In 1982 the research group Witchcraft and Sorcery in the Netherlands was founded. It flourished for about a decade, producing thorough overviews of Dutch witchcraft trials and cases of bewitchment, including a book-length bibliography. Cases of bewitchment were already found in the early fifteenth century and lasted as late as the mid-twentieth century; the trials were introduced around 1500 and came to a relatively early stop around 1600, the precise dates depending on the jurisdiction in which they occurred. Given the preference of Dutch historians for everyday-life witchcraft, there is still enough archival material to base new studies on, not to mention the possibility of restudies. The historiography has also not neglected the intellectual engagement with witchcraft although the material is less abundant. But after about ten fruitful years, the research group came to an end, partly because the prospect of further theses on the subject had become slim. To have two new witchcraft theses published, both in 2011, can thus only be welcomed. Both are by Flemish researchers who found a supervisor in Dutch universities, in Groningen and Nijmegen respectively, both deal with the more elite approaches to witchcraft, focussing on Johan Wier (Weyer) and two prints by Pieter Breugel (Brueghel) the Elder. Regrettably, however, the initial excitement fades very quickly, as it appears that the expertise built up by the Dutch research group has largely been neglected. Both authors lack historical sensitivity that could have better contextualized their chosen subject and made their interpretations more convincing than they are at present.

1 Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Willem Frijhoff (Eds.), Nederland betoverd. Toverij en hekserij van de veertiende tot in de twintigste eeuw (Amsterdam, 1987), a selection translated as: Witchcraft in the Netherlands from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Century (Rijswijk, 1991); Fred Matter et al., Toverij in Nederland, 1795–1985 (Amsterdam, 1990).

Theses allow the researcher to delve into a subject in an original manner. To assess this in the context of a review necessitates selecting particular arguments or pieces of historical evidence, as it is impossible to repeat the entire process. In witchcraft research an important touchstone is how the authorship of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) is discussed. As the witchcraft historian Maxwell-Stuart wrote: “It is now generally accepted that Jacob Sprenger was not the co-author of the Malleus.” Those who disagree and rather subscribe to the contrary view of Christopher Mackay, another translator, and still feature Sprenger as the co-author of Heinrich Kramer (Institoris) at least need to take on the German experts who provided the basis for Maxwell-Stuart’s conclusions. Ignoring the scholarly debate is not an option. Yet Hoorens, a social psychologist, used the Mackay edition and does exactly that. In her book a proper historical discussion is rendered into a smooth narrative with the obstacles ironed out.

The central point of her book is a reconsideration of the motives behind Wier’s best known work *De praestigiis daemonum* (On the illusions of devils) of 1563. According to Hoorens in the period just before and during the time Wier wrote the first version of his book only a few witch trials took place. “It is therefore impossible that Wier reacted to the witch hunts ‘of his time’” (p. 20). Later she repeats the conclusion offering more substantiation (p. 187). It nevertheless remains inaccurate: Wier himself was involved in a trial of a cunning man in Arnhem in 1549 and 1550, which Hoorens acknowledges (pp. 99–103), and in the following years the prosecution of witches increased in Guelders and especially in Nijmegen and the Betuwe, the region between the rivers Maas and Rhine, right on Wier’s doorstep. The author’s neglect of relevant literature can be considered as even more serious than the *Malleus* issue, as Hoorens uses the alleged lack of witch trials as one of her main arguments why Wier’s major work was directed at the Catholic Church, rather

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5 See the entry ‘Malleus Maleficarum’ by Werner Tschacher on www.historicum.net, Hexenforschung.
6 My translation. Dutch: “Wier kan dus niet op de heksenjachten ‘van zijn tijd’ hebben gereageerd.”