

Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme



Mackay, Christopher S. (trans.). The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum

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Volume 34, Number 1-2, Winter–Spring 2011

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1106422ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v34i1-2.16186>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Raiswell, R. (2011). Review of [Mackay, Christopher S. (trans.). *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum*]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 34(1-2), 279–281.
<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v34i1-2.16186>

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an authoritative voice on questions of ancient custom. Duquesnoy follows in the tradition of Giambologna, the greatest sculptor of the second half of the sixteenth century and also a Fleming. It seems that even in the century before Winckelmann, the question of Greek and Roman artistic manner — and the values that these represented — were of broad European concern.

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Mackay, Christopher S. (trans.).

The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum.

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. 657. ISBN 978-0-521-74787-5 (paperback) \$29.99.

When Christopher Mackay published his two-volume study and bilingual edition of Henricus Institoris and Jacobus Sprenger's *Malleus Maleficarum* in 2006, it deservedly met with universal acclaim. Now Mackay and Cambridge University Press have issued the English-language translation, together with a shorter, more accessible introduction, in an affordable single volume that will prove invaluable for students and general readers interested in this notorious text.

Those of us who have worked with any of the early Latin printings of this seminal articulation of early witchcraft theory have long appreciated that the translation made by Montague Summers in 1928 is wretched. Aside from the wooden syntax and non-idiomatic English, Summers' work is deeply compromised by the fact that he approached the *Malleus* believing that the conception of witchcraft sketched out on its pages was real. Indeed, he was convinced that the sheer number of first-hand accounts of *maleficium* recounted in the writings of premodern demonologists, when read in conjunction with the seemingly analogous testimony that could be adduced from various pre-Christian sources, spoke to the reality of witchcraft. As he pointed out in the preface to the first edition of his translation, "witchcraft is an evil thing, an enemy to light, an ally of the powers of darkness, disruption, and decay"; it is "a vast political movement, an organized society which was anti-social and

anarchical, a world-wide plot against civilization.”² To be sure, he noted that the text was not without certain “trifling blemishes” but its essential message was as relevant to the licentious world of the late nineteen-twenties, with its Bolsheviks and anarchists, as it had been when it was originally composed. Indeed, he added, some of its excesses, such as its undeniable misogyny, might even serve as a “wholesome and needful antidote” to the current “feministic age” with its confounding of the sexes.³ Not surprisingly, the translation that came from Summers’ addled mind is ahistorical, for it treats the writings of these late fifteenth-century Dominicans uncritically and largely divorced from context.

By contrast, Mackay approaches the text as the consummate historian, situating it squarely in the intellectual and cultural milieu from which it was spawned. Certainly, he argues in his introduction, the *Malleus* constitutes the beginnings of a paradigm shift in that it imposed a coherent structure and meaning on a set of disparate and disconnected beliefs, resituating them in terms of the grand cosmological struggle between God and his opposite. But what modern scholars have dubbed the “elaborated concept of witchcraft” that begins to emerge from these pages is almost exclusively derived from the theologians’ particular readings of Thomas Aquinas, Nicholas Eymeric, and Johannes Nider. What is new in the *Malleus* when it first appeared in 1486 is not the content, Mackay is at pains to stress; rather, its novelty lies in the final cause to which the arguments Institoris and Sprenger bring forth are ordered.

In offering this one-volume edition, Mackay’s goal is to help the modern reader appreciate how the work would have been understood in its own day. This is an important and valuable approach in a translation aimed at a more general market. Accordingly, he includes important sections that situate historically those aspects of the text that are most repulsive to modern, more enlightened sensibilities. He notes, for instance, that while the *Malleus* is often singled out for its rabid misogyny, those sections that are most directly hostile towards women are almost entirely derivative, lifted from the pages of Nider and an early fifteenth-century Dominican archbishop of Florence known as Antoninus. They reflect, then, a particular contemporary orthodoxy that was by no means

2. *Malleus Maleficarum* of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, trans. Montague Summers (London: John Rodker, 1928; reprint New York: Dover, 1971), p. xi and xviii; cf. p. xxiv.

3. Summers, pp. xxxix–xl.

unique to the tract's authors (pp. 25–27). Likewise, Mackay includes a useful section on the legitimacy of conjecture as a mode of determining guilt that highlights, relying upon Eymeric, the difficulties inquisitors had in prosecuting a crime in which the perceived harm was physically removed from the actions believed to have caused it (pp. 28–30). But it is this concern to contextualise the work historically that leads to what will likely seem the most jarring feature of the translation to modern readers over familiar with Summers' efforts: the decision to render *maleficus* and *malefica* as *sorcerer* and *sorceress* — not (male and female) *witch* — and *maleficium* as *sorcery* — not *witchcraft*. Certainly, there are sound linguistic reasons for this choice. But ultimately, Mackay's point is to avoid *witch* and its cognates in order to stress that the *Malleus* is recrafting a late medieval conception of a particular type of magic user, rather than anticipating a later, more ideologically fraught conception of *witch* (p. 57).

As is the case with the two-volume edition, this is scholarly work of the highest order. The translation retains all of the scholarly apparatus of the original, complete with explanatory footnotes and detailed references to the source texts upon which the Dominicans are drawing. The introduction is modelled upon that of the earlier edition, but is largely rewritten with a view to a more general audience. Missing or highly compressed are the sections on the medieval university and the nature of scholastic theology, along with Mackay's more general notes on cosmology and magic. However, he has retained the valuable short biographies of the authors of various the sources used in the text, along with a short glossary of terms.

With no false modesty, Mackay introduces his work as “the only full and reliable translation of the *Malleus* into English” (p. 1). This is unequivocally the case, and now, with the publication of this affordable, accessible one-volume edition I sincerely hope that, despite the ubiquity of Summers' edition across the internet, Mackay's work will become the new standard in the classroom and amongst general readers in the way that his bilingual edition has within the academy.

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