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Prominence of Manicules within Early Editions of the *Malleus Maleficarum*

Abstract: Marginal notation is extremely common in incunabula. The Portland State University *Malleus Maleficarum* (1490) is no exception to this trend, and contains various types of marginal notation throughout the text. Among them are three examples of manicules, a form of notation where readers draw a hand to note important sections of a text. This paper examines the frequency of manicules in fifteen different early copies of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, along with the sections of the text in which the manicules are concentrated, in order to ascertain whether or not the usage of the PSU *Malleus Maleficarum* shares similarities with other existing copies and to see if broader patterns in marginal notation of the *Malleus* can be discerned.

Within the Portland State University *Malleus Maleficarum*, many different methods of marginal notation can be identified; *Nota Bene* markers, *exempla*, as well as written commentary are all examples of this variety. Another method that can be observed is the creation of “manicules,” drawings of hands, often (but not always) pointing towards sections of the text, from the margins, or in between columns. In attempting to better understand how the PSU *Malleus Maleficarum* was utilized, it is useful to ascertain whether or not the frequency of manicules within the PSU *Malleus* is consistent with other early copies.

In order to answer this, one must first know what a manicule is. Manicules are an admittedly old form of noting passages in a text that the reader sought to highlight, often because they saw the passage as containing something important, useful, or otherwise noteworthy. In order to note the passage, readers sometimes created a manicule, often with a singular outstretched finger pointing toward a notable lines or phrases. It is important to note that not all manicules are the same. While many are well detailed, with an anatomically correct number of

fingers or a well-detailed wrist, others are very basic, with little more than a finger pointing towards the text. Additionally, while manicules are almost always found pointed towards the text, instances have been located where that is not the case, such as in the Portland State University codex's copy of the the *Fasciculus temporum*.

Knowledge of what manicules are and how they were used can help us better understand how the PSU *Malleus* was used by its owners. By going through fifteen additional copies of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, identifying the number of manicules, cataloging where they appear, and assessing this data, we can determine whether or not the manicules, and hence patterns of use, in our *Malleus* differ from those in other copies.

Methodology

In undertaking this task, I examined, utilizing the Incunabula Short Title Catalog, a useful sample size of fifteen available online copies of the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Of the fifteen copies I analyzed, their editions ranged from 1486/7 to 1496. Once the raw data had been collected, it was necessary to dissect and categorize it further. The *Malleus Maleficarum* is divided into three books. The first book sets out to prove the existence of sorcery; the second book discusses what sorceresses do, and how to counteract them. Finally, the third book discusses how to investigate and convict the sorceresses.¹ I utilized the divisions of the text to plot the frequency of manicules to see whether or not there were broader trends, with certain sections being marked more than others. Finally, I entered all of this data onto a spreadsheet, with links to the copies of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (where possible), in order to make referencing the data easier.

¹ See Mackay, 10-11.

Results

Across the fifteen copies of the *Malleus Maleficarum* I processed, I was able to identify 119 manicules, or an average of just under eight per copy. The Portland State University copy of the *Malleus Maleficarum* contained three separate manicules, all of which were contained within the second book of the text. The concentration of all three manicules in the second section of the text may suggest that its readers were interested in how to counteract sorcery, although this is a tentative assertion.

At an initial glance, one could compare the three manicules present in the PSU *Malleus*, next to the average of just under eight per copy in the sample, and identify it as well below the average, and perhaps abnormal. However, this would be misleading. Eight out of the fifteen copies of the *Malleus* analyzed, a majority, contained no manicules whatsoever. Of the seven that contained manicules, only four of them contained eight or more. Two copies of the *Malleus* analyzed contained 31 and 48 manicules, respectively. Interestingly, both of these copies were printed in 1494. As a result, these two *Malleuses* contain two-thirds of all the manicules located among the fifteen copies.

When the gross number of 119 manicules is broken down by the three aforementioned books, a trend can be quickly identified. Among the *Malleus* copies, the first book contains 71 manicules, the second contained 36, and the third contained 12. From this, it would appear that those who used and marked copies of the *Malleus Maleficarum* focused on the first section more than the second, and the second more than the third. While it may be initially attractive to claim that readers of the *Malleus Maleficarum* found the first book more engaging or useful than the others, it could also be just as true that the users of the *Malleus* simply were more likely to mark the beginning as opposed to the end, as a result of starting their reading of the text with the first

book. In this way, late medieval and early modern readers can be seen as similar to the average student: more observant during the beginning of a reading than compared to the end.

A striking comparison that can be made from the data is contrast between the immense number of manicules present in some copies of the *Malleus* versus the eight copies that contained, collectively, zero manicules. This contrast may suggest that manicules, as a form of notation, were not nearly as ubiquitous as, say, *Nota Bene* markers or underlining. Within the scope of these metrics, the Portland State University *Malleus Maleficarum* does not seem to be inconsistent at all, and its users seem to be relatively comparable to others.

Other Notes

It is important to note that this paper only pertains to the frequency of manicules within the fifteen *Malleuses* analyzed. While going through the copies, it was quite common to see other forms of notation frequently appear: *Nota Bene* markers, *exempla*, underlining, marginal commentary, etc. Quite often, the margins of certain pages were full of various forms of notation, giving credence to the notion that the *Malleus* was an often-read manual. However, multiple copies also contained little to no marginal notation, which may alternatively suggest that arguments that the *Malleus Maleficarum* was routinely used, in witchcraft trials or for other purposes, have been overstated. Diving into the history of individual owners throughout time would be necessary to expand this hypothesis.

Perhaps the most important factor to note is the existence of less than legible notation within various copies of the *Malleus*. On multiple occasions, it was difficult to discern between what may have been an example of a manicule, and what may have just been some other form of notation. In these instances, those manicules were not counted. The 119 that were finally tallied

represent a safe count. It is entirely possible that the users of these *Malleuses* intended for certain notations to be manicules, and we simply cannot tell as a result of damage, aging, or a lack of artistic talent.

Survivorship bias is another topic that may be pertinent to this area. Copies of the *Malleus* that were heavily used are entirely likely to have been damaged more over time, which could result in a sample of *Malleuses* that were, in fact, used less than the average copy of its time. This notion may call into question research into *Malleus* usage as a whole, or may have little effect on the data altogether. Analysis into sales records, age of existing copies, number of users and owners, storage methods, and damage to copies may be fruitful in following this path of inquiry further.

In the future, this topic is extremely viable for further research. By examining only the manicules present in the *Malleuses*, and comparing those to the PSU copy, it was not possible to find any evidence showing that the PSU copy was an outlier. As has been covered, however, there are many forms of marginal notation that are quite common throughout these copies. As the work of cataloging online copies of the *Malleus* has been accomplished, it would be easy to expand this project to examine other forms of marginal notation. If a future researcher was able to expand this project to include *Nota Bene* markers and *exempla* into the dataset, it is entirely likely we would be able to find out more about the usership of the PSU *Malleus Maleficarum*. Of course, it would also be useful to double check the work that has been done in this paper, as the previously mentioned presence of inconclusive manicules yields towards caution. Regardless, this topic has much more work that can be done.

Conclusion

The Portland State University copy of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1490) contains three separate examples of manicules, all of which were concentrated in the second book of the text, which revolves around what sorceresses do as well as how to counteract them.² This number, if the results from the dataset acquired are consistent with the overall body of *Malleuses*, would indicate that nothing about the user base of the PSU *Malleus* is abnormal. Perhaps what can be learned from this is that the PSU *Malleus* was used similarly to other existing copies, although this conclusion is tentative. Further research into this topic is warranted.

² Mackay, 10.

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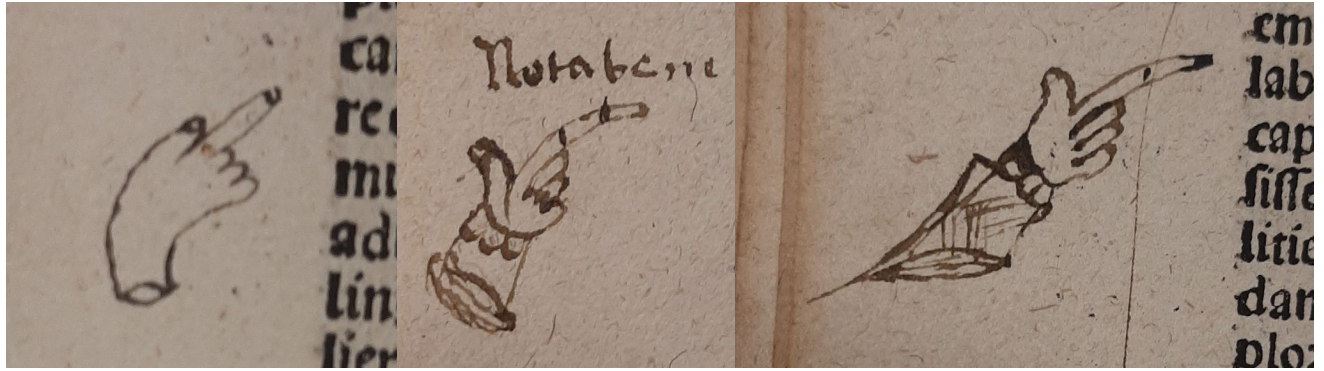
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Appendix

Images of Manicules in the Portland State University *Malleus Maleficarum*



Raw Dataset

	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Total
South Carolina M. M. 1490	6	2	0	8
Wolfenbuttel M. M. 1490	0	0	0	0
Dusseldorf M. M. 1489 OR 1494	0	0	0	0
Technische Universität Darmstadt M. M. 1494	21	10	0	31
National Library of Medicine M. M. 1494	37	1	10	48
PSU Malleus	0	3	0	3
Munich Library M. M. 1486 - 1487	0	0	0	0
Paris Library M. M. 1487	0	0	0	0
Bibliothèque Universitaire, Liège, Belgique 1494	0	0	0	0
Bonn University 1494	0	1	1	2

Munich Library M. M. 1495	0	0	0	0
Dusseldorf M. M. 1492 - 1495	0	0	0	0
German National Museum M. M. 1492	1	15	1	17
Munich Library M.M. 1496	0	0	0	0
Dusseldorf M.M. 1496	6	4	0	10
Total	71	36	12	119