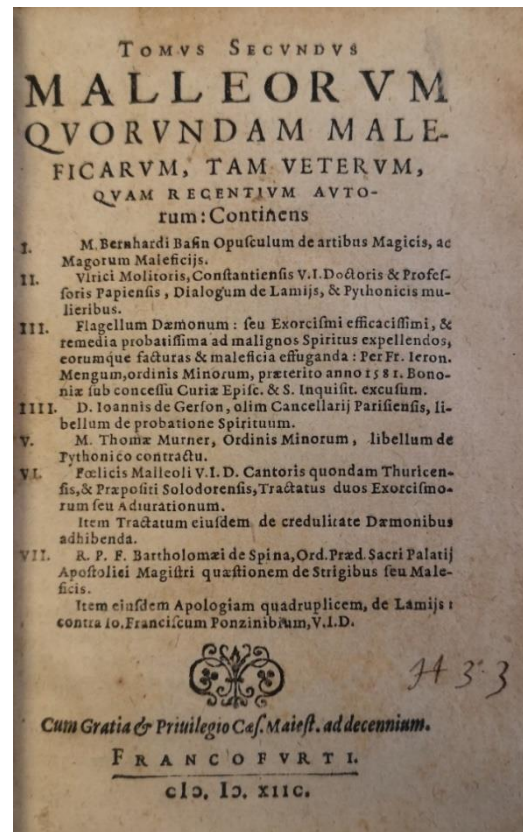


Fear Sells: Addenda to the 1588 *Malleus Maleficarum*



Our 1588 printing of the *Malleus Maleficarum* in two tomes, New College Library, Oxford, BT3.259.6 and BT3.259.7
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New College Library houses an impressive collection of witchcraft and demonological treatises, offering scholars and researchers a compendious resource for exploring the multifaceted dimensions of early modern witchcraft and demonology. The collection holds texts by prominent theologians, philosophers, and occultists, revealing diverse perspectives and theories on the nature of witchcraft, the practices associated with it, and the belief systems underpinning demonology. These treatises elucidate the evolution of cultural, religious, and societal attitudes towards witchcraft, from early superstitions to the infamous witch trials of the early modern period. Though the scale and processes of the witch trials varied geographically and chronologically, the most severe prosecutions took place between 1560 and 1630. It is estimated that in these years, approximately 40,000 to 50,000 individuals were executed for witchcraft in Europe. Many confessions were obtained through coercion, false promises, or torture. Scholars have attributed these witch trials to various factors, including socio-political turmoil, religious upheaval post-Reformation, misogyny, scapegoating marginalized groups, and neighbourhood conflicts. Witchcraft, perceived as the practice of harmful magic, selling one's soul to the Devil, participating in Sabbaths, and colluding with demons to undermine Christendom, evoked considerable anxiety among theologians and intellectuals. This apprehension prompted the publication of numerous witchcraft treatises.

Our first exhibition to display these treatises, *Maleficia: Magic, Witchcraft, & Astrology at New College Library* in May 2023, featured many books printed during this intense period. The foundation of this exhibition stemmed from the unearthing of our 1588 edition of the renowned treatise on witchcraft, the *Malleus Maleficarum* or 'Hammer of Witches,' the archetypal misogynistic text which advocated the persecution and torture of witches as heretics in secular courts. This influential book contributed to the widespread belief in early modern Europe that women were

more predisposed to witchcraft than men. Notably, the title employs the feminine ending ‘maleficarum’ for witches rather than the masculine or neutral form ‘maleficorum’. Subsequent writers on witchcraft adopted this gendered notion, attributing female involvement in witchery to women’s perceived mental and physical weaknesses. Written by inquisitor Heinrich Kramer (c. 1430–1505), the *Malleus* posits that each act of harmful magic, known as *maleficium*, results from three components: an evil spirit (*daemon*), a witch (*maleficus*), and the permission of God. Kramer explores alleged instances of pacts with the Devil, characterizing witchcraft as a renunciation of the Catholic faith and complete submission to the Devil, involving the offering of babies and engaging in carnal acts with him. Although initially published in 1487, the text did not immediately gain popularity but witnessed widespread reprinting in the late sixteenth century, as evidenced by our copy. Despite theological condemnation by the Faculty of Cologne for its unethical nature and inconsistency with Catholic doctrine, the *Malleus* found favour among educated laypeople. The provenance of our 1588 edition of the *Malleus*, along with most of the witchcraft-related books in our collection, remains unknown. Our records merely provide a list of previous shelfmarks, offering little insight into the identities of those who may have owned and, perhaps more ominously, consulted these texts. During the 16th and 17th centuries, women were perceived as particularly vulnerable to the seductive influence of the Devil due to their perceived sexual weakness. Prior to this period, occult sciences had predominantly been the domain of male clerics, resulting in less severe prosecutions. Consequently, while men continued to be accused of witchcraft, approximately three-quarters of the total executions were women.

As New College, and indeed the University of Oxford as a whole, was very much a theological school in the 16th and 17th centuries, these demonological tracts would have been of great interest to scholars at the time. Many of our theological anti-witchcraft treatise may have come into the library as an exercise in ‘Keeping Up With the Clerics’, so to speak. While most of these witchcraft treatises are decidedly unempathetic and in many cases outright bloodthirsty, a number of addenda printed with our 1588 copy of the *Malleus Maleficarum* attracted my attention, offering potentially more nuanced perspectives on the witchcraft debate. Printers, keen to exploit the increased interest in witchcraft in the 16th century, would often print various texts on witches and demons together. What we find therefore, appended to the end of our *Malleus*, is a collection of 15th and 16th century texts both for and against clemency for alleged witches, handy for any 16th century scholar keen to get an overview of the field of demonology. From 1580, many such *Mallei* were printed as multi-volume collections of sources from before and after the original publication of the *Malleus*. Readers could conveniently access a wide array of knowledge concerning witchcraft, magic, *maleficia*, and related matters within two volumes. In our edition, the *Malleus Maleficarum* stands as the seminal work, followed by treatises authored by Bernardo Basín, Ulrich Molitor, Girolamo Menghi, Jean Gerson, Thomas Murner, Felix Hemmerlin, and Bartolomeo Spina. These seven texts attained prominence within late sixteenth and seventeenth century witchcraft anthologies, likely due to their contentious viewpoints. As a result, their inclusion in a collection of treatises proved to be a strategic move, piquing reader interest and increasing sales. Our 1588 edition was prepared by the printer Nicolas Bassée (d. 1601) with the publisher Lazarus Zetzner (1551–1616). In the foreword to our copy, Zetzner explains the purpose of his compilations as follows:

Some of these treatises, both by ancient and recent authors, who wrote about the evils of the Sagas, and the prestige of Demons, in Italy and Germany, have been several times before, but very wrongly expounded . . . and finally, by the work and faith of IOANNIS FISCHARD, the jurist, they were again reviewed, and in some places punished, and distributed into two parts, in the cause of the public good, which should be the most important purpose for us all . . . now again it has seemed to us to bring to light the subjects of the press: that our work on the matter, not only literary, but also judiciary, indeed, we hope will be acceptable and accepted by all good men and lovers of the

Republic: who easily understand how much the Republic prohibits such dissertations, to which such great controversies, and which are in common view, are properly discussed, correctly defined, and explained.¹

Bassée in his preface offers a further defence of the reprinting of the *Malleus*:

Of course you will hear them pronounce, with the great frown of legislators, that the tractates of the *Malleus Maleficarum* are worthless, because it teaches a few things which rest on no sufficiently secure and stable foundation, and therefore should be shaken out of the hands of the students . . . I rather agree with Pliny the Younger, that there is no book so bad that it cannot be useful in some part.²

As much work has been done on the text of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, including in its 1588 Frankfurt edition, I will omit any detailed discussion of this and instead give an overview of the texts that accompanied it through various reprintings for almost a century.

The first tractate appended to our *Malleus Maleficarum*, and included at the end of the first tome, is an earlier work by Johannes Nider (c. 1380–1438) titled *Formicarum de Maleficis* (Of the Ant Colony of the Witches), constituting the fifth part of the second-ever printed book on witchcraft, *Formicarius*. Composed as a dialogue between a theologian and a sceptic, the book delves into the challenges confronted by the Church Council at Basel, with a particular focus on witchcraft. Nider, a member of the theological faculty at the University of Vienna from approximately 1380 to 1438, penned this text between 1436 and 1438. First published in 1475, Nider's work, like the *Malleus Maleficarum*, played a significant role in the paradigm shift from perceiving magic as an art practiced by educated clerics to its association with uneducated women. Nider's theological argument positing women's heightened vulnerability to demonic attacks served as a pivotal source for Heinrich Kramer's influential *Malleus*. However, unlike subsequent writers, Nider maintained that witches could achieve nothing by their own power, 'but they are said to injure through words, rites, or deeds as if through pacts made with demons'.³ While the *Formicarius* was fully reprinted a mere six times, its witchcraft section frequently circulated as a supplement to the *Malleus*. Within the *Formicarius*, Nider recounts tales heard from a Dominican inquisitor and the secular judge Peter of Bern. One of these tales concerns a sect of witches that killed and cannibalised 13 babies in Bern, as Nider records one of the witch's confessions in graphic detail:

This is the manner in which we slaughter unbaptised infants, or even baptised ones, especially if they are not protected by the sign of the cross and prayers: we kill them in their cradles or lying at the sides of their parents in our ceremonies—that after they are

¹ 'Quorum aliquot tractatus, tam veterum, quàm recentium auctorum, qui de maleficijs Sagarum, & præstigijs Dæmonum scripserunt, in Italia Germaniâque, antehac aliquoties, sed perperam admodum excusos . ac demum operâ & fide IOANNIS FISCHARDI Iureconsulti, iterum recognitos, & alicubi castigatos, & in duas partes, distributos, publici commodi causâ, quod meritò nobis omnibus propositum maximè esse debet. nunc denuò prælo subiectos in lucem emittere nobis visum est : quam operam nostram rei non modò literariæ, sed etiam iudiciariæ nauatam, equidem speramus fore gratam & acceptam omnibus viris bonis, & Reipub amantibus: qui facillè intelligunt, quanti interdit Reipublicæ istiusmodi dissertaciones, quibus tam graues controuersia, & quæ in vsu communi sunt, probè discutiuntur, rectè definiri, atque explicari', Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (Frankfurt, 1588), I, 5, New College Library, Oxford, BT3.259.6.

² 'Eos sanè magno cum supercilio legislatorum more, pronu[n]tiare audias, Mallei Maleficarum tractatus nihili faciendos, quòd pauca quædam, quæ nullo satis tuto ac stabili fundamento nitantur, doceat, & propterea studiosorum manibus excutiendos . . . Imò potius cum Plinio Iuniorè, nullum librum esse tam malu[m], quin aliqua ex parte prodesse possit', Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (Frankfurt, 1588), II, 3, New College Library, Oxford, BT3.259.7.

³ ' . . . sed per verba ritus, vel facta quasi per pacta innita cum Dæmonibus lædere dicuntur', Johannes Nider, *Formicarius de Maleficis*, in Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (Frankfurt, 1588), I, 71, New College Library, Oxford, BT3.259.6.

supposed to have been crushed, or to have died from some other cause—we steal them secretly from their graves, and boil them in a cauldron, until, after the bones have been pulled out, almost the whole flesh is made into a drinkable liquid. Of the solid material we make an ointment suitable to our wills and arts and transformations. We fill a flask or bottle with a more liquid fluid, of which he who has drunk, after a few additional ceremonies, is immediately made a member and a master of our sect.⁴

Nider's stories did not feature a diabolic flight by night, but they did demonstrate the emerging early modern stereotype of the witch—infanticide, cannibalism, calling down storms, causing impotence in men, predicting the future, and other heretical practices. As historian Lyndal Roper as pointed out, many of the stories in witchcraft treatises were not just warnings but also a form of entertainment.⁵ The bizarre and often erotic tales of witches and demons captured the imagination of their early modern readers, and indeed of readers today, persisting in a literary genre of witchcraft and magic.

The second tome of the *Malleus* also contains an additional text of significant interest, Bernardo Basín's *Opusculum de artibus magicis ac magorum maleficiis* (Treatise on the Magic Arts and Witchcraft of Magicians). Similarly to Nider, Basín (1445–c. 1510) recounts stories of infanticide and metamorphoses, alluding to classical tales of magic, including Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the *Bucolics* of Virgil. Basín, a clergyman hailing from Zaragoza, authored this treatise in Paris as a response to an academic adversary who advocated that the study of magical arts could aid the salvation of the faithful. However, Basín vehemently disagreed with this notion and advocated for the outright rejection and abstention from the study of magical arts, even for purposes of condemnation. Though he did not deny the existence of magic, Basín argues that 'the artifices which magicians use for benevolence, hatred, revenge, or the knowledge of secrets, or any other effects of the magical art, have no power in them from heaven or elsewhere', being concerned more so with the heresy of devil-worship than the realities of a witch's power.⁶ He does, however, share the belief of Heinrich Kramer and Johannes Nider that women are more inclined toward witchcraft than men. His reasoning, borrowed from the *Formicarius*, is threefold. Firstly, he writes that women are more inclined toward faith ('credendum'), including belief in the Devil and his machinations. Secondly, due to their flexible constitution, women are more inclined to receive visions and are thus easily influenced by spirits. And lastly, he writes that women have slippery tongues ('linguam lubricam') and could scarcely conceal the evil things they had learned from their companions and, since they were weak of mind, sought revenge through *maleficia*.⁷ As a result:

Some women, obeying Satan, seduced by the illusions of the Devil, believe and confess that they ride during the hours of the night with the divine goddess of the pagans with

⁴ 'Modus iste est. Nam infantibus nondum baptisatis insidiamur, vel etiam baptisatis, præsertim si signo crucis no[n] muniuntur, & orationibus hos in cunabulis, vel ad latera iacentes parentum, caeremonijs nostris occidimus, quos postquam puta[n]tur oppreßi esse, vel aliunde mortui de tumulis clam furto recipimus, in caldari decoquimus, quousque euulsis oßibus tota penè caro efficiatur sorbilis & potabilis. De solidori huius materia vnguentum facimus nostris voluntatibus & artibus ac transmutationibus accomodatum: de liquidori verò humore flascam aut vtrem replemus, de quo is qui potatus fuerit, additis paucis cerimonijs, statim conscius efficitur et magister nostræ sectæ', *ibid.*, I, 717.

⁵ Lyndal Roper, 'Witchcraft and the Western Imagination', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 16 (2006), 117–41.

⁶ 'Artificialia, quibus Magi vtuntur ad benevolentia[m] odium vindictam, seu secretorum notitiam, aut alios quoscunq[ue] Ieffectus artis Magicæ', Bernardo Basín, *Opusculum de artibus magicis ac magorum maleficiis*, in Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (Frankfurt, 1588), II, 6, New College Library, Oxford, BT3.259.7.

⁷ 'Sed unde est, quòd fœminæ in maiori multitudine reperiuntur superstitiosæ et maleficæ, quàm viri? Respondeo, quòd triplici ratione. Primò, quia pronæ sunt ad credendum. Fidem autem malam Dæmon principaliter quærit . . . Secondò, quia à natura (propter fluxibilitatem complexionis) facilius sunt impreßionis ad reuelationes capiendas per impreßionem separatorum spirituum . . . Tertiò, quia linguam lubricam habent, & ea quæ mala arte sciunt, comparibus fœminis vix cælare possunt, séque occultè cùm vires non habeant, per maleficia vindicare quærent', *ibid.*, II, 19.

a great multitude of women, and do other nefarious things, for example, take babies from the side of their husbands, roast them and eat them, enter houses through chimneys or windows, and disturb the inhabitants in various ways, all of these things happen only in their imaginations.⁸

Basín's treatise garnered considerable attention, initially published in Paris in 1483. It achieved immediate success and experienced several reprints in prominent cities until the late 17th century.

Basín's condemnation of magic is followed by a printing of Ulrich Molitor's *Dialogum de lamiis, & pythonicis mulieribus* (On Witches and Female Soothsayers), a significant treatise that stands in opposition to Heinrich Kramer's witch-phobic endeavours. Molitor's work was initially published in 1489, three years after the first edition of Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum*, and both books experienced frequent reprints throughout the 1490s. Molitor (c. 1442–c. 1507) likely had first-hand experience with the inquisitions led by Heinrich Kramer in the diocese of Brixen and the diocese of Constance. Presented in the form of a dialogue with Sigismund, the Archduke of Austria, serving as a wise arbitrator while Molitor takes on the role of a sceptic, challenging the witch-phobic views presented by Conrad Schatz, presumably representing Kramer. Molitor's stance aligns with traditional Catholic law, the Canon *Episcopi*, which considered witchcraft as mere illusion. Drawing upon biblical passages, writings of Church Fathers, and poetic works, Molitor underscores the deceptive abilities of the Devil. He contends that 'the Devil can neither by himself, nor by the ministry of men, disturb the elements or injure men and animals or render men impotent, except by secret of God, never by [His] unjust judgement, in punishments for our sins'.⁹ Molitor vehemently refutes the notion of witches possessing harmful capabilities and deems them to be demonic illusions. He argues that only with God's permission can they cause harm, suggesting that supposed witchly nocturnal travels and gatherings are mere impressions instilled by the Devil while these women are either asleep or under the influence of a vigorous imagination.¹⁰ Sigismund rejects confessions extracted through torture as evidence within the following dialogue:

Conrad. Among Philosophers it is a common proverb that the opinion everyone shares should not be abandoned completely. And it is common opinion that witches themselves make thunder and hail and cause great damage to crops and people. From the confession made by each of them under torture it has been discovered that they have done such things and betrayed [to us] the manner in which they do them.

Sigismund. Yet I do not believe mere rumour. For the common people easily follow what has been said, and I will not be satisfied with a confession of torture, as with the fear of torture a person is sometimes induced to confess that which is not in the nature of things.¹¹

⁸ ' . . . Vnde quædam mulierculæ inseruientes Sathanæ, Dæmonum illusionibus seductæ, credunt se, & profitentur nocturnis horis cum Divina paganorum Dea in magna mulierum multitudine equitare, & alia nefanda agere, puta paruulos à latere maritum accipere, assare, & comedere, domos per carminos seu per fenestras intrare, et habitantes varijs modis inquietare: Quæ omnia & consimilia aliquando solùm phantatice accidunt eis', *ibid.*, II, 17.

⁹ ' . . . quòd Diabolus neq[ue] per se, neq[ue] ministerio hominum potest elementis, hominibusq[ue] & animalibus nocere : vel homines ad generandu[m] impotentes reddere : nisi quando occulto Dei, sed nunquam iniusto iudicio vel ob pœnam delictorum nostrorum . . .', Ulrich Molitor, *De Pythonicis mulieribus*, in Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (Frankfurt, 1588), II, 87, New College Library, Oxford, BT3.259.7.

¹⁰ ' . . . quòd huius modi malæ mulieres per multa miliarium spacia in noctis silentio non proficiscunter : nec mutuò taliter proficiscendo conueniunt. Sed duntaxat ipsis somniantibus, vel imaginatione forti, vt præmissum est, labora[n]tibus, per repræsentationem specierum similitudinariam à Diabolo eis impressarum . . .', *ibid.*, II, 88.

¹¹ 'Conrad. Apud Philosophum tritum est sermon prouerbium, vt fama quam omnes famant non omnino perdat. Fama autem communis est, quòd ipsæ strigæ tonitrua & grandines fecerint, magna[ue] damna segetibus & hominibus intulerint. Ex confesione quoq[ue] earum in tortura facta, se talia fecisse, & modum faciendi tradidisse compertum est. / Sig. At ego nudæ famæ non intendo. Facile enim dictum sequitur vulgus, nec confesione torturali satiabor, cùm metu tormentorum quis inducitur quandoq[ue] ad confitendum id quod in rerum natura no[n] est', *ibid.*, II, 37.

He also counters the notion of procreation between witches and the Devil, stating that ‘except Christ, there never has been a man born of a spirit and a woman’, though he does admit intercourse can occur. Molitor’s work presents an alternative perspective on witchcraft, standing in contrast to the prevailing witch-phobic narratives promoted by Kramer. Having personally experienced an inquisition led by Kramer in Innsbruck in 1485, Sigismund may have played a pivotal role in halting it, thereby preventing the execution of seven accused women. Nevertheless, according to Molitor those who believed themselves to be sorcerer must be tried as apostates and executed: ‘such criminals and women who have apostatized from the most generous God and dedicated themselves to the Devil must be put to death: as it is said in the many cases about sorcerers and astrologers’.¹²

After Menghi’s treatise is printed Girolamo Menghi’s *Flagellum daemonum* (The Demons’ Scourge), an exorcist’s manual originally published in 1577. Born in Viadana and later joining the Franciscan order at the age of 20, Menghi (1529–1609) was one of the foremost exorcists of early modern Italy. Menghi’s expertise in this domain is well-documented, having authored many books on demons and exorcism, of which his *Flagellum Daemonum* was particularly successful. Detailed instructions are provided on how to prepare the priest and afflicted individual for exorcism, as well as guidance on how the priest should use specific gestures and paraphernalia. For instance, Menghi’s treatise frequently advocates the use of holy water to wash the possessed, a practice believed to expel the demon from every part of the afflicted person’s body. The burning of various herbs or minerals also recommended to aid in driving out the Devil, while the manual provides specific rites of blessing for this purpose. Menghi details the appropriate manner of addressing the demon during the exorcism as follows:

Listen unclean spirit of the Devil, I admonish you, and I exorcise you, and I command you tempter, vain, senseless, false, heretical, empty, hostile, drunken, whispering, foolish, thrown from the grace of God and of Christ. By him I exorcise you, who came down to earth for our sake, and who was named by an Angel, and incarnated by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and grew in age and wisdom, in the twelfth year he came to the temple, and sitting among the Doctors, he questioned them wisely. I appeal to you † by him who was baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan, and was tempted by the Devil, sold, and betrayed by his disciple Judas, captured, deceived, scourged, flogged, made to drink vinegar, bound, and crowned with thorns, stripped of his clothes, upon whose clothing they cast lots. I conjure you † by him who was crucified, died, and was buried, and on the third day rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of God the Father, from thence he will come to judge the living and the dead, and the world by fire, that you may go forth at once, and flee from this vessel, by the image of God, and offend neither me, nor bystanders, and without doing any injury to him. I exorcise you by him, whom Gabriel the Angel announced would come in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary, and, in the womb of Elizabeth, John greeted him, and by him I conjure you to tell me about any matter I ask you, and tell me the truth, what is your master’s name, and what is your name, and if you are in this body or outside, or if you are alone, either a legion or several legions are with you.¹³

¹² ‘. . . tales sceleratæ & mulieres, quæ à Deo largiſſimo apſtatarunt, & Diabolo ſeſe dedicarunt, morte plecti debent : prout dicitur i[n] multi[s] c[asis] de Maleficis & Mathematicis’, *ibid.*, II, 89.

¹³ ‘Avdi immunde ſpiritus Diabole, admoneo te, & Exorcizo † te, atque tibi præcipio tentator, vane, inſentate, false, hæretice, vacue, inimice, ebriose, ſuſurro, inſipiens, deiecte de gratia Dei, & Christi. Per ipſim te Exorcizo, qui propter nos in vacuum deſcendit, & qui ab Angelo fuit nominatus, & à Spiritu ſancto incarnatus, ex Virgine Maria natus, & crevit ætate, & ſapientia, in duodecimo anno venit in templum, & ſedens in medio Doctorum, ſapienter interrogabat illos. Adiuro te † per illum, qui à Ioanne Baptiſta in Iordano flumine baptizatus fuit, & à Diabolo tentatus, venundatus, & traditus à diſcipulo ſuo Iuda, captus, illuſus, flagellatus, tibatus felle, potatus aceto, vinctus, & ſpinis coronatus, veſtibus expoliatus, ſuper cuius veſtes ſortem miſerunt. Coniuro te † per illum, qui crucifixus, mortuus, & ſepultus fuit, & tertia die reſurrexit à mortuis, aſcendit in cœlum, ſedet ad dexteram Dei Patris, inde venturus eſt iudicare vivos,

Forcing the demon to name itself was one of the most important aspects of the ritual, as control over the demon and the subsequent cure of the demoniac is achieved by naming the source of possession, much as a doctor cannot treat his patient until a disease is identified. Menghi goes on to explain what the signs of demonic possession are, and which persons are the most vulnerable to this possession. He expands on this in his later 1576 treatise *Fustis Daemonum* (The Demons' Bludgeon), explaining that women and girls afflicted with a 'lightness of the brain' are more easily possessed than men as demons 'seek to hide themselves under the name of matrilineal humours, which reign more in women than in men'.¹⁴ In his preface to *Flagellum Daemonum*, however, Menghi uses the neutral or masculine *maleficorum* concerning witches, laying out his intent in writing the treatise: 'I hope that this work of mine will not be useless to those who in our times are so pitifully fighting the work of Demons and Sorcerers'.¹⁵ Menghi is, in this text at least, more concerned with demonic possession and the evil doings of demons than the *maleficia* they perform through witches. The inclusion a text preoccupied more so with exorcism than witchcraft conveys the interrelation of discourses on demonology, witchcraft, magic, and exorcism in the early modern period. While Kramer only included a short section on demonic possession and exorcism in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, which was otherwise a volume on the characteristics, practice, and prosecution of witchcraft, Menghi was known to tackle witchcraft through exorcism rather than legal persecutions. In 1583, for example, he claimed to have banished the possessing demon from a girl on trial for witchcraft. The demon confessed to have been responsible for all her misdeeds, and the charges against the girl were withdrawn.¹⁶

Menghi's how-to-exorcise guide is followed by an older work from 1415, Jean Gerson's *Libellus de probatione spirituum* (Book on the Discernment of Spirits). Gerson (1363–1429), who served as the chancellor of the University of Paris from 1395, aimed to establish a method to ascertain the authenticity of mystical visions distinguishing between divine and heretical ones. A common thread found in addenda to the *Malleus Maleficarum* is the specific cautionary stance against the behaviours of women. Gerson, too, issues a warning concerning women's revelations. He particularly endeavours to discredit the canonisation of Bridget of Sweden, whose admission into sainthood was being deliberated at the 1415 Council of Constance to which Gerson contributed this treatise, attributing Bridget's revelations to diabolic origins. Gerson expresses concern regarding the practice of bridal mysticism, in which a mystic envisions themselves in a spiritual union with Christ. He contends that approving false or frivolous visions over genuine and profound revelations is inappropriate and contrary to the principles of the council.¹⁷ Even confessors, according to Gerson, were not safe from the lustful nature of women:

& mortuos, & seculum per ignem, vt statim exeas, & fugias de vase isto, & plasmate Dei, & nec me, neq[ue] astantes offendas, & sine læsione ipsius. Exorcizo te † per ipsum quem Gabriel Angelus nunciauit in vtero beatæ Mariæ Virginis venturum, & in vtero Helizabeth Ioannes salutauit, & per ipsum te coniuro, vt de quacun que re te interroguero, dicas, & indices mihi verum, quomodo vocatur magister tuus, & quomodo vocaris, & si in corpore isto es, vel extra corpus, aut si solus es, vel legio recum vel plures legiones', *ibid.*, II, 143–4.

¹⁴ . . . qui nunc dicuntur vexari, sunt quædam mulieres, et puellae subiectæ humoribus matricularibus, quæ ex levitate cerebri consueuerunt . . . vexant potius mulieres, & puellas, q[uam] homines, pro eo, q[uod] ipsi quærunt se occultare sub nomine humorum matricularium, qui plus regna[n]t in mulieribus . . .', Girolamo Menghi, *Flagellum Daemonum. Exorcismos Terribiles, Potentissimos, et Efficaces* (Venice: Dominicum Malduram, 1606), pp. 22–6.

¹⁵ ' . . . me hunc laborem nulla alia de causa sumpsisse, quàm quod sperem hoc opus meum non inutile fore his, qui nostris temporibus tam miserè, atque perniciosè Dæmonum, et Maleficorum opera conflictantur', Ulrich Molitor, *De Pythonicis mulieribus* in Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (Frankfurt, 1588), II, 96, New College Library, Oxford, BT3.259.7.

¹⁶ Guido Dall'Olio, 'Scourging Demons with Exorcism: Girolamo Menghi's *Flagellum Daemonum*', in Jan Machielsen (ed.), *The Science of Demons: Early Modern Authors Facing Witchcraft and the Devil* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), pp. 224–37, at p. 227.

¹⁷ 'Approbare enim falsas aut illusorias aut friuolas visiones pro veris & solidas reuelationibus, quid indignus, quid alienius ab hoc sacro consilio?', Jean Gerson, *Libellus de probatione spirituum*, in Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (Frankfurt, 1588), II, 339, New College Library, Oxford, BT3.259.7.

It is especially necessary to consider this, if it is a woman, how she converses with her confessors and instructors. If she attends to continuous conversations, under the cover of now a frequent confession, now a lengthy narration of her visions, now any other slander : believe the experts, namely Augustine and Lord Bonaventure : Scarcely is there another pestilence either more efficacious in injuring, or more incurable : which if it had no other loss, if not for this extensive consumption of precious time, it would be sufficient for the Devil. She has something else, of course, an insatiable desire to see and to speak, meanwhile I will cease [be silent] concerning touch.¹⁸

Gerson therefore developed a somewhat forensic approach in distinguishing a divine revelation from a diabolic one which he details in this treatise and in his 1401 *De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis* (On Distinguishing True Visions from False), in which he argues ‘if a miracle lacks any pious utility or necessity, it should be suspected or rejected by that fact alone . . . In our lifetime there has been a woman famed for such revelations, whom this sign, if I am not mistaken, shows to have been out of her mind’.¹⁹ The ‘famed’ woman he references could be Bridget of Sweden or Catherine of Siena, both visionaries who were credited with bringing Pope Gregory XI back to Rome through their meddling in ecclesiastical affairs, resulting in a schism after Gregory’s death. The circulation of this treatise with the *Malleus*, as Nancy McLoughlin has theorised, could be understood as ‘a sign that Gerson’s discernment methods caused aspiring visionaries to be judged witches, the two activities of encouraging female contemplation and hunting witches seem to have been complementary rather than opposed to each other.’²⁰

Turning again toward witchcraft, the next text printed in the *Malleus* is Thomas Murner’s *De Pythonico Contractu*, originally printed in 1499. A satirist from Alsace perhaps better known for his opposing of the Reformation, Murner (1475–c. 1537) discusses the problem of witchcraft in a fictitious scholastic debate with the future provost of Basel, Hans Werner von Mörsperg, and his father Kasper von Mörsperg. Murner had suffered from paralysis as a child, likely caused by polio, but which he himself attributed to witchcraft.²¹ He aims to prove the harmful capabilities of magicians, frustrated that some theologians, in their childishness, explained away misfortunes by natural causes rather than by witchcraft. Using the example of impotence, he references Duns Scotus, arguing that, while there is a natural cause, ‘in which mutilation or coldness of the member follows’, but that ‘the other [cause] is accidental, which is done by evil: and this is done by evil spirits: who, having made pacts with men, keep their promises, not because they are truthful, but because they are bound to others’.²² He reminds his opponent, Hans Werner, of the teachings of Aristotle (though perhaps he means Augustine): ‘the faith of ordinary men is greater than that of

¹⁸ ‘Hoc praecipue considerare necesse est, si sit mulier, qualiter cum suis confessoribus conuersatur, & instructoribus. Si colloctionibus intendit continuis, sub obtenta, nunc crebrae confesionis, nunc prolixae narrationis visionum suarum, nunc alterius cuiuslibet confabulationis : Expertis credite, nominatim Augu[stino] & domino Bonaventurae : Vix est altera pestis vel efficacior ad nocendum, vel insanabilior : quae si nihil haberet aliud detrimenti, nisi temporis preciosi latibimam hanc consumptionem, abunde Diabolo satis esset. Habet aliud, scilicet insatiabilem viuendi [sic] loquendi[que] ut interim de tactu sileam, pruriginem’, *ibid.*, II, 348.

¹⁹ Nancy Caciola and Moshe Sluhovskiy, ‘Spiritual Physiologies: The Discernment of Spirits in Medieval and Early Modern Europe’, *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 1 (2012), 1–48, at p. 16.

²⁰ Nancy McLoughlin, *Jean Gerson and Gender: Rhetoric and Politics in Fifteenth-Century France* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 150.

²¹ ‘Quid est, quod caeteris plus te malè fortunatum natura constituit, maleficiatum reddidit à Pythonica dico muliere contractum? Quae inquam tuae genitrici, vt maleuola nocumentum asportaret, amicissimo sibi obesse spondit, tuo vt percepirelatu. Sic equidem matris dilectio (instigante natura) in peiorem partem secessit’, Thomas Murner, *De Pythonico Contractu*, in Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (Frankfurt, 1588), II, 352, New College Library, Oxford, BT3.259.7.

²² ‘Nam dicit Scotus lib. 4.34. dist.q.i. quod duplex est impotentia in genere. Naturalis una, ad quam membri sequitur mutilatio seu frigiditas, de quo nihil ad praesens. Alia autem casualis, quae fit per maleficium: & haec fit per malignos spiritus: qui habentes pactiones cum hominibus, seruant promissa, non quia veraces, fed vt alij eis adhæreant’, *ibid.*, II, 363.

philosophers and learned men'.²³ In the context of the European witch trials, this rhetoric is quite troubling. Witchcraft 'from below', arising from interpersonal relations and political anxieties in local communities, led to the trial and executions of hundreds of thousands of alleged witches who were most commonly, in one way or another, local deviants in their community. In providing a theological basis for local demonological beliefs, writers such as Murner fanned the flames of the witch-craze, while ready access to printers who were more than happy to make profit from these witch-phobic texts allowed authors to disseminate these ideas among the learned. Murner's form of a witchcraft treatise in a fictional dialogue was seen earlier in this tome, that of Ulrich Molitor. Though the author's opponent is fictional, both texts are of interest in presenting the real and anticipated objections to the author's demonological stance. For Molitor in 1489, the opponent is the witch-hunting fanatic, while the author is the reasonable sceptic whose arguments are rooted in longstanding catholic law. For Murner, ten years later, he is the reasoned theologian personally victimised by witchcraft, while his opponent is the sceptic, unconvinced of the real and present danger of sorcery.

Let us shift our focus to the penultimate author included in our *Malleus*, Felix Hemmerlin (1389–1460), a canon lawyer from Zurich whose three treatises appear Murner's. The treatises in question are *Tractatus duos Exorcismorum* and *De credulitate Daemonibus adhibenda*, first published 1492 after the author's death. Hemmerlin, like John Gerson, was writing a generation before the Heinrich Kramer conceived the *Malleus Maleficarum*, but is best-known for his writings against ecclesiastical abuses, which eventually led to his dismissal from office. In his treatise on demons, Hemmerlin is less concerned with magicians and diabolic pacts, but is more so preoccupied by the real presence and dangers of demons. Hemmerlin narrates tales of demons stealing the penises of sinful priests and of destroying the armies of prideful princes, acting independently of sorcerers and even dealing out punishment for sins. As shown in his tractates on exorcism, Hemmerlin was surprisingly tolerant of witchcraft, providing an interesting contrast to many of his contemporaries. The first treatise opens with a case study, in which a peasant was condemned by unnamed authorities for using a spell to heal his cow. Hemmerlin includes the spell, recited in the German vernacular: 'Ob das sen / dass Maria Magd oder Jungfrau / ein Kind Jesum gebahr / so komme diesem Thier das Blatt ab / in Namen dess Vatters'.²⁴ From this case, Hemmerlin forms six questions. Firstly, whether or not we are bound to take care of animals. Secondly, whether we should ask for their defects or pains to be lawfully healed in the name of God. Thirdly, whether we can use blessing or curses on animals or human beings. Fourthly, whether all chants or curses are to be prohibited. Fifthly, whether it is because of the rhymes of the incantations that they are to be denounced. And sixthly, whether it is because of the gestures of the chanters that they are to be denounced.²⁵ His conclusions are thus: 'And wherefore such and similar oaths, or exorcisms, or the pronounciation of curses, are lawfully and properly admitted: the prelates of the Churches should not forbid them, and by faith, hope, and charity they should be preserved'.²⁶ It is perhaps Hemmerlin's work, then, that best satisfies my hope to find a more tolerant treatise appended to the *Malleus*. Though Ulrich Molitor argued against the unbridled witch persecutions, based on confessions obtained through torture, he fell short of allowing the uses of spells and incantations to aid human and beasts.

The volume ends with two works by Bartolomeo Spina (c. 1475–1546), one of the most enthusiastic witch-haters in 16th-century Italy, taking up most of the second tome, *Quaestio de*

²³ 'Quod maior est rusticorum fides, quam philosophorum & doctorum virorum', *ibid.*, cf. Augustine, *Confessiones*, 4.16.31.

²⁴ Felix Hemmerlin, *Tractatus I. de Exorcismis*, in Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (Frankfurt, 1588), II, 378, New College Library, Oxford, BT3.259.7.

²⁵ *ibid.*, II, 378–9.

²⁶ 'Et quòd tales & sui similes adiurationes seu exorcismi, aut imprecationum pronounciatio licetè & conuenienter admittitur : & per praelatos Ecclesiarum non prohibeatur, & per hoc illius fides, spes & charitas conseruatur: qui fidei nostrae verbo & exemplo fuit exorcista divertibimus, & viuit & regnat per infinita seculorum secula benedictus', *ibid.*, II, 421.

strigibus feu maleficis (An Inquiry into Witches, 1523) and *Quadruplici apologia de lamiis contra Ponzinibium* (Fourfold Defense on Witches against Ponzinibio, 1525). Spina, a prominent Italian theologian, joined the Dominicans in 1493 and spent time teaching across Italy until his instalment as an inquisitorial vicar in Modena in 1517. In this role, he embarked on an enthusiastic anti-witchcraft campaign, attacking the leniency with which judges prosecuted diabolic witchcraft in his two works printed in the 1588 *Malleus*. The first work, *Quaestio de strigibus*, is a defence of belief in witches, including their nocturnal flight, interaction with demons, and ability to transform into animals. Spina supports the acceptance of evidence obtained through torture, arguing that, rather than making false confessions out of fear of punishment as Molitor suggests would occur, the threat of damnation assures the veracity of their confessions.²⁷ In both works, Spina relies heavily on the *Malleus Maleficarum* as a source, aiming to refute the arguments of those who consider witches' Sabbat and confessions to be mere illusions, and dismissing the Canon Episcopi as an authority on the matter. In his strong advocacy for the belief in witchcraft, Spina's second work, *Quadruplici apologia*, counters the views of Gianfrancesco Ponzinibio, an Italian lawyer critical of the inquisition's methods to prosecute alleged witches. Ponzinibio argued for adhering the Canon Episcopi, as Ulrich Molitor had done, and denied the reality of there being any real power in witchcraft. Spina refutes Ponzinibio's arguments across four tracts, even suggesting the prosecution of Ponzinibio under suspicion of heresy for defending heretics. Offended by Ponzinibio's suggestion that lawyers should assist in witchcraft trials, Spina declares: "They are the jurists of civil crimes, but not of spiritual ones, such as the crime of heresy. But theologians are not only the first handlers of these crimes: they are also judges and exterminators."²⁸ If only Ponzinibio's criticisms of the witch trials had carried more weight, perhaps many of the unpleasant tractates accompanying our *Malleus* would not have been reprinted. However, as can be seen in the parroted arguments running through these addenda, texts urging clemency for alleged witches were simply less marketable than their opponents. Nonetheless, perhaps the *Malleus'* printer, Nicholas Bassée, was right in his suggestion that there is no book so bad that it cannot be useful in some part, as these addenda, though disconcerting in content, present us with the demonological bestseller list from the late 16th century, and, through a more thorough analysis, can reveal how ideas about unorthodox practices evolved over time.

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²⁷ *ibid.*, II, 519.

²⁸ . . . sunt iuristæ criminalium ciuilem, non autem spiritualium, quale crimen est hæresis. Sed Theologi non solùm sunt horum criminum primi tractatores : verùm etiam iudices & exterminatores', Bartolomeo Spina, *Quadruplici apologia de lamiis contra Ponzinibium*, in Heinrich Institoris and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (Frankfurt, 1588), II, 698, New College Library, Oxford, BT3.259.7.