

***Malleus Maleficarum*. By Henricus Institoris, O. P. and Jacobus Sprenger, O. P. Edited and translated by Christopher S. Mackay. Volume I. The Latin Text and Introduction. Pp. x, 720. Volume II. The English Translation. Pp. 615. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006, \$275.00.**

***On the Inconstancy of Witches: Pierre de Lancre's Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et demons (1612)*. Ed. and trans. Gerhild Scholz Williams. Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 307. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006. liv + 586 pp. index. illus. map. gloss. bibl. \$62. ISBN: 0-86698-352-X.**

'Read the Arabian Nights through, and perhaps, with the single exception of Cassim Baba quartered in the robbers' cavern, you will not find an incident in that vast collection of fairy tales that will excite terror or disgust ; but glance over the awful *Malleus Mallificarum*, as print on the eve of Saint Catherine, Queen, Virgin, and Martyr, in the last decennary of the fifteenth century- pore over its dusky, black-lettered pages, its miniated capitals, and shudder [...] study these monstrous books – monstrous alike in form and contents – study them in the dead of night (if you have nerve enough), and sleep afterwards, nightmareless, if you can.'<sup>1</sup> Thus was the darkly romantic view of Charles Dickens, although the fact that he misspelled the name of the *Malleus Maleficarum* suggest he himself never did dare to read them. One modern scholar, with an equal sense of exaggeration, argued that witchcraft theory has been unduly neglected because of historians' 'unjustified *fear of being bored*'.<sup>2</sup> Reality, of course, is more prosaic and more humdrum.

Many of the writings of major demonologists and their opponents have in recent years been made accessible in modern print editions and translations. Many more original documents can be accessed through the Early English Books Online project, the Gallica project of the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, and the Witchcraft collection of Cornell University.<sup>3</sup> Scholars and students now can observe for themselves how Scot's witty sarcasm – 'for you may perceive by the first part of the historie, he was a verie honest man' – undermined the credibility of witchcraft beliefs.<sup>4</sup> They can contrast for themselves the inane arguments advanced by James I and VI – 'For since the Devill is the verie contrarie to God, there can be

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Dickens, 'The Complaint of the Old Magician', in: *Household Words: A Weekly Journal* (1854), p. 546.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers* (Chicago: 2002), p. 9. The italics are his.

<sup>3</sup> <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>; <http://gallica.bnf.fr>; <http://historical.library.cornell.edu/witchcraft>

<sup>4</sup> Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed. Montague Summers (Mineola, N.Y.: 1972), p. 27.

no better way to know God, then by the contrarie...’ –<sup>5</sup> with the intellectual precocity of Martin Delrio who claimed to have read no fewer than 1,100 authors in his youth. Readers can interact first-hand with Henry Boguet’s endless praise of the courage, wisdom, and bravery of an 8 year old girl whose testimony set off a witchhunt. The accessibility of all these texts has made it possible to focus on shared foundations as well areas of disagreement, to study the intellectual edifice as well as the personal (and psychological) motivations of the creators themselves.

Two new modern editions have raised the bar for translations quite significantly. Gerhild Scholz Williams’s translation of Pierre de Lancre’s *Tableau de l’Inconstance des Mauvais Anges et Demons* (ACMRS, 2006) fills an important void. Pierre de Lancre’s account of his witch-hunting activities in the Basque speaking *Pays de Labourd* is without doubt *the* most interesting account of a witch-hunt given by an inquisitor. It reveals much of the concerns and pre-occupations of both the local populace and the inquisitors themselves. The maritime concerns of these sea-faring communities are evident from the denunciations and confessions recorded with witches flying off to Newfoundland (the traditional fishing grounds for the Basque people and a mere 2 or 3 hours air travel for witches), and raising storms.<sup>6</sup> Other pre-occupations are less explicable. The dressing up of toads and their guarding by children is the strangest story concerning animal familiars that I’ve heard of.<sup>7</sup> De Lancre himself is clearly fascinated by the notion of the divine protection of magistrates. He recounts how witches confessed to entering his bedroom at night and were unable to harm him.<sup>8</sup> He also displays a rather bizarre curiosity towards witchcraft theory. He asks one witch if she could please bring back some of the ointment necessary for flight to the Sabbath with her next time she goes.<sup>9</sup>

Scholz Williams is to be commended for her translation – the first for this work into English. Scholz Williams based her translation on the copy available online on the BNF’s Gallica website (certainly a much more cost-effective method than the one employed by Mackay; see below). Scholz Williams gives a brief and certainly adequate introduction into the background of the *Pays de Labourd* trials, the criminal procedures employed, and Pierre de Lancre

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<sup>5</sup> James I and VI, *Daemonologie, in forme of ane Dialogue* (Edinburgh, 1597), p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> Pierre de Lancre, *On the Inconstancy of Witches*, ed. Gerhild Scholz Williams (Tempe, AZ: 2006), pp. 118, 150.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 400-1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 160.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 121

himself – although one would wish for more than two pages on the author. Despite the obvious care displayed by Scholz Williams some errors did slip in. Jean du Bellay (1492-1560) identified by Scholz Williams cannot have been the Sieur du Bellay who recommends Martin Delrio's *Disquisitiones Magicae* (which only appeared in 1599-1600).<sup>10</sup> Most errors relate to De Lancre's use of classical material. Pompeius Mela was not the only Roman geographer.<sup>11</sup> Philo of Alexandria was a Jew and not an early convert to Christianity.<sup>12</sup> Some of De Lancre's classical references are not explained.<sup>13</sup> These are all very minor points however, and by making De Lancre's fascinating work available in a clear, readable edition to a wider (and undergraduate) audience, Scholz Williams has greatly helped both the teaching and study of witchcraft history.

Christopher Mackay's new two volume edition of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Cambridge University Press, 2006) is unlikely ever to be rivalled. The *Malleus* or Witch Hammer was the first major demonology (first published in 1486) and has become almost synonymous with the European witch-hunt. It has also become a byword for misogyny, notoriously claiming that the word *femina* was derived from *f[id]e[s] minus* or lesser faith (although Mackay has shown that this dubious foray into etymology was in fact taken from Antoninus of Florence).<sup>14</sup> It was also one of the first demonological tracts to be translated into English - in 1928 by Montague Summers, a man who notoriously believed in the reality of witchcraft accusing academics of ignoring 'the immodesty of the witch-cult', 'extenuat[ing] its evil' and of pursuing an 'ostrich-like policy'.<sup>15</sup> A new scholarly translation has long been desired therefore, and Mackay's admirable new edition has helped fill a glaring hole.

The first volume includes the original Latin text (with updated punctuation and scholarly apparatus), the second the English translation, clearly marked for easy cross-referencing. Volume I contains a general introduction, which outlines the (pseudo-)scholastic method used in the *Malleus* and details its background, cosmology, and sources. Some sections work less well than others. Mackay's discussion on the actual existence of witchcraft (§2*c.i*) adds

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 131

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 86, e.g. Solinus.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 560

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85, on the desecration by Publius Clodius of the Bona Dea ceremony in 62 BCE. Scholtz Williams does not even explain who 'Clodius' is.

<sup>14</sup> Heinrich Institoris & Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, ed. and transl. by Christopher S. Mackay (Cambridge, 2006) §2*b*; i, 36.

<sup>15</sup> Montague Summers, *The History of Witchcraft* (London, 1994), p. xv.

nothing new to our understanding of the subject or to our understanding of the *Malleus*, and one wishes for a longer discussion of the book's print history (§6*b*). At the same time, Mackay's exposition on the contested authorship of the *Malleus* is outstanding and insightful.

It has become more or less commonly accepted that the *Malleus* was the work of one man, Heinrich Kramer or Henricus Institoris, who falsely insinuated the more celebrated Jacobus Sprenger as his co-author to lend the work more respectability. Kramer believed that witches were capable of stealing penises and storing them in bird's nests 'where the members move as if alive or eat a stalk or fodder',<sup>16</sup> and historians may be excused for believing the worst of such a person and for trying to treat the *Malleus* as the product of one man's delusions only. Mackay, however, shows that the evidence that Kramer falsified the documents that front the *Malleus* - papal bull, the approbation from the Cologne theology faculty and Sprenger's foreword - is weak. The fact that, as Mackay admits, 'the driving force behind the work was definitely Institoris' does not preclude Sprenger's involvement.<sup>17</sup> The popularity and influence of the *Malleus* itself suggest that its opinions may have been less controversial than we would think, and therefore not necessarily just the product of one barmy Dominican friar.

Indeed, Mackay's new translation exposes us to the strangeness of history and despite its new accessibility, the appeal of the *Malleus* remains as hard to fathom ever. The work went by one count through 28 editions. Its reasoning is tortuous – Sydney Anglo abrasively but rightly noted that the *Malleus* employed divine permission as an 'invincible chess piece [...] to remove all opposing pieces from the board' to prove the reality of witchcraft.<sup>18</sup> The *Malleus*'s use of a strange pseudo-scholastic method makes it hand over as many arguments for scepticism – which it hardly attempts to refute – as it does in favour of witchcraft belief and persecutions. There is no question that the works of later demonologists like Bodin, Remy, and Delrio offer a better read – understanding the *Malleus* will remain as hard as ever.

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<sup>16</sup> *Malleus*, ii, 280.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* §4.c.ii. □; i, 120.

<sup>18</sup> Sydney Anglo, *The Damned art : essays in the literature of witchcraft* (London, 1977), p.21.