

DISCOUERIE OF WITCHCRAFT IN THE VAULTS

getting familiar with witches

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Magic played a dual and sometimes contradictory role in the early modern imagination. Men of learning and science, such as John Dee, turned to the occult as another aspect of the universe, and perhaps even the key to all its mysteries. Others saw nothing but temptation, sin, and the Devil in the pursuit of the occult, and in their zeal to protect the world from these pernicious forces, saw the occult in everything around them. These items from the Folger collection illustrate the centuries-long debate - was witchcraft real? was it a demonic temptation or the path to enlightenment? - and offer glimpses of the men and women caught up in its turbulence.

☛ Institoris, Heinrich. *Malleus maleficarum: in tres diuisus partes, in quibus concurrentia ad maleficia, maleficiorum effectus, remedia aduersus maleficia, et modus procedendi, ac puniendi maleficos abundè continetur, praecipuè autem omnibus inquisitoribus, & diuini uerbi concionatoribus utilis, ac necessarius*. Venice, 1576.

166- 895q <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=76824>

First published in Germany in 1487, *Malleus Maleficarum*, or *The Hammer of Witches*, was written by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger. It is the most well known treatise on witchcraft and, as a bestseller for 200 years after its publication, heavily influenced early modern European ideas about what witches looked like and how they should be punished. *Malleus Maleficarum* was written to demonstrate that sorcery was real, what the practices of sorcery were and how to counter them, and how to investigate and convict sorceresses. The authors consider sorcery to be heresy, punishable by death. It encouraged torture to obtain confessions, and argued women were more likely to be sorcerers, or witches, than men.

☛ Molitor, Ulrich. *De lanijs et phitonicis mulieribus ad illutrissimu[m] principem dominum Sigismundum archiducem Austrie tractatus pulcherrimus*. Leipzig, 1495

INC M686 <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=90307>

De Lamiis et Pythonicis Mulieribus (*Of witches and diuiner women*) features woodcuts that are some of the first illustrations of witches. First published in 1489, *De Lamiis* is a dialogue between a skeptic (Archduke Sigismund of Austria) and a believer (Molitor) in witchcraft. Ulrich Molitor believed that the devil had the power to trick people and most magical phenomena were illusions caused by the devil. He did not trust

confessions that came from torture but did advocate for the execution of witches as heretics. These woodcuts established the popular idea of what witches looked like that can still be seen today.

☛ *Index eorum, quae hoc in libro habentur...* Venice, 1516
Folio BF1501 .J2 copy 2 Cage <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=187962>
selected images in Folger Digital Image Collection:
<http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/s/tsvp0h>

The *Index eorum...* contains a selection of Neo-Platonic and natural philosophy texts. It is open to the signature of a former owner, Johannes Dee - better known today as John Dee.

John Dee was one of a number of Renaissance-era proponents of Neo-Platonism, which blended the Platonic ideas about objective truth and forms with a hearty dose of mysticism and astrology. Dee was a prominent figure in Queen Elizabeth's court as her adviser and astrologer. Although initially he pursued a numerological explanation for the universe, by the 1580s he had devoted himself to more supernatural pursuits such as alchemy, and contacting the spirits. In this, Dee was another early modern man of wealth, power, and knowledge who sought still more.

☛ *An paramount for to get the love of a woman* [manuscript], circa 1600
X.d.208 <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=193221>
available in Folger Digital Image Collection:
<https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/s/cr2wwh>

☛ *Spell to bind the seven sisters of the fairies to you for ever* [manuscript], circa 1600
X.d.234 <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=193249>

These two manuscripts are some of the few examples of stand-alone spells in the Folger collection. Not much is known about them, but they probably date to the early 17th century. Both are spells for personal gain, and were likely recorded and attempted by men.

In addition to the spell text itself, the "paramount for to get the love of a woman" features a simplistic drawing of a woman together with multiple astrological symbols on the second page, and what appears to be a numerical cipher on the fourth (back) page.

The "spell to bind the seven sisters of the fairies to you for ever" is an extremely coercive set of instructions which enabled the caster to summon a fairy to his bed, after which he would be able to ask her for any knowledge he desired. The writer suggests that he has done so multiple times successfully, and also implies that the fairies would be dangerous if they were not magically bound to obey when summoned. A full discussion of this manuscript and its contents are provided in Frederika Bain's "The Binding of the Fairies: Four Spells" (*Preternature* 1:2 (2012), pp. 323-354).

☛ *Book of magic, with instructions for invoking spirits, etc.* [manuscript]. Circa 1577-1583 V.b.26 <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=228887> available in Folger Digital Image Collection: <http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/s/w22y97> (part 1) and <http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/s/m86pk1> (part 2)

This manuscript grimoire contains a variety of spells and incantations. It blends together several traditions, incorporating bits and pieces of Jewish mysticism, occult invocations, and Christian psalms next to descriptions of angels and demons, and spells for more mundane purposes such as preventing theft and sickness. The Folger owns two sections, which were acquired almost half a century apart: V.b.26 (1), shown here, contains pages 15-205 of the text. It was acquired in 1958, forty-nine years before we acquired pages 206-235, now known as V.b.26 (2), in 2007... and we're still lacking pages 1 through 14! If you know of a spell to reunite missing pages with their book, please consider casting it for us...

☛ Weyer, Johann. *De praestigiis daemonum, et incantationibus, ac ueneficijs, libri v.* Basel, 1563. BF1520.W4 P8 1563 Cage <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=76214>

Johann Weyer, a Dutch physician and occultist, was one of the earliest voices to advocate against witch hunting. In his *De praestigiis daemonum*, first published in 1563, he argued that those who accused of practicing witchcraft were instead suffering from mental illness, and advocated against the continuing persecution of "witches". Weyer did believe very emphatically in the supernatural, however, and he included a catalogue of various demons and their powers at the end of the *De praestigiis*. Weyer suggested that while demonic forces were indeed at work in the world, so-called "witches" had nothing to do with them, and were nothing but a distraction. The Folger's copy of *De praestigiis* was acquired around 1903.

☛ Scot, Reginald. *The discoverie of witchcraft: vwherein the lewde dealing of witches and witchmongers is notablie detected, the knauerie of coniurors, the impietie of inchantors, the follie of soothsaiers, the impudent falshood of cousenors, the infidelitie of atheists, the pestilent practises of pythonists, the curiositie of figurecasters, the vanitie of dreamers, the beggerlie art of alcumystrie, the abhominat[i]on of idolatrie, the horrible art of poisoning, the vertue and power of naturall magike, and all the conueiances of legierdemaine and iuggling are deciphered: and many other things opened, which have long lien hidden, howbeit verie necessarie to be knowne. Heerevnto is added a treatise vpon the nature and substance of spirits and diuels, &c.* London, 1584.

STC 21864 copy 1 <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=166692>
selected images available in Folger Digital Image Collection:
<https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/s/zbt022>

The discoverie of witchcraft is a skeptical treatise refuting the existence of witchcraft and magic. It was popular from its publication through the 17th century. Reginald Scot believed that there were psychological and sociological explanations for magical phenomena and witchcraft accusations. He wrote about how old, poor women were often accused of witchcraft when their neighbors had denied them charity. The treatise became a source for descriptions of beliefs in magic, witchcraft, and other supernatural phenomenon. Scot wrote about astrology, alchemy, conjuring tricks, and summoning demons. James VI/I's *Daemonologie* attacked Scot's treatise in particular. Shakespeare likely drew inspiration from *Discoverie* for the witches in *Macbeth* and Puck and Bottom's transformation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

☛ James VI of Scotland/I of England. *Daemonologie* [manuscript]. 1592. V.a.185 <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=226695>
selected images available in Folger Digital Image Collection:
<http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/s/405vy1>

Written in the form of a dialogue, *Daemonologie* is an argument for King James' belief in witchcraft and other supernatural phenomena. He also recommends punishments, including the death penalty, for witches. Besides witchcraft, he discusses necromancy, divination, astrology, curses, sorcery, and the classification of demons, including vampires and werewolves. This manuscript version, likely written by the scribe Sir James Sempill, includes autograph annotations by King James and possibly James Carmichael. Many of the aspects of witchcraft that Shakespeare uses for the witches in *Macbeth* come from *Daemonologie*.

☛ Glanvill, Joseph. *Saducismus triumphatus: or, Full and plain evidence concerning witches and apparitions: In two parts. The first treating of their possibility. The second of their real existence.* London, 1682.

G823 <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=148272>

selected images available in Folger Digital Image Collection:

<https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/s/9pk3sh>

Joseph Glanvill, a philosopher and Church of England clergyman, asserted that witches and spirits were real. He primarily focused on the existence of spirits and devils and how they interacted with the natural world, collecting accounts of witchcraft as evidence for the reality of the spiritual world. *Saducismus triumphatus* was the final version of his book on witchcraft; it was published posthumously with material added by Henry More. In it Glanvill defines witchcraft and lays out evidence for it, and he argues against John Webster's attacks on his previous works, connecting his denial of the existence of witchcraft to the denial of the spiritual world. The frontispiece depicts scenes from famous 17th century witch cases; it is by William Faithorne (1660-1691), who mostly engraved frontispieces for books and portraits.

☛ Drage, William. *Daiemonomageia. A small treatise of sicknesses and diseases from witchcraft, and supernatural causes.* London, 1665.

223- 315q <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=143862>

Daiemonomageia was published on its own and, here, with *A physical nosonomy: or, A new and true description of the law of God (called nature) in the body of man.* Written by William Drage, a physician and apothecary, it is a treatise for physicians about illnesses that are caused by witchcraft and possessions. Drage focuses on curing these illnesses, not punishing accused witches. It features accounts of witchcraft, such as possessed people walking on ceilings, and includes Drage's own experience attempting to cure Mary Hall of Little Gaddesden, Hertfordshire, a teenage girl possessed by two demonic spirits. Speaking through Mary, the demons claimed they were sent by witches, possessed her because they had no power over her father, and asked for new clothes for her.

☛ Ady, Thomas. *A Candle in the Dark, or, A treatise concerning the nature of witches & witchcraft: being advice to judges, sheriffes, justices of the peace and grand-jury-men, what to do, before they passe sentence on such as are arraigned for their lives, as witches.* London, 1656.

208- 004q <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=344478>

A Candle in the Dark is a skeptical treatise on witchcraft. Ady uses passages from the Bible and how they should be translated and interpreted to support his argument that those accused of witchcraft are innocent. In the third section, Ady criticizes authors of other works on witchcraft, including King James' *Daemonologie*, and he defends Reginald Scot's *The discoverie of witchcraft*. *A Candle in the Dark* was used by the defense at the Salem witch trials.

☛ Bernard, Richard. *A guide to grand-iury men : diuided into two bookes*. London, 1627. STC 1943 <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=158984>

Richard Bernard would have been familiar with courts by the time he wrote his *Guide for grand-jury men*. As a non-conforming Anglican clergyman, who had at one time founded his own small separatist church, he was brought before church courts several times for refusing to make the sign of the cross during baptisms.

His *Guide to grand-jury men* was first published in 1627, and is made up of two distinct works, which together lay out the process by which a person may become a witch, the means to detect and examine a witch, and the procedure for trying a witch once they have been arrested. Similarly to his predecessor Johannes Heyer, Bernard was convinced of the presence of witchcraft in the world, fueled by demonic powers, but doubted that many of the persecuted were actually "witches." His *Guide* painstakingly distinguishes the signs of witchcraft from the signs of natural diseases, which he felt accounted for many false accusations of witchcraft; further, he noted that people could bring false accusations for political or social reasons. Bernard's work, like Thomas Ady's *Candle in the dark*, is known to have been used by the magistrates and judges overseeing the Salem Witch Trials in 1692.

☛ *Warrant from the Middlesex Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace for imprisonment of Joane Micholson* [manuscript], circa 1675? X.d.375 (30) <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=233480>

In the late 1670s, a warrant was issued for the arrest of one "Joane Micholsan, alias Peterson." It describes her as "reported by all her Neighbours to be a Cunnige woman," and accused her of leading a "wicked life." In 2011, this document was featured in the Folger's exhibit "Beyond Home Remedy: Women, Medicine, and Science," which offered a possible motivation for Micholsan's arrest.

In order to avoid "sorceries, witchcrafte, and other inconveniencies," a law was enacted in 1512 against any medical practice not licensed by a body of surgeons or physicians.

This law was revised in 1542 under Henry VIII to allow for unlicensed individuals, both male and female, to practice as long as they do so charitably. The reasons given are the obvious: the needs of the poor, the knowledge of “the nature, kind, and operation of certaine herbes, rootes, and waters” held by unlicensed individuals, and the high fees (and greed) of surgeons who were prosecuting them.

☛ Michaëlis, Sébastien. *The admirable historie of the possession and conuersion of a penitent woman. : Seduced by a magician that made her to become a witch, and the princes of sorcerers in the country of Prouince, who was brought to S. Baume to be exorcised, in the yeere 1610.*

London, 1613

STC 17854a copy 2 <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=164550>

Sébastien Michaëlis was a prominent Dominican inquisitor in the Avignon region of France in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, where he was involved in a number of witch trials and executions. In 1611, he was called to investigate a group of nuns at an Aix-en-Provence convent who were reportedly possessed by the devil. Several of the nuns asserted that a local priest was the cause of their possession, accusing him of everything from devil worship to sexual perversion to cannibalism. Under torture, the priest confessed to having signed a pact with the Devil, and was executed. Michaëlis wrote up his experiences in a book called *Histoire admirable de la possession d'une penitente*, published in 1611; the English translation, shown here, followed soon after in 1613.

Michaëlis's text is known for its extensive classification and hierarchy of demons named by the nuns in their confessions. While many of the named demons are not discussed elsewhere, his classification schema was highly influential upon other demonologies and witchcraft treatises.

☛ Perrault, François. *The divell of Mascon, or, A true relation of the chief things which an unclean spirit did and said at Mascon in Burgundy : in the house of one Mr. Francis Pereaud, Minister of the Reformed Church in the same town.* Oxford, 1679.

189- 436q <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=346158>

This book is an English translation of *L'antidémon de Mascon* by Perrault, François, translated by Peter Du Moulin at the request of Robert Boyle, with letters between those two men at the beginning. It is an account of a spirit haunting a minister's house, where it moved objects and spoke over a few months, then left in the form of a snake. Perrault says God never allowed the devil to harm the residents of the house or their possessions. At the end he gives several possible reasons the devil came to his house,

including accused witches being held in a nearby jail and suspicions of his maid being a witch.

☛ Bragge, Francis. *A full and impartial account of the discovery of sorcery & witchcraft*. London, 1712.

BF1581.B7 Cage <http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=182543>

Jane Wenham was one of the last people to be convicted of witchcraft in Britain. Wenham, an elderly woman in the town of Walkern was accused of practicing witchcraft by a neighbor; she responded by suing the neighbor for defamation. Though she won the case, she was said to be unsatisfied with the outcome, and supposedly cursed a servant of the rector who decided it. At that point, several of her neighbors brought additional charges of witchcraft against her. She was convicted and sentenced to death by the jury, but the sentence was later overturned by the skeptical judge, who remarked that there was no law against flying.

This pamphlet by Reverend Francis Bragge is one of several that were produced in the year of her trial, arguing over the existence of witchcraft (and, by extension, Wenham's guilt). Bragge, the curate of nearby Biggleswade, was deeply convinced of her guilt. He was closely involved in her questioning, and later gave evidence as the chief prosecutor at her trial. He published his "full and impartial account" in 1712 not long after Wenham's trial closed, and became embroiled in a brief pamphlet war with several anonymous writers who disagreed that Wenham embodied the traits of a witch.

The previous owner of this volume had the foresight to bind together *A full and impartial account of the discover of sorcery & witchcraft* with two other works: *Case of the Hertfordshire witchcraft consider'd. Being an examination of a book, entitl'd, A full and impartial account of the discovery of sorcery & witchcraft*, a response to Bragge, and *Witchcraft further display'd*, an additional account by Bragge rebutting his critics. All three pamphlets were published in 1712, the same year as Wenham's trial.