and in the ensuing terror of their intertwining one must be made to drop out of sight to make the other appear.⁵

Microhistories of the Inquisition traffic little with current critiques of representation in anthropology. Ginzburg proudly and perhaps, as I argue, not so anachronistically, identified the Inquisitor as an anthropologist and differentiates their work from his work only by its means: "The elusive evidence that inquisitors were trying to elicit from defendants was not so different after all from our own objective: what was different, of course, were their means and ultimate ends."⁶ The desire of the microhistorian and the inquisitor are seemingly the same. What is it that they both desire?

Anthropologists have been less anxious to talk of this desire of the microhistorian. Renato Rosaldo has compared the rhetorical strategies of Ladurie's *Montaillou* with the Evans-Pritchard's "classic" ethnography *The Nuer* (1940) to show how Ladurie "cloaks himself with the borrowed authority of ethnographic science" in order to convert interrogation into "overhearing and cataloguing",⁷ into polyphony the equally voiced voices of fourteenth-century peasants and the contemporary French historian. In a disciplinary-wide critique Claire Spensler had claimed that medievalists are holding out as the "last" ethnographers. They protect a site for the production of ethnography which anthropologists have attempted to dismantle.

This slippage across historian, ethnographer and inquisitor, such conceptual confusion in the microhistories, may prove to be very productive methodologically. I began to think that confusion offered clues to a genealogy of the

European ethnographic project which microhistorians disavow and anthropologists have ignored in telling ways. What if the Inquisition itself served as an important institutional moment and process in the formation of the European ethnographic disciplines?

This essay, intended as a gesture toward this genealogical problem posed by Inquisitorial practices, proposes to read an exemplary Inquisition manual counter-ethnographically for the ways in which it constructs its authority and its determinations of what counts for evidence.⁸ The reading protocols used by ethnographic critics such as James Clifford and Mary Louise Pratt inspire my reading at the same time that I attempt to trouble the concept of colonial "encounter" as something transacted not only *between* but *within*. In the text of a late fifteenth-century Inquisition manual can be found the stunning evidence for division *within* the European phantasmatic, for an intimacy of alterity as Inquisitors produced a European ethnos from within. The production of that ethnos within would complicate and divide the mapping exercise of an ethnographic encounter between Europe and the Americas. ⁹

Such a reading may seem to fly in the face of the historiographical agenda

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for Inquisition studies crafted over the past twenty years. Much of that historiography has concentrated on trial records in efforts to re-evaluate the supposed leniency of Inquisitorial tribunals. This agenda shadow-boxes with nineteenth-century historians of the Inquisition such as Henry Charles Lea, who stand accused of demonizing the Inquisition in their ardor for science and progress.¹⁰ My reading steps out of this historiographical opposition of demonization-recuperation in order to imagine what an emergent history of the Inquisition might look like. Such re-framing of Inquisitorial practices allies itself with postcolonial criticisms of the "natural" frames of historical representation. Homi K. Bhabha writes:

[R]econstituting the discourse of cultural difference demands more than a simple change of cultural contents and symbols, for a replacement within the same representational time frame is never adequate. This reconstitution requires a radical revision of the social temporality in which emergent histories may be written, the re-articulation of the "sign" in which cultural identities may be inscribed.¹¹

1. The Devil and Ethnographic Production of Cannibal Within Europe

*[M]achines are social before being technical.*¹²

Let us begin by imagining the Inquisitor as he conjures himself in this passage taken from the infamously famous fifteenth-century text on witchcraft known as the *Malleus Maleficarum*.¹³ This is the picture the Inquisitor paints of himself in part three of that treatise which outlines the rules for carrying out juridical proceedings against witches:

[T]he judge should wear around his neck consecrated salt and other things, with the Seven Words which Christ uttered on the Cross written in a schedule, and all bound together. And he should, if he conveniently can, wear these made into the length of Christ's stature against his naked body, and bound in holy wax.

supra tacta de sale et aliis rebus benedictis cum septem verbis que Christus protulit in cruce in cedula conscriptis et insimul colligatis collo eius alligentur. longitudo christi super nudum corpus ex cera benedicta circumcingatur.(f. 108v)

The Inquisitor gives the sartorial recipe for magically protecting the judge's body from the accused witch who stands before him. Sealed with holy wax and wearing the "textual" body of Christ, the Inquisitor is trying to seal himself, his skin and his body fluids, off from the threat of the witch. The Inquisitor stands before the witch in the juridical space of death and in that space he finds what

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Michael Taussig has called the "language of heroic restraint generally awfully male . . . yet this death-space may be both tougher and more banal, more upset and upsetting than the discourse of heroic restraint has allowed."¹⁴ A reading of the *Malleus Maleficarum* can help to trouble the banality of this space of death how did the Inquisitor produce this space and how may his magical presence there be read as the shamanistic effect of his own textualization? By what erotic passion does he devour the devouring witches?

The Dominican Inquisitor, Heinrich Kramer, and his erstwhile co-author Jakob Sprenger, who wrote the *Malleus Maleficarum* (*Hammer of Witches*), which first appeared in print in 1487, produced a three-part treatise, a Bosch-like textual triptych of the scholastic, the ethnographic, and the juridical in their project to graph an ethnos from within Europe. I have chosen this late-medieval text for a reading because of its noted perversity, its confusion, its refusal to "go away" over five centuries. The amazing (and perverse) twentieth-century translation of Montague Summers is readily available in paperback at the local bookstore, and even Sigmund Freud could not bear to part with his German translation as he stood before his bookshelves in Nazi Vienna making decisions about what books to leave behind and what books to take along on his flight to London.¹⁵ The publication history of the the *Malleus* needs more work, but we know from the history drawn up by Joseph Hansen in 1898 that the treatise went through at least 13 printings between 1487 and 1520, and later in the third-quarter of the sixteenth century formed a canonical part of popular witchcraft anthologies which continued to be published into the seventeenth century.

The Inquisitors recognized from the outset that the *Malleus* marked a "modern" rupture, and they use such diction as "modern times" ("ab illo tempore moderne" [f 54v] and "expert testimony" ("experta testimonia" [f. 54 v]) to describe the truth they were capable of securing from the accused. From the first printings, even before debate emerged, Kramer and Sprenger prefaced the treatise with an apology in which they claimed their work to be "old in respect to subject and authority; new in respect to selection and organization" (breve pariter et prolixum antiquum certe materia et auctoritate; novum vero partium compilatione earumque aggregatione [f. 1r]). In other words, they realized that they had produced a new writing space, a surface on which to produce new objects of knowledge, they were producing an ethnos, a people.

The three parts of the treatise, or its three panels, produced a textual space for an ethnographic theory of reproduction of the savage within to risk anachronism, it can be said that the *Malleus* risks its own "bio-logy" in order to produce the reproductive rules for its witches, the ethnos it needs to graph. This "bio-logy" is not "natural;" as I shall soon show, reproduction of the European savage within requires the technological assistance of the devil.¹⁶ Inquisitorial discourse had to balance its intimacy with the devil with the danger of too much sympathy, a sympathy which could lead them into utter confusion. As they write in the opening question (*prima questio*), "they [witches] could bring it [the world] to utter confusion" ("quia sic perimere possent totum mundum" [f. 4r]). Where there is utter confusion, Jonathan Goldberg has alerted us to look for that

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"utterly confused category" of sodomy.¹⁷

What kind of ethnos were the Inquisitors graphing and why did they need to spell out the rules of production for that ethnos? The strong binary of alliance constructed in the first part of the treatise aligns sacramental, married, procreative sex over and against, not, as we might expect, anything else that might threaten alliance (the confused non-category of sodomy), but rather, a juridically and technologically organized, demonically assisted form of counter-alliance. This demonic counter-alliance both produced its own offspring at the same time it preyed on the reproductive processes of married, procreative sex. Witches, according the Inquisitors, ate children, the product of alliance; they also could induce sterility in men and undo sacramental, procreative sex.

The intimate urgency of alliance and counter-alliance is set in motion in the first section of the *Malleus Maleficarum*. The Inquisitors first stage a crisis of alliance in part one of the *Malleus*, its scholastic space, in which the authors mostly rely on citations of traditional scholastic authorities for their authority. They speak of the "most powerful cause which contributes to the increase of witches" as "the woeful rivalry between married folk and unmarried women and men" ("Et revera potissima causa deserviens in augmentum maleficarum est dolorosum duellum inter maritatos et non maritatas feminas et viros" [f. 21v]). So effective is the reproductive economy of the witches that they seem to be depopulating all of Christendom ("iam totam christianitatem depopulare videntur"[f. 33r]). This counter-economy, like sacramental marriage, requires a pact, a kind of marriage agreement, contracted between the devil and a woman. In Part One the Inquisitors discuss this pact according to the discursive concerns of whether such a pact (*pactum*) made by words or by deeds can reduce the witch to apostasy (f. 37r). In discussing this problem the text begins to map a series of spaces for which the demonic pact marks the axis of the vanishing point. Beyond the vanishing point of the pact witches recede from infidels (f. 36v), bad angels (f. 36r) and the first parents (f. 36r). Through the pact witches vanish spatially beyond the Others ("Jews" and "Turks") of *Christianitas* (f.36v). They are

located too beyond any heavenly topography, and beyond salvation history, since the sin of witches is even greater than original sin, greater than the sin of Adam and Eve.

The second part of the treatise also deals with the pact but now as an ethnographic rather than as a scholastic phenomenon. In Part Two of the treatise the Inquisitors elaborate on the kinds of ritual involved in setting up the pact. Once again the text produces a series of spaces and I want to pause and look at these spaces, since an understanding of their textual construction can offer insight into the spatial practices used in the *Malleus*. In Part One, the Inquisitors endlessly established conditions of proximity and distance, organized around the subject of the witch as a vanishing point. Part Two of the treatise maps a specific oral geography of witchcraft by citing testimonies and confessions of witches collected from specific Inquisitorial sites, or "fields."

An analysis of the rhetorical structure of this chapter on the ethnography of

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formal pacts with devils ("super expressum pactum fidelitatis cum demonibus" [f. 48r]) can help us to understand how the inquisitors are executing the ethnographic project of organizing the rule of ethnographic reproduction into a "picture of orality." ¹⁸ If the first wing of the triptych, Part One, depicts a topography of proximity and distance that is the effect and constitution of the witch, then the central panel of the triptych (part two of the treatise) layers the heterogeneous spaces through which the witch travels. Within this nomadic space, this "spatial polyglotism," ¹⁹ the Inquisitors try to construct a cartography of orality by interpolating into the text specific, located citations of Inquisitorial court testimony.

Let me show how this cartography gets mapped in the chapter on pacts. First the text draws a powerful frame around the space of witches. Witches are cannibals their practice of devouring their children sets them apart from humans, although there is a space for the wolf inside this strong frame ("sunt autem he que contra humane nature inclinati omnem immo omnium ferarum lupina tantummodo excepta proprie speciei infantes vorant et comedere solent" [f. 48v]).²⁰

Within this anthropophagic frame the Inquisitors proceed to list sixteen *maleficia* or harms rendered by witches. The list traverses spaces ranging from the interior of the womb, the infant's cradle, the local climatic region, the juridical space of arrest, court and torture, roadways and bridges, inter-regional travel, even the space of the future and the invisible. *Maleficia* could be worked through a diversity of senses the eye by a mere look, the voice by incantation, the hand by a touch. After citing a list of *maleficia*, the Inquisitors again attempt to frame and to contain these nomadic spaces by insisting on the carnality of the witches they copulate with devils ("hoc tamen est commune omnium spurcias carnales cum demonibus exercere" [f. 48v]). Once these non-contiguous spaces of interiority and exteriority, the domestic, the regional, and the inter-regional are layered within this double-frame of cannibalism and diabolic copulation, the Inquisitors then go on to authenticate this strange panel through nothing less than the body of an Inquisitor, the Inquisitor of Como. They tell the story of the Inquisitor of Como who, thirty years ago, had 41 witches burned in one year. Thus the body of the eighty-five year old Inquisitor (still going strong) superimposed over the bodies of 41 burnt witches somehow impacts the pact-making of the ethnos and further frames the double-frame of cannibalism and copulation with the devil drawn around the witches. It is as if, as the Inquisitors pile up more spaces semantically, they need more burnt bodies to offset these spaces. The stake at which witches were burned somehow makes a delirious vanishing point for these nomadic spaces.

The Inquisitors next take on the work in Part Two of describing the ritual of the pact. To do so they adapt and invert the figures and gestures of the profession of a novice into a nunnery to describe the pact-making. This ritual is described in the third person. In order to authenticate their description they then recollect yet again the collective bodies of the Inquisitor with "we Inquisitors" (" . . . hunc modum nos inquisitores experientia teste procepimus

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in oppido Brisiaco basiliensis diocesis plenam informationem capiendo ab una iuvenula maleficia sed conversa . . . " [f. 48v]). They attach their collective body to the deposition of a young witch whose story they report in the third person except for directly reported dialogue between an aunt and the young girl. The young girl thus speaks the words of the witch which the Inquisitors then repeat in the story. Shifting as it does from third person to direct reporting of

dialogue in the second person, the text articulates no first-person voice. The Inquisitorial translation of the trial testimony has "eaten" the first person and substituted its collective body and experience in that space. Ironically, the story that the girl tells displaces her actual making of the pact with the devil to a story of procuration and prostitution how her aunt, a witch, solicits for her by bringing her into a room filled with fifteen young men in green garments ("in vestimentis viridi coloris" [f. 49r]). The Inquisitors too displace the story of the pact by questioning this young woman about witchly transport over long distances, namely from Strasburg to Cologne. The displacement of the ritual workings of the pact in this anecdote to an inquisition of witch travel over long distances echoes a wider structural displacement in Part Two in which the concluding discussion of the pact turns into a speculation on the devil's capability to tell the future.

The control over space and time discernible in this one anecdote which interrupts Part Two with specifically located materials interpolated from Inquisitorial trial-proceedings repeats in seven other anecdotes interpolated into this chapter. What is the inquisitorial strategy, we can ask, for staging these Inquisitorial trial-transcriptions at certain spaces in the text? What is the purpose of this so-called Inquisitorial dialogue that interrupts impersonal third-person descriptions? It seems to me that the piling up of anecdotes throughout the second part of the treatise and not only in its second chapter functions as a kind of "collection" of oral testimony, a kind of Inquisitorial museum. This museum of testimony provides a counterspatial practice in the text. With the careful incantation in Part Two of inquisitorial anecdotes extracted from processes held in Berne (three times), Basel (three times), Strasburg (one time), Constance (one time), the Inquisitors can anchor the nomadic spaces of *maleficia* to a local cartography. The space of the Inquisitorial text, its grid of anecdotes, becomes a cartography through which the nomadic ethnos can be mapped. Thus the space of orality generated by this interpolation of "expert testimony" is an engendered space founded on the burnt bodies of female witches. It becomes an Inquisitorial cartography in which the Inquisitor himself eats the first-person of the located narrative in order to set himself in this place. An engendered cartography is thus cannibalized in order to produce the Inquisitor as the guarantee of a mapping exercise that defies meaning: "It is a Babel in which the maps accumulate and mix without dissolving. A spatial polyglotism."²¹

The Inquisitor cannibalizes the witch-cannibal and in so doing gnaws at the very frame that is somehow to contain the nomadic spaces over which *maleficia* wanders. Where does this cannibalism leave the sexuality of the Inquisitor, his

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relation to the frame that frames cannibalism, copulation with the devil? My way into this question picks a path through the dismemberment and detachments of the text, its repeated anxieties about wandering semen, disappeared penises, dismembered crucifixes, body parts pierced by magical archers, and cooked babies. Amidst this debris of corporeal substances, the Inquisitor represents his own judicial body as he stands before the witch in Part Three of the treatise, in the third wing of the triptych. We return to the body in the space of death already described at the opening of this section, the body of the Inquisitorial judge bounded in the Seven Last Words of Christ which rest against his naked skin. Against what does the Inquisitor so phobically protect his body? Does only his own cannibalism worry him, lest it be turned against himself does the erotic passion of devouring the devourer trouble him? Or is there something else again that troubles, some other body against which the Inquisitor must defend his body?

The devil, it seems to me, provides a way into thinking of the utter fear of the Inquisitor, his utter fear of the "utter confusion of the world," from which he must defend the world. Could this utter confusion of the world mark what Jonathan Goldberg has called a "sodometrical relation," a relation that does not yield the sodomite but delivers the relational structures "precariously available in prevailing discourse" for enabling and disabling the construction of sexual exteriorities which mark the abject and the unspeakable. How does the encounter of the judge with the witch both enable and disable the category of sodomy in the *Malleus*?²²

The Inquisitors in their construction of a counter-economy of diabolic reproduction came precariously close to imagining a sexual ethnography which could be categorized as sodomitical by conventional, scholastic prescription, which defined sodomy as the emission of semen in an inappropriate place.²³ Witches copulated not only with devils but with animals, such bestiality could put into question the category of appropriate places. Although the Inquisitors attached a sodometrical threat of alliance to witches, they also worked carefully, even phobically, to protect the devils from accusations of sodomy in their generation of the ethnos of witches. The devil's involvement in the counter-

economy of diabolical reproduction as detailed by the Inquisitors could appear suspect to a discerning scholastic eye. According to the rules of this economy an unwary human male serves as the donor of semen which the devil collects as a succubus (lying underneath). The devil then travels to a witch to inject ("infundere" [f. 13r]) the semen as an incubus (lying on top). The devil is thus responsible for a kind of "artificial insemination." The devil chooses a male donor for utilitarian purposes, namely the virility of his semen, not for his past or future involvement in witchcraft. Devils can also extend the chain of semen transfer in this reproductive economy. If a succubus with collected semen chooses for whatever reasons not to serve as an incubus to a witch, that devil can simply transfer the collected semen to another devil. Thus semen can thus travel through a chain of places on its way to the appropriate place known as the "vas debitum" (f. 14 v) the place that is owed. This semen chain, with its

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multiplication of places in transport, hints at some unrecognized spatial usury haunting this counter-economy. Scholastics regarded usury as the unnatural (sterile) multiplication of money in relation to time. The diabolic counter-economy of reproduction enabled the multiplication of spaces or containers in relation to semen.

The Inquisitors insist, however, that the male donor, and not the devil, is the father of the child (" . . . unde si queritur cuius filius sic natus existit. Patet quia non est filius demonis sed illius hominis cuius est semen acceptum . . ." [fol. 13r]). The laws of blood and kin are thus properly upheld even in this counter-reproductive economy. This insistence on maintaining the good order of lineage suggests that some other fluid did the work of marking the exteriority of Christendom, and that fluid was blood.²⁴

These rules of the counter-reproductive economy also construct for the male donor an unknowingness, a kind of secret vulnerability, which seems to proliferate in the treatise into anxious concerns over the power witches exercise against the God-ordained procreative economy, the economy of marital alliance.²⁵ Witches can disappear penises or render them dysfunctional thus introducing male sterility into sacramental marriage. It may seem too strong to say that the Inquisitors build in a kind of homophobic/homosocial self-ignorance into their rules for reproducing the ethnos, if it were not for their active denial of any sodomitical practices by the devil. They desire to find a sodomitical relation in witchcraft and to deny it at the same time. Writing of the sexual practices of the devil they foreclose the suspicion of sodomy as follows:

. . . and it must be carefully noted that, though the Scripture speaks of incubi and succubi lusting after women, yet nowhere do we read that incubi and succubi fell into vices against nature. We do not speak only of sodomy, but of any sin whereby the act is wrongfully performed outside the rightful receptacle.

. . . tamen nusquam legit in vitiis quibuscumque contra nature loquendo non solum de sodomitico sed etiam de quocumque alie peccato extra vas debitum prope agendo se incubus et succubus fecisse. (f. 14v)

The Inquisitors of the *Malleus*, consistent with their protection of the devil, are also careful to skirt discussion of the witches' sabbath (available to them discursively at the time they composed the treatise) with its tropes of sexual orgy, same-sex pleasures, and the ritual kiss offered by witches to the devil's anus. Why, beyond producing a purportedly coherent counter-economy of diabolical alliance capable of supplying the Inquisitors with the phantasmatic of a self-reproducing savage within to persecute, would the Inquisitors so protect the devil in their treatise? What purchase does the devil have on this text?

The devil, I argue, serves as a kind of optical device that makes the Inquisitor's counter-economy visible and therefore something that can be

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counted as evidence. The textual materialization of the devil which the *Malleus* sediments with such care enables the Inquisitor to gaze at and see, make legible, an invisible world of the ethnos he is conjuring. Through the optical prosthetic of the devil the Inquisitor can watch the couplings of incubi and succubi and have instantaneous knowledge at distance. Perhaps even more importantly, the devil offers a special kind of insight, what ethnographers today would call a "theoretical abstraction," which promises the ethnographer "to get to the heart" of a culture more rapidly than someone undertaking, for example, a thorough inventory of customs and beliefs.²⁶ What theoretical abstractions, such as Radcliffe-Brown's "social structure" did for ethnography in the 1920s, the devil as optical device trained on the

newly emergent ethnos of the witch did for Inquisitors of the later fifteenth century.

The Inquisitors of the *Malleus* give examples, such as the following anecdote which they recount from a Dominican house in Spires, of such optical insight. They tell this story in the first person, that is, in the voice of the confessor. Their use of the first person reminds the reader that when it comes to looking through the optical device of the devil, the eye of the Inquisitor gazes through one end of the apparatus:

"[O]ne day," he says, "while I was hearing confessions, a young man came to me and, in the course of his confession, woefully said that he had lost his member. Being astonished at this, and not being willing to give it easy credence, since in the opinion of the wise it is a mark of light-heartedness to believe too easily, I obtained proof of it when I saw nothing on the young man's removing his clothes and showing the place.

. . . quadam inquit die dum confessionum audientie instarem Iuvenis quidam accessit et inter verba confessionis membrum virile lamentabiliter se perdidisse asseruit. Ammirans ego pater et verbis suis facilliter credere nolens eo quo (***) levis corde qui facile credit a sapiente iudicatur. Experientia didici per visum nihil cernendo dum iuvenis locum vestes detegendo demonstrasset.(f. 58r)

The purchase of the Inquisitors, their mastery of the visual plenitude of an invisible world, came at a cost, since they had to manipulate the materialization of the devil to have this optical access. The intimacy of the inquisitorial gaze, as it focused through the devil's sensorium, threatened the good homosocial order that the Inquisitors worked so hard to maintain in their text. Looking forward to the ethnos of the witch engendered on female corporeality involved the Inquisitors in looking backward through the devil, a materialization that could make a certain optics matter as evidence. The Inquisitors thus caught themselves in a kind of optical unconscious of disavowal; yes, the counter-economy works through sodomitical relations that implicate the Inquisitor, but the counter-economy is "proper" because devils are strictly heterosexual.

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This optical unconscious returns both the Inquisitor and the historian once again to a question about ethnographic authority, to an interrogation of the eye that can produce integrated portraits, that can see an ethnos. The production of an ethnos always begs the question, "What has dropped out of sight."[27](#)

Who or what has dropped out of sight in the fifteenth century raises the question of medieval Jews from the Mediterranean to the North Sea. Medieval Jews were both dropping out of sight at a faster pace in fifteenth-century Christendom at the same time that they were becoming more visible as a group ordered under sumptuary law to mark themselves with signs such as yellow badges.[28](#) Expelled from England in 1290, from France in 1306, subject to the wearing of distinguishing signs in northern Italy in the 1430s (Padua, 1430; Perugia, 1432; Florence and Siena, 1439), expelled from several Imperial Rhineland towns in the 1420s and 1430s and finally expelled from Spain in 1492, Jews were subject to growing Inquisitorial and civic violence over the fifteenth century. Expulsion did not mean the end to anti-Semitism, as the discursive investment in the phantasmatic Jew of late medieval England literature and drama shows.[29](#) Nevertheless, expulsion and the persecution of Jews in blood-libel cases meant that the population grew less available as the corporeally materialized Other who guaranteed Christendom by marking its exteriority.[30](#) The synchronization of a growing manuscript tradition of witchcraft treatises from the late 1430s, which then proliferated in print culture in the 1470s, 1480s, and 1490s, needs to be viewed as a process in tension with the Christian destruction or "cannibalization" of the bodies that counted as its exteriority. Christians had to materialize a new corporeal ethnos to which the anti-Semitic tropes of the exterior, namely usury and its sterility, could be shifted and at the same time doubled by the engendering of witches as a corporeal exteriority. This occulted doubling of the Jew in the misogynistic production of the witch as an ethnos set in motion a counter-procreative economy in which semen functioned usuriously through chains of transfer and in which the sterility associated in the scholastic mind with usury became the corporeal obsession of Inquisitors and male laymen.

Tropes of anti-Semitism thus flickered in a kind of blindspot in the ethnographic space of witchcraft crafted by Inquisitorial discourse, in which space, as we have seen, witches served as the vanishing point. Within this strange space in between the blind spot and the vanishing point the Inquisitors materialized the devil as an optical device that magically tried to fill this tragic gap with a savage visual plenitude. The authority of the Inquisitor and the devil were

closely intertwined; therefore the devil must be both protected as an optical device at the same time that the devil must be kept out sight as a sign of what might lie beyond the invisible to which the devil gives access.

The inquisitorial engendering of an ethnos relied on an optics in a way that the pursuit of heretics, a more textually-based inquisitorial pursuit, did not. It is this conjuncture of the need to produce an ethnos as medieval Jews were decorporealized in Christendom which required the strategic optical interventions of the devil. Witches were about sight and space; heretics, a category of

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pursuit which the Inquisition did not abandon as it produced an ethnos within Europe, were about language writing, reading and interpretation. The tension between the heretic and the witch, the space of evidence and its text, would be reworked in the seventeenth century when the witness of mechanical devices could settle questions of evidence: "Endowed with their new semiotic powers, the latter (non-human, mechanical devices) contribute to a new form of text, the experimental science article, a hybrid between the age-old style of biblical exegesis which has previously been applied not only to the Scriptures and classical texts and the new instrument that produces new inscriptions."[31](#)

The *Malleus Maleficarum* significantly remapped the phantasmatic borders of Europe, where wild men, and monsters lurked, into its savage center, into the churches and town squares where Inquisitorial processes and persecutions occurred. The neighborhood thus became the monstrous edge of a *mappae mundi* and the town-square became a local theater of cruelty. In other words, I am claiming that we might find that the Inquisition produced "natural man" through "natural woman" in the fifteenth century and that production proved crucial to the New World ethnographic project.

Notes

1. I am thinking of the constitution of inquisitorial discourse as a broadly discursive practice (temporally and spatially) that renders certain objects visible and then regulates their materialization, their "incarnation," at the same time that such practices can regulate disincarnation, decorporealization. The technologies relied on to produce the visible and invisible, what counts for evidence, changed over time and may be located in tensions between the accusatory and the investigatory, confession and torture, the civil and the canonical. Inquisitorial texts travel across such varied genres as the interrogation manual, trial transcript, witness deposition, proclamation of public execution, witchcraft anthology, woodcut and engraving, and across oceans as well from Europe to the Americas. My work for this essay has its own discursive influences: Homi Bhabha, "How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern space, postcolonial times and the trials of cultural translation," *The Location of Culture* (New York, 1994), pp. 212-235; Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York, 1993); *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman (New York 1994); Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, England, 1993); Cherríe Moraga, *The Last Generation* (Boston, 1993); Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (New York, 1991); as well as a literature of ethnographic critique cited below in footnote 4.

2. My readings in microhistory for this essay have concentrated on the following books and articles: Carlo Ginzburg, "The Inquisitor as Anthropologist," *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, 1989), pp. 156-64 (on the dialogic nature of the archive see p. 159; on the archive as "Eldorado" see p. 157); Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, trans., Barbara Bray (New York, 1978),

Ruggiero, *Binding Passions: Tales of Magic, Marriage, and Power at the End of the Renaissance* (New York, 1993), p. 19; Georges Duby, "Affidavits and Confession," in Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, *A History of Women in the West. vol. 2: The Silence of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), p. 483. I have chosen these texts for close reading based on their strong methodological claims for the kind of "voice" that they can "hear" in the records. For a difference within "microhistory" of Inquisitorial archives see Mary O'Neil whose work shares similarities of interest with Ruggiero. O'Neil works from the ambiguity of magical operations for both the inquisitor and the love charmer and therefore distributes the problem of evidence and truth across discursive fields: Mary O'Neil, "Magical Healing, Love Magic and the Inquisition in late Sixteenth-century Modena," in *Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Stephen Haliczer (New York, 1987), pp. 88-114.

3. Ginzburg, "Inquisitor as Anthropologist," p. 157.

4. I am following Marilyn Strathern in eliding ethnography/anthropology to mark the elision between fieldworker and writer/author. See her *Partial Connections* (Savage MD, 1991), p. 123. My critique of ethnography is also inspired by the following texts: James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, England, 1988); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York, 1992); *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*, ed. Roger Sanjek (Ithaca, 1990); Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago, 1992); Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago, 1987); Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York, 1988) and his *Mystic Fable* (New York, 1992). For specific critiques of Ladurie's *Montaillou* see James Clifford, "Naming Names," *Canto* 3 (1979), 142-53; Renato Rosaldo, "From the Door of His Tent: The Fieldworker and the Inquisitor," in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, eds., James Clifford and George F. Marcus (Berkeley 1986), pp. 77-97; Claire Sponsler, "Medieval Ethnography: Fieldwork and the European Past," *Assays* 7 (1992), 1-30.

5. I am indebted to Sara Suleri and Michael Taussig for their discussions of colonial terror Suleri eloquently notes that "to tell the history of another is to be pressed against the limit's of one's own thus culture learns that terror has a local habitation and a name" (p. 2).

6. Ginzburg, "Inquisitor as Anthropologist," p. 158.

7. Rosaldo, 93.

8. As an introduction to bibliography on the late medieval institutional history of the Inquisition and its archives I have found the following texts useful: *The Inquisition in Early Modern Europe: Studies on Sources and Methods*, eds., Gustav Henningsen and John Tedeschi with Charles Amiel (Dekalb, IL, 1986); *Cultural Encounters: The Impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World*, eds., May Elizabeth Perry and Anne J. Cruz (Berkeley, 1991). In my concentration on an Inquisitorial manual on witchcraft, I do not mean to

imply that the prosecution of heretics and "crypto-Jews" is not critical to fifteenth-century Inquisitorial activity. I want to make the point that the witchcraft project of the Inquisition has specific ethnographic effects. The literature on witchcraft is vast. Works consulted are listed partially in footnote 11. See also Marianne Hester who provides a succinct overview of English historiography of witchcraft in *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches: A Study of the Dynamics of Male Domination* (New York, 1992). Her work can be complemented by the comparative essays in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, eds., Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (New York 1990). Also relevant to the intersection of Inquisitorial practice and witchcraft see: Edward Peters, *Torture* (New York, 1985); Sabine MacCormack, "Demons, Imagination, and the Incas," *Representations* 33 (Winter, 1991), 121-46.

9. For instance, Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797* (New York, 1986) where the Hulme traces a tension between discourse of Oriental civilization traceable to Marco Polo and a discourse of savagery traceable to Herodotus in Columbus' journal. I am trying to map yet another engendered, sexualized discourse, a "European" ethnographic discourse of the Inquisition, a discourse of the cannibal within to complicate this. For an interesting use of Hulme and a complication of cannibalism, which joins to the work in this essay on cannibalism, see Carla Freccero, "Cannibalism, Homophobia, Women: Montaigne's "Des cannibales" and "De L'amiti," in *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, eds., Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (New York, 1994), pp. 73-82.

10. For an important essay that analyzes the stakes and inter-textuality of nineteenth century histories of the Inquisition and the fascination with the Inquisition in British historical novels, see Michael Ragussis, "The Birth of a Nation in Victorian Culture: The Spanish Inquisition, the Converted Daughter, and the Secret Race," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1994), 477-508. The following essay has influenced my methodological efforts to reframe the problem of demonization-recuperation by posing a different set of discursive questions: Susan Harding, "Representing Fundamentalism: The Problem of the Repugnant Other," *Social Research* 58 (1991), 373-93.

11. Homi K. Bhabha, "Freedom's Basis in the Indeterminate," *October* 61 (1992), 46; see also Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, 1993), p.

12. A citation that reoccurs in Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990) and is taken from Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minneapolis, 1988), p. 13.

13. I have worked with the following facsimile edited by Gnter Jerouschek: *Malleus Maleficarum 1487 von Heinrich Kramer* (Institoris) (New York, 1992); and also with the following English translation by Montague Summers: *The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger* (first translated 1928, reprinted 1948) (New York, 1971); *Der Hexenhammer: Entstehung und Umfeld des Malleus maleficarum*

von 1487, ed. Peter Segl (K"ln, 1988); and various works by Joseph Hansen including his "Der Malleus maleficarum, seine Druckausgaben und die gef.,lschte K"lner Approbation vom J. 1487," *Westdeutsche Zeitschrift fr Geschichte und Kunst* 17 (1898), 119-68 and his *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hexenwahns und der Hexenverfolgung im Mittelalter* (Hildesheim, rpt. 1963).

14. Michael Taussig, *Shamanism*, p. 448.

15. Here is a brief selection of comments, largely contradictory, on the importance of the *Malleus Maleficarum* culled from a selection of major histories of European witchcraft. Much work remains to be done on the publication and translation histories of this text: Sydney Anglo, "Evident

authority and authoritative evidence: The *Malleus Maleficarum*," in *The Damned Art*, ed. Sydney Anglo (London, 1977), pp. 1-31: "It now seems to be becoming fashionable to suggest that the *Malleus* has been accorded an exaggerated importance. This may well be true, for the influence of most books tends to be exaggerated by historians. On the other hand, it was reissued more frequently than any other major witch-hunting manual; it was long the most commonly cited; and it remained one of the works which the opponents of persecution sought especially to refute. But perhaps none of this matters" (p. 31); Julio Caro Baroja, *The World of Witches*, trans., O.N.V. Glendinning (Chicago, 1964): "The views it advanced spread rapidly through Italy, Spain, France and countries in the north of Europe. Both Catholics and Protestants were influenced by it. And the more learned was the judge in charge of the trial, the more notice he took of it" (p. 250); *Witchcraft in Europe 100-1700: A Documentary History*, eds., Alan C. Kors and Edward Peters (Philadelphia, 1972): "first 'encyclopedia' of witchcraft beliefs, exhaustively analyzed the entire problem of witch beliefs and set out meticulously the ways by which witches could be found, convicted and executed" (p. 113); Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (London, 1975): "the importance of the most famous of the witch hunters' manuals, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, published in 1486, has been exaggerated" (p. 225); Stephen Greenblatt, "Shakespeare Bewitched," in *New Historical Literary Study* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 108-35: "Faced with the necessity of producing the effect of the real of the materials of fantasy, the inquisitors turned to narrative. The *Malleus Maleficarum* rehearses dozens of tales crafted to redraw the boundary between the imaginary and the real, or rather to siphon off the darkest contents of the imagination and pour them, like a poison into the ear of the world" (p. 110); Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials: Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500* (Berkeley, 1976): "made available a fully developed manual for witch hunters" (p. 23); Ruth Martin, *Witchcraft and the Inquisition in Venice 1550-1650* (New York, 1989): "there is no evidence that in their dealings with witchcraft Venetian Inquisitors made any use of the book. There was no demand for its reprinting and circulation amongst Inquisition tribunals within Italy and no mention or reflection of the Venetian witchcraft

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investigations during the period up to 1650" (p. 58); H.C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany 1562-1684* (Stanford, 1972): "the *Malleus Maleficarum* failed to become generally accepted doctrine, and its influence and authority have been vastly exaggerated by most scholars" (p. 22); Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1972): "immediately achieved broad popularity among Inquisitors and throughout the church . . . It contributed little original to the witch phenomenon, but its careful organization and argumentation, combined with the papal approval that accompanied it, fixed the whole system of witch beliefs firmly in the mind of Inquisition and society in general" (p. 230-31); William Monter, *Frontiers of Heresy: The Spanish Inquisition from the Basque Lands to Sicily* (New York, 1990): "One tantalizing clue only deepens the mystery of the Suprema's encouragement of the Navarrese witch-hunters in 1609-10. A brief letter in February 1608 ordered an overzealous comisario in Bilbao to release seventy-six copies of the newly-reprinted *Malleus Maleficarum*, the most famous handbook of witchhunting, which he had confiscated; they belonged to a Madrid bookseller named Francisco de Robles, who may well have sold a few copies to inquisitorial policy-makers that year. The Suprema had warned the Navarre Inquisitors about the *Malleus Maleficarum* seventy years previously: "'Do not believe everything in it,' they had said, even if he [the authors] writes about it as something he himself has seen and investigated, for the cases are of such a nature that he may have been mistaken, as others have been," (p. 270-71). The German translation of the *Malleus Maleficarum* may be found catalogued in Freud's London Library. For the catalog see Roger Dennis Simmons, "The Freud Library," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 21 (1973), 646-87.

16. The following essay offers a way of thinking about reproduction as a historical problem in cultural studies: Sarah Franklin, "Postmodern Procreation: A Cultural Account of Assisted Reproduction," *Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research-International Symposium on "The Politics of Reproduction,"* November 1-9, 1991; rpt. in *Procreation Stories*, special issue of *Science and Culture* 17 (3, 1993), 522-61.

17. The work of Jonathan Goldberg on the utter confusion of sodomy as a category and his exploration of "some of the terrains of confusion in the Renaissance" (p. 18) has informed my use of sodomy in this essay and my own exploration of the Inquisitorial fear of "the utter confusion of the world": Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford 1992).

18. Michel de Certeau's chapter on Ethno-graphy in his *The Writing of History* has guided my work here. The notion of the "picture of orality" comes from p. 209.

19. De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, p. 66.

20. For discussion of the engendering and racializing the space of cannibalism in late medieval/early modern Christendom, see Kathleen Biddick, "Gen-

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ders, Bodies, Borders" Technologies of the Visible," *Speculum* 68 (1993), rpt. in *Studying Medieval Women*, ed. Nancy Partner (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), pp. 87-116; Carla Freccero, "Cannibalism, Homophobia, Women."

21. De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, p. 66.

22. Goldberg, *Sodometries*, especially p. 20

23. See Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science and Culture* (New York, 1993); Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1988); John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago, 1980); *The Pursuit of Sodomy: Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe*, eds., Kert Gerard and Gert Helima (New York, 1989).

24. For the over-determination of blood as a border fluid see Biddick, "Gender, Bodies, Borders." For interesting reflections on blood and symbolic relationships: Juliet Du Boulay, "The Blood: Symbolic Relationships between Descent, Marriage, Incest Prohibitions and Spiritual Kinship in Greece," *Man* 19 (1984), 533-56; Françoise Hritter-Aug., "Some Ancient Theories Concerning Their Genesis and Relationship," in *Fragments for a History of the Body*, vol. 3 (New York, 1989), pp. 159-75. Work resulting from a conference entitled "What Blood Got to Do With It?: Kinship Reconsidered" organized by Sarah Franklin and held at the University of California at Santa Cruz (April 1994) will help to retheorize representations of kinship through the "blood tie."

25. An essay by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick helps us to understand the strategy of ignorance in the counter-economy imagined by the Inquisitors:

"Privilege of Unknowing," *Genders* 1 (1988), 102-24.

26. Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, p. 31

27. Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, p. 40

28. Dian Owen Hughes, "Distinguishing Signs: Ear-rings, Jews and Franciscan Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance City," *Past and Present* 112 (August 1986), 3-59.

29. Louise O. Fradenburg, "Criticism, Anti-Semitism, and the Prioress's Tale," *Exemplaria* 1 (1989), 69-115.

30. I make these arguments in more detail in my essay, "Genders, Bodies, Borders." The Inquisitorial anxiety regarding Crypto-Jews needs to be read along the complicated fault-lines of ethnographic co-construction. For work on the Inquisition and Jews see *Cultural Encounters and essays in Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Spain*, ed. Haliczer, especially Stephen Haliczer, "The First Holocaust: The Inquisition and the