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ABSTRACT

From the later Middle Ages throughout the early modern period, the biblical injunction to "test the spirits" became the subject of an increasing number of treatises and practical case studies. The phrase was understood as an imperative to verify whether the preternatural abilities claimed by some individuals—chiefly women—derived from a divine, or rather from a demonic, spiritual origin. Efforts to locate spirits within the body, to map their interactions with individuals, and to exorcize them if they were determined to be evil in character, all were implicated in this centuries-long effort to distinguish good from evil inspiration. While it is self-evident that such practices had religious implications, this article argues that they also had much broader ramifications for the intellectual history of European culture. As the discernment of spirits grew and flourished, it helped foster the development of a culture of testing unseen dimensions of reality more broadly. The discourse of discernment of spirits represents a form of epistemological inquiry—a concern with verification of assumed truths, and with testing evidence—that challenges conventional narratives about the rise of experimental science.

CLARE'S TRANCES

In 1318 a witness at the preliminary canonization hearing for Clare of Montefalco was asked to define a term: "What is trance [*raptus*]?" For an aspiring holy woman like Clare and her devotees, altered states of consciousness were well-known, an utterly predictable side effect of union with the divine. Thus Joanna, the witness, had a precise answer ready at hand: "A trance is an intense and powerful elevation of the mind into God. When someone is in a trance they feel nothing, and do not perceive any exterior sensations with their bodily senses." As Joanna's answer was dutifully recorded by a notary, the interviewer

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posed a follow-up question: "The witness was asked about any defect of the womb, or infirmities of the body or heart, and about epilepsy; that is, whether Clare suffered from any of those illnesses which sometimes can make their victims seem as if outside themselves, or out of their senses."[1] Joanna emphatically denied this possibility.

Attempts to clarify the precise etiology of Clare's trances were an ongoing aspect of this particular canonization inquiry, however; and one trance in particular was the focus of extensive discussion. During her lifetime Clare frequently had recounted a special vision she had received while in a state of trance: she met Jesus on the road to Calvary, and permitted him to plant his cross inside her heart. So often and so passionately did Clare describe this trance vision, that after her death her sisters performed an autopsy on her body. They removed her heart and cut it open, scrutinizing the organ itself for authenticating signs of Clare's reported visionary experience; many of the women present at this postmortem gave testimony about it at the canonization hearing. All agreed that they had discovered a crucifix inside the heart formed directly from the cardiac flesh itself. Though other witnesses disputed the miraculous nature of the crucifix—one individual from outside the convent deemed it a malefice, a fraud perpetrated by the nuns—their impulse to seek public proof of a private revelation was, strategically speaking, shrewd. If, in a metaphysical sense, Clare's mind was in God, then in a very concrete, material sense, God was inside her.

The concern with trance manifested in Clare's canonization inquiry arises from the intensifying late medieval care for the testing, or discernment, of spirits.[2] These synonymous phrases—"testing of spirits," "discernment of spirits"—refer to the scriptural imperative to evaluate the genesis of ostensibly miraculous behaviors. In brief, the practice of discerning spirits was a complicated technique for authenticating divine miracles through the systematic suggestion and elimination of alternate heuristic frameworks within which individual charisms could be understood. The logic of discernment proceeded along the following lines: Were apparently miraculous phenomena, such as trances, truly supernaturally accomplished? If so, then were they due to the intervention of the divine or of a demonic spirit? If not, were they simulations—human deceptions? Or might they have resulted from an organic pathology or state of mental instability?

In sum, the discernment of spirits was a pluralistic form of inquiry negotiated through several different juxtapositions: natural/supernatural, divine/demonic, and genuine/simulated. That this series of alternatives was present in the minds of those conducting the inquiry into Clare of Montefalco is quite

clear, to return to the specific example with which we began. As it turns out, the witness Joanna's definition of trance was quite sophisticated, for it harmonized well with more learned articulations of the phenomenon. The notion that a visionary's mind enters into the divine, while the bodily senses become dormant, echoes hagiographical and theological descriptions of trance rather closely. Yet this happy convergence of understanding was far from sufficient to establish Clare's sanctity, for it was known that trances could arise from several different kinds of stimuli, the *least* likely of which was direct divine intervention. Hence the follow-up question to Joanna posing alternative diagnoses, from epilepsy to uterine defects, which could engender a similarly altered state of consciousness. Joanna firmly refused these suggested medical explanations: Clare's trances were supernaturally, not naturally, engendered.

Significantly, however, the best proof for the authentically divine character of Clare's trances was yet another kind of medical testimony: the detailed descriptions of the amateur autopsy and of Clare's heart. The crucifix-impressed heart was offered up as empirical proof of Clare's trances, of their divine character, and of the convergence between Clare's claims and her actual experiences. To autopsy—literally, to see for oneself—is, here, to seek visible evidence of the otherwise unseen reality of the vision world: a primitive form of spiritual forensics. This directs our attention to another important point in this debate: the natural and the supernatural were not diametrically opposed to each other in medieval and early modern discussions of the discernment of spirits. Rather, they tended to interpenetrate each other and are better understood as arranged along a spectrum, rather than as strict polarities. Even as the natural sphere was being marked off more and more frequently throughout these centuries, it also increasingly was viewed as having a symbiotic relationship with the supernatural in certain contexts. The relationship between nature and supernature was not irreconcilable, but cooperative. As Alain Boureau has noted, there was a tendency in thirteenth-century thought "to situate, within human nature, a possibility for cooperation between that nature and a supernatural causality."[3] In sum, though we might expect the discernment of spirits to be a purely supernaturalist and metaphysical branch of study, in fact discernment was, concurrently, a highly naturalized and empiricist discourse in the later Middle Ages and beyond. It was, in short, a form of scientific inquiry that sought to verify, as empirically as possible, the unseen causes of observable behaviors such as trance or prophesizing.

Given the compound nature of this kind of inquiry, it should not be surprising that discernment's traces are preserved in multiple evidentiary genres.

Indeed, treatises explicitly devoted to the discernment of spirits constitute a relatively small portion of the available evidence for discernment in the Middle Ages; and even when such texts become more numerous in the early modern period, they tend to enshrine and repeat the insights of their predecessors rather than add new momentum to the discussion. Alongside such works, then, historians of discernment look to several other forms of texts that addressed this question along varying axes of juxtaposition. Hagiographies, canonization proceedings, and preaching exempla and miracle compilations tell us how medieval and early modern Europeans defended and legitimized attributions of divine intervention into the lives of specific individuals. Exorcists' manuals, inquisitorial proceedings, and witchcraft treatises lay forth detailed epistemologies of malign "anti-miracles" or mere *mira* (wonders). Medical treatises and encyclopedias describe pathological syndromes that could conceivably produce physiological behaviors that superficially resembled certain kinds of miracles. Moreover, each of these different branches of the discernment debate spilled over into the others, and thus continually shifted the terms of inquiry in new directions. Although all the above issues were present throughout the discussion of discernment over the *longue durée*, their degree of prominence varied significantly over time. Indeed, the frequent, kaleidoscopic recombinations of different discourses and investigations render the history of discernment a particularly fruitful organizing device for exploring the cultural history of late medieval and early modern Europe.

To translate this situation into the terms of inquiry suggested by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, the individual issues collected under the testing of spirits enterprise may be understood as a series of interlinked experimental systems, the epistemic object of which was a mysterious event or behavior—that is, a potential miracle. "Miracles," the objects of inquiry for the discernment system, in all its loosely articulated components, are thus both the precondition of inquiry and the epistemic products of the "science of discernment" itself. They arise within this particular discourse yet also serve to reproduce the conditions of necessity for further debate. Indeed, the history of the discernment of spirits is one of continually shifting terrain: the possible field of explanations for a particular miracle was continually being reframed without ever being fully constituted. In this context, Rheinberger's words aptly describe miracles as epistemic things: "The coherence of an experimental system does not . . . depend on the explicit resolution of contradictions. As long as its differential replication goes on, the appearance of a new trait related to the epistemic object under scrutiny need not eliminate earlier traits. They may, however, decrease in prominence, be reduced to marginality,

dissolve into background noise, or simply be forgotten."[4] Our contribution aims to trace this shifting and continually reconstitutive process concerning the discernment of spirits from the thirteenth through the eighteenth centuries.

THE SHAPE OF THE QUESTION

In its original, eschatological context, the injunction to "test the spirits" found in the first letter of John referred narrowly to the evaluation of the divine or demonic underpinnings of prophecy and other charismatic leadership claims advanced within the primitive Church. Perhaps inevitably, interest in the issue declined with the delay of the Parousia and the subsequent institutionalization of a formal clerical hierarchy. The holding of a consecrated office, rather than the ability to prophesy or pronounce spellbinding sermons, became the standard basis of authority within the Church by the late fourth century and beyond. But it was not until the twelfth century that the testing of spirits again became a hot topic of debate, as communities struggled to interpret the behaviors of a newly expanding populace of self-proclaimed lay prophets, teachers, and visionaries. The contemporary outpouring of interest in *imitatio Christi* led many to wonder whether some were, rather, the *pseudo-Christi* whose advent Jesus had predicted just before the end times. With increasing momentum from the thirteenth century onward, Church leaders tried to foster an atmosphere of caution concerning individuals who displayed unusual, apparently miraculous physical and intellectual powers. The theologian and bishop William of Auvergne, for example, warned of the existence of a demonic hierarchy of "anti-saints" modeled on the divine, but "in thrall to demons."[5] The latter use their victims to "parallel and assimilate [infernal] orders to [celestial] orders. For instance, false apostles to God's holy apostles, and also false martyrs to God's holy martyrs, and in the same way with confessors and virgins."[6] Personal confessors to visionaries, and even sometimes their hagiographers, openly wondered whether their spiritual charges were deceiving them and colluding with the ancient enemy: "If, in detriment to the truth, she lied repeatedly when speaking about God, about the saints, and about herself, then it necessarily follows that she cannot be a member of Christ, who is Truth, but a member of the Devil, who is a Lie and the father thereof."[7] Meanwhile, popes from Innocent III onward warned against the unchecked enthusiasm of the masses for anyone credited with a miraculous healing, however spurious. By seizing control over canonization, he and his successors arrogated to themselves sole authority to define the realm of the

immanent supernatural.[8] As Innocent noted in one sermon, "We must beware, lest in seeking saintly patronage we give offense by using as intercessors persons whom God hates."[9]

It is striking that, from the beginning of the medieval revival of interest in the discernment of spirits and on through the early modern period, this set of concerns clustered most insistently around members of the "fragile sex." Although the later Middle Ages has long been associated with the "rise of the female saint,"[10] this process was neither linear nor uncontested. Indeed, at the same moment that more and more women began to gain attention for their claims to celestial visions, suspicions concerning women's reliability when describing their supernatural experiences grew. Concurrently, there also was a sharp increase in reports of women being defined as demoniacs—that is, as possessed by demons.[11] In fact, the external etiologies of the two syndromes—divine and demonic possessions or seizure—were represented in such similar terms as to be indistinguishable. Both visionaries and demoniacs were likely to be women who entered into immobile and insensible trance states, and to claim special gifts such as xenoglossia or prophetic knowledge. Both categories of person were noted for a cluster of identical physical signs and symptoms, including the ability to live without food, reports of levitation, and instances of strange bloating or other physiological transformation. In addition, observers of these phenomena wondered about the possibility of simulated sanctity; female religious movements like the Beguines attracted early and frequently repeated accusations of both malingering and hubris. The following satirical verse from the Old French *Diz des Béguines* encapsulates this theme well:

Anything a Beguine says
You must interpret in a good light.
For it is all about religion,
Everything in her life:
Her utterances are prophecy . . .
If she weeps, it is devotion.
If she sleeps, she is in a trance;
If she dreams, it is a vision.
If she lies, don't worry about it.[12]

The verse is witty precisely because it plays on the dynamic we have outlined: if the experiential claims of religious laywomen were not falsifiable, then perhaps neither were they believable.

Since sainthood was overwhelmingly associated with the masculine sex, noble blood, and clerical or monastic status, poor laywomen's claims to divine inspiration were inherently controversial.[13] Inversely, since demonic possession also was a sex-related phenomenon that was thought to afflict women far more often than men, a negative interpretation of unusual or extreme behaviors among women must have seemed obvious to many observers.[14] The naturalization of these categories as gendered in their essence—saintliness as essentially masculine, demonic possession as essentially feminine—bred resistance to interpretations of charismatic women as divinely, rather than demonically, motivated. Thus issues of authority, gender, and social structure all inflected the discernment of spirits. As a result, relatively few laywomen received the ultimate imprimatur of the papacy: canonization as saints.[15] The initial inquiry into Clare of Montefalco, for instance, did not result in a successful canonization for her within the medieval period.[16]

Women designated variously in the sources as visionaries, as demoniacs, and (increasingly over time) as ill or as deceivers, reach us already sorted into separate categories and different textual genres. Since the behaviors reported of these groups were largely identical, however, we would do well to recognize their inherent, underlying likenesses. This insight has important ramifications. For one thing, we cannot simply assume that behind every hagiography lay a cult of saintly veneration. In many cases, the individual's circle of devotees may in fact have been quite restricted: the inclusion of just one fervent follower who was literate could make all the difference in preserving a record of the individual as a saint, rather than according to some other interpretation. Conversely, some hostile stories about demoniacs, or about women who either fantasized or simulated trances, might in other circumstances have been tales about divinely inspired visionaries. Reading against the grain of laudatory sources reveals righteous detractors; reading against the grain of hostile sources reveals pious devotees. The charismatic women under contention are clustered together somewhere in the middle of these hostile and hagiographic viewpoints. If we, as historians, unthinkingly reproduce descriptions of particular individuals as saints, demoniacs or deceivers, then we implicitly adopt, along with these words, the outlook of the clerical elite who composed the vast majority of our sources. In this article we would like to pose a different query instead: what politics of knowledge production were involved in decisions about whom to venerate as a saint, and whom to reject as unacceptable in various ways? These categories should be used as starting points, rather than end points, analyzed as emergent social, institutional, and gendered constructions rather than simply replicated.

In short, the authoritative quality of individual categorizations such as "saint," "demoniac," and "faker" depends on the degree to which these labels come to seem natural, thus obscuring the processes of negotiation and accommodation by which they were produced.[17] As Ernesto Laclau has noted, "The process of representation itself creates retroactively the entity to be represented."[18] The discernment of spirits may be regarded as a translation, into religious terms, of precisely this process of retroactive representation.

THE MEDIEVAL NATURALIZATION OF DISCERNMENT

At the core of discernment anxieties lay a simple verity about the opacity of individual experience. The celestial visions that women like Clare (and generations of her successors) claimed they received during trance states were completely private, internal experiences. Hence they remained unverifiable by outside observers: absent a crucifix in the heart, it was difficult to posit an empirical basis through which to authenticate these individualistic assertions of divine commerce. Innocent III rather incisively gave voice to this dilemma in a letter of 1199, stating that "it is not enough for someone flatly to assert that they have been sent by God, when that commission is internal and private, for any heretic can say as much."[19] Since others could not directly apprehend spiritual infusions, the discernment of spirits was deferred to a discernment of bodies. The testing of spirits was, at bottom, a meticulous investigation into the ways in which particular bodily "signs" could be read and interpreted, for, as Aquinas wrote, "the same bodily sign can indicate many things."[20] Since the body was viewed as a material aggregate of one's moral status, "reading" the body was considered an effective way to discern spirits; yet the bodily behaviors at issue were multivalent. In short, the somatic signs under consideration were ciphers in need of decoding, epistemic things in experimental flux, awaiting categorization and determinacy as divine, demonic, or human in origin.

As an initial case study and an organizing device for this section, we return to the sign with which this paper began: trance. By focusing on just one of the epistemic elements that figured into the testing of spirits, the discussion of early naturalizing tendencies within this discourse will gain coherence. It should be kept in mind, however, that the same arguments could be made about other disputed miracles. Prophecies, occult knowledge, inedia, and xenoglossia could all, mutatis mutandis, be discussed in similar ways. All were subject to multiple interpretations, both natural and supernatural; all needed to be discerned;

all gained clarity of representation through a process of careful probation, elimination of alternatives, and final categorization.

Trance states, then, were thought to occur for three reasons, as Aquinas explained with characteristic clarity: "First from a bodily cause, as is clear from those who . . . by some illness have lost their reason. Second, from the power of demons, as with those who are possessed. Third, from the divine power . . . when one is lifted up by the Spirit of God to a supernatural level, with abstraction from the senses."[21] It is important to note that Aquinas did not originate this set of ideas so much as reflect a broad, commonsense understanding of altered states of consciousness prevalent throughout later medieval society. It is not surprising, then, to find that his theological formulation accords well with actual case histories we may observe "on the ground" in the later Middle Ages. The illiterate nun Joanna's definition of trance, offered some forty-five years after Aquinas's death, suggests the degree to which the definition of divine trances, at least, was a matter of broad cultural consensus: "A trance is an intense and powerful elevation of the mind into God. When someone is in a trance they . . . do not perceive any exterior sensations with their bodily senses." Hagiographies, too, often employ the idiom of withdrawal from the "exterior senses" in order to better access the "interior senses" of the soul. Once this withdrawal was accomplished, and the distractions of the material world were nullified, the entranced visionary was better able to apprehend spiritual realities. The body went into a state of dormancy, as it were, in order to give the spirit heightened powers of perception. Further, each trance state left its mark on the individual, rendering her more apt to enter into such states again in the future. Of course, if every trance state (and, mutatis mutandis, other miracles that functioned as epistemic things within this system) were understood narrowly in these terms, then there would be no need for the discernment of spirits: trance would be a transparent signifier of the divine presence. But this emphatically was not the case: descriptions of demonic possession also prominently feature episodes of alienation from the senses among the physical symptoms of demoniacs. We possess some close descriptions of demonic trances, and they are presented in extremely similar terms to those in female hagiographies. In one case, for example, immediately after the entrance of an unclean spirit into a woman, she entered a trance in which "her limbs . . . were contracted with the most extreme rigidity, and her mouth closed so tightly that a knife could not open it even a little bit."[22] Compare this with a passage from the vita of Catherine of Siena, describing one of her divine raptures: "Her hands and feet used to contract . . . so rigidly that they would be crushed or broken before they could be moved in

any way from their place."[23] The focus on the rigidity and immovability of the body in both cases is striking. Likewise, the complete insensibility (or "withdrawal from the exterior senses") that was characteristic of divine trance states also is found in demonically altered states of consciousness. After the entrance of three demons into a little girl named Pasqua, for instance, "for five years she remained without memory or sense, although she occasionally had lucid intervals."[24] These rigid and insensible trance states are the same physical idiom as the episodes described in hagiographical texts, with the sole distinction being that in these descriptions they are categorized as a symptom of demonic, rather than divine, possession.

We also know of cases of women who were accused of feigned sanctity—that is, of consciously mimicking the signs of divine possession in order to gain a reputation as a saint or visionary. Trances figured prominently in these instances. Indeed, trances were so intrinsic to the definition of visionary activity that they became convenient shorthand for signifying the category of "visionary" to observers. A Beguine named Sibylla of Marsal, for instance, attained a lively reputation for her trances and visions within her local community in the year 1240. The bishop of Metz, Jacques, was highly impressed with her after having viewed her in an apparently immobile and insensible trance state; the Franciscans and Dominicans preached her merits; and a local housewife provided her with free food and shelter. Yet Sibylla later was found to be simulating for her entire career: her trances were deceits, elaborate pantomimes of immobility and insensitivity. Significantly, her fakery was discovered when a devotee spied on her during a time when she had announced that she was expecting an angelic visit, and that she would remain locked in her room, entranced by visions. The witness, hoping for the edifying sight of a visionary in rapture, instead saw, through a crack near the ceiling, the Beguine up and about, making her bed. A later search of her room revealed (we are told) hidden delicacies to eat as well as a diabolic mask, which she apparently had used to impersonate a demon in the lanes and byways of Marsal, in this guise complaining about the sanctity of her "true" self.[25] Detailed information about such cases (whether we are talking about "real" frauds or about cases that for specific reasons were adjudged to be fraudulent) is rare for the Middle Ages, though in later centuries examples of this kind are well attested. Given the various negative etiologies of trance and the sincere anxieties concerning such modes of communication with the divine, however, it hardly is surprising that trance behavior often attracted accusations of foul play even (perhaps especially) in the careers of some of the best-known female religious figures of the later Middle Ages. When Catherine of Siena

visited the papal court in Avignon, for example, three members of the curia came to quiz her about her trances. As a witness at her canonization proceeding later described the scene, "They asked her very many terribly difficult questions, in particular about those trances of hers and about her unique way of life and (since the Apostle says that an angel of Satan can transfigure himself into an angel of light) about how she could recognize if she were deceived by the Devil? . . . There was a protracted disputation [about it]."[26]

Finally, the third cause for trance identified by Aquinas, illness, was also a significant category of analysis for the science of discernment. Trances arising from physical or mental pathologies, moreover, also were highly feminized. Thus, when Joanna was asked about the possibility of Clare's suffering from uterine defects or epilepsy, her questioner clearly was acting on current medical knowledge. By 1318 inquiring into the medical history of a visionary woman was no longer unusual, for medieval physiological theories in development since the early twelfth century held that the composition of female bodies rendered them particularly prone to natural trance states—which variously were categorized as "vertigo" (or "suffocation of the womb," thus a sex-specific malady), or as "melancholia" (a specific humoral balance that was thought to be far more common among women than men). The illness known as vertigo could produce a trance in its most advanced stages. According to descriptions of this malady, vertigo was a type of uterine defect in which an unhealthy buildup of menstrual matter in the womb gave rise to noxious vapors. As this vaporous miasma wafted upward from the pelvis, it was likely to cause a severe clouding of both the mind and the eyesight. In consequence, the victim's senses would become clogged, and she would swoon in a trance, appearing totally inanimate and unresponsive to external stimuli. Alternatively, though less commonly, these vapors could have become trapped within the uterus, and cause an inflation and lifting of the organ—the medieval version on the classical diagnosis of "hysteria," the "wandering womb." The rise of the uterus would place pressure on the diaphragm from below, leading to shortness of breath, light-headedness, and in extreme cases, delusions.[27]

The similarities between this natural form of trance and contemporary descriptions of religious trances were not lost on the encyclopedists and natural philosophers who described vertigo. For example, Vincent of Beauvais referred to the illness in his *Mirror of Doctrine*, noting that menstrual retention generates morbid vapors that, if they ascend to the head, can cause migraines, darkened vision, and finally, dizziness and altered states of consciousness.[28] Bartholomew the Englishman described vertigo in similar terms, but added frenzy to the

maleficent symptoms of the syndrome.[29] Most provocatively, one anonymous writer went so far as to complain that these natural trances, though arising from uterine pathologies, sometimes were mistakenly understood as religious in character by those who suffered from them. Silly women of this kind were likely to report seeing the various realms of the afterlife in their swoons. But, our author scolds, "this is ridiculous: the illness happens from natural causes. However [these women] think that they have been rapt from their bodies because vapors rise to their brains. If these vapors are very thick and cloudy, it appears to them that they are in hell and that they see black demons; if the vapors are light, it seems to them that they are in heaven and that they see God and his angels shining brightly."[30]

Here, with stunning casualness, a medical discourse is superimposed on reports of religious experiences as an alternate heuristic device for visions and trance behavior. Vertigo thus presents a fascinatingly detailed explanation for precisely the kinds of otherworldly visions that the majority of self-proclaimed female visionaries reported having received while in trance. The most common visions are indeed of either glittering, celestial spaces, or smoky, infernal realms. But by reframing female reports of trances and visions as typical symptoms of vertigo, then these women, far from being viewed as exalted intimates of the divine majesty, were more likely to be regarded as suffering from an excess of rotten uterine humors and their own overactive imagination.

Nor was hysteria or the vertigo syndrome the only liability of female physiology. Indeed, the more general physiological disposition of the female body also rendered women more prone to trance states than men, even when they were in the best of health. The theory of the four humors, which was used in the Middle Ages to describe different personality types as well as different body types, assigned a "cold and moist" complexion to women, one dominated by the humor known as black bile. This particular physiological balance was said to engender a highly impressionable, melancholy temperament in women; melancholia, in turn, made women particularly prone to egocentric and delusional fantasies, in which they perpetually existed at the center of great dramas. According to Bartholomew the Englishman, melancholics suffered from all kinds of ridiculously grandiose fantasies, while Vincent of Beauvais simply noted that cold-complected individuals were prone to a "habit. . . called 'alienation of the mind,' which certainly either enfeebles them or brings about harm."[31] Antoninus of Florence explained that a humoral balance that was strongly melancholic could cause a permanent alteration of the senses, leading to mania and insanity. Significantly, for Antoninus "inordinate vigils, fasts, zeal, scrupulosity, or deep

thinking" exacerbated a propensity toward melancholia.[32] Presumably women, already predisposed toward melancholia, should avoid excessive asceticism and intellectual challenges—yet these are, of course, precisely the kind of behaviors we find among women aspiring to religious authority.

Medical discourses such as these did not exist in isolation from other cultural streams; to the contrary, these ideas were subsumed within the theory and practice of discernment from the late thirteenth century onward. We already have seen this in Clare of Montefalco's canonization trial, but other examples abound. The trances of some women, for example, were tested by incredulous bystanders with pinpricks and pinches to see if they would flinch: presumably if they showed a response, this would indicate that they had not fully subtracted themselves from their exterior senses, and thus that they were not fully entranced.[33] In the fifteenth century, the nun Magdalena of Fribourg preached that she would die at a given day and hour; she duly was examined by medical doctors sent by the town council to confirm both her state of absolute trance and her expected expiration—though the latter event failed to occur.[34] Ultimately the best-known discernment writer in the whole of this long tradition, Jean Gerson, complained about those who mistakenly perceive as divine, visions that really are due to medical causes or demonic temptations: "One should attribute such visions to an injury of the imagination, and should worry about having some defect like the insane, maniacs or melancholics. One should beware lest this has been given for a condemnation, because of the enormity of past sins, so that one may be led astray by delusions."[35] The more alternate explanations existed for female trance states or other miraculous behaviors, the more unlikely it became that such events would be diagnosed as indicators of divine intervention. Conversely, the more women claimed divine intervention, the more their claims were stigmatized and explained away as demonic deceits, self-deceits, or natural pathologies. In the decades surrounding the turn of the fifteenth century, the tradition of skepticism embodied in the discernment of spirits discourse finally reached the point of specific articulation in a series of treatises dedicated to the exploration of this problem.

DISCERNMENT TREATISES

Through the late fourteenth century, the testing of spirits unfolded in a relatively uncoordinated manner. There is evidence of mounting concern with this issue, expressed in the heightened level of scrutiny directed at laywomen,

especially Beguines and Tertiaries, who claimed to have received visions; in the increasing popularity of stories about the demonically possessed, vertigo sufferers, deluded melancholics, and simulating pseudo-saints; and in the growing number of explicit references to the urgency of distinguishing the authentically divine from these other categories of pseudo-miraculous events. Yet treatises explicitly devoted to the discernment of spirits were rather slow to appear. Some earlier works, such as Henry of Freimar's *The Four Inspirations*, likely composed in the early part of the fourteenth century, discussed the different origins of various miraculous behaviors but did not offer any specific recommendations to the reader about how to discern among them.[36] We must wait until the year 1383 for a more pragmatic approach to the issue, when Henry of Langenstein, professor of theology at the University of Paris (and later the University of Vienna), composed *On the Discernment of Spirits*.[37] In turn, Langenstein was widely read in the Parisian circles frequented by Pierre D'Ailly and Jean Gerson. Although D'Ailly's two treatises *On False Prophets*[38] address the question of discernment, it was his pupil Gerson who penned the most lastingly influential treatments of the issue, shaping the debate for generations to come. The following pages therefore focus on Gerson's *On Distinguishing True Visions from False* (1401), *On the Testing of Spirits* (1415), and *On the Examination of Doctrines* (1423).[39] Like many of Gerson's compositions, these works are highly polemical yet extremely pragmatic, a combination that undoubtedly was instrumental to their success over the long term. This success stood in striking contrast to the reception of Gerson's work among his immediate contemporaries, which may be described as tepid. By the end of the fifteenth century they had become unqualified "classics" in the field, however, and they proved wildly popular in early modern print editions for centuries thereafter.[40]

But why was this collection of texts suddenly composed at this moment? The sudden proliferation of discernment texts within a relatively compact time frame may at first appear puzzling. Little had changed in the realm of saints' cults, in depictions of demoniacs, or in medical norms; why, then, did the science of discernment suddenly achieve such unprecedented visibility in the minds of prominent university thinkers like Langenstein, D'Ailly, and Gerson? The likeliest explanation is that the climate of instability brought about by the Great Schism, which lasted from 1378 to 1417, precipitated a more general crisis concerning issues of leadership at all levels of the Christian ecumene.[41] The doubling of claims to the papal mitre encouraged intellectuals to ponder the question of precisely how authority should be constituted within the Church. These thinkers—all of whom, significantly, contributed to the debate

over conciliarism as well—were actively involved in interrogating the problem of who should guide the Christian community and how. Moreover, part of the debate over leadership unfolded within the context of canonization, where the question of testing spirits already was a well-entrenched part of the discourse. Yet even as the discernment of spirits debate was moving in new directions, it remained faithful to its tradition of skepticism about women visionaries. Henry of Langenstein, for example, wrote against the proliferation of canonizations, arguing that contemporary cults for figures such as Brigit of Sweden detracted from the dignity of apostolic and patristic saints of long standing,[42] and Gerson later cited Henry's call for the restriction of saints' cults approvingly in *On the Testing of Spirits*. Though Gerson did not quote Langenstein directly, or repeat Brigit's name, the context for the reference is particularly provocative. For *On the Testing of Spirits* was commissioned by the Council of Constance specifically to determine whether Brigit of Sweden deserved the halo bestowed on her by Boniface IX, the Roman contender for the papacy during the Schism period. By making indirect reference to Brigit's case via Henry, Gerson gives a clear indication of his feelings about Brigit's cause.

The story of Brigit, the Schism, the Council of Constance, and Jean Gerson is quite a complicated one that aptly illustrates how much was at stake in the discernment of spirits debate at its apogee in the early fifteenth century. Much of Brigit of Sweden's career had been taken up with hellfire-and-brimstone prophecies based on private visions, and with her bitter campaign for the return of the papal curia to Rome from Avignon, where it had been located since 1305. Brigit's unceasing exhortations to return to Rome extended through the papal reigns of Clement VI, Urban V, and Gregory XI, and likewise was based on her claim to direct celestial revelations—which she believed exalted her, though a woman, to a mouthpiece of God. She died without ever seeing this objective achieved. Yet when Gregory XI finally did return the curia to Rome in 1377, many credited Brigit's influence on him—along with that of another famous female visionary, Catherine of Siena, who also had campaigned for this cause—with the move.

However the celebration of Gregory's return to the Eternal City was premature. His death a mere fifteen months later resulted in a contested election for his successor, a counter-election by a splinter group of clerics who moved back to Avignon, and the enduring spectacle of the Great Schism. If Brigit and Catherine were to receive credit for Gregory XI's action, then what precisely did this new development mean for the validity of their visions and inspirations? Viewed from one angle, Gregory's return validated their campaign; yet the advent of

the Schism significantly destabilized the authenticity of their prophetic claims. Would God truly have inspired these women to put into motion a series of events leading to a devastating division of the faithful? To many observers, it seemed more likely that either demonic inspiration or a stunning level of all-too-human hubris underlay Brigit's and Catherine's interference in the ecclesiastical affairs of men. The Council of Constance was convened specifically to heal the Schism and to reform Church practices such as canonization; the agenda item concerning Brigit, to which Gerson was invited to contribute *On the Testing of Spirits*, spoke to both concerns simultaneously.

Gerson's tone is not without skepticism as he introduces the question of Brigit's revelations. She "claims commonly to receive visions from heaven, in which she is treated as a friend not only by angels, but also by Christ and Mary, Agnes and other saints, who talk with her as a bridegroom to his bride." Yet Gerson sharply questioned the validity of Brigit's visions. Not only did he fear the possibility of demonic deception, even more he dreaded the frivolity of the female sex and their claims to revelation. As he continues, "To approve false and delusive and silly visions as true and solid revelations—what could be more unworthy, more foreign to this sacred Council?"[43] Though he admits the possibility that Brigit's visions may indeed be genuine, and notes that others have tested her visions in the past, "or so it is said,"[44] Gerson's hostility to Brigit's cause is unmistakable.

But how was one to tell if a vision was false, delusive, and silly? The best criterion Gerson advanced was to judge revelations according to whether they are useful. As he wrote in his 1401 work *On Distinguishing True Visions from False*, "If a miracle lacks any pious utility or necessity, it should be suspected or rejected by that fact alone. . . . In our lifetime there has been a woman famed for such revelations, whom this sign, if I am not mistaken, shows to have been out of her mind."[45] It is quite possible that these words refer either to Brigit of Sweden or to Catherine of Siena, and constitute an indirect critique of the involvement of female visionaries in Gregory XI's decision to return to Rome. Their claims that celestial visions had motivated them to urge Gregory's return certainly would qualify these revelations as lacking any "pious utility," since the end result of honoring these visions was the Schism. If Gerson was not already thinking along these lines in 1401, however, we know for certain that he held this opinion in 1423. *On the Examination of Doctrines* describes the active harm perpetrated by the plague of women visionaries who gain credibility for spurious revelations. He counsels extreme caution for those who are given charge of "the lowly, particularly ignorant and illiterate

silly women," warning that they should be cautious in assessing such women's claims to visions. Gerson continues, "Gregory XI was a perceptive witness of this, though too late. As he lay dying, holding the Body of Christ in his hands, he denounced such people . . . who recount the visions of their heads under a pretense of religion. For he himself was led astray by some people [*tales*] of this kind and, dismissing the reasonable advice of his men, he dragged himself and the Church to the brink of an impending Schism."[46]

In sum, according to Gerson's way of thinking, the direct intervention of God in daily life was a truly rare and momentous event, one that by definition occurred only in circumstances of some urgency. Hence visions that lack utility are frivolous and silly; in some cases, revelations of this kind may actively bring about harm and confusion, like the Schism. Added to this was Gerson's insistence that those most likely to publicize spurious visions were women. Though this was a traditional aspect of the discernment of spirits, it now was enshrined within Gerson's formal articulation of the terms of debate, from which vantage point it was to govern much of the subsequent discussion of this topic. Gerson's language bespeaks an ill-tempered frustration with self-proclaimed women visionaries, whose pretensions he regards as always harmful to some degree:

> If the person is a woman, it is especially necessary to consider how she acts . . . now with extended narrations of her visions, now with some other topic of discussion. . . . If this preoccupation had no other detriment than an abundant waste of precious time, that still would be more than enough for the Devil. Know, in addition, that a woman also has an incurable itching lust for looking and speaking, not to mention touching. . . . No one will be surprised if such people turn toward falsehoods and away from the truth, especially if these are women of the curious kind, about whom the Apostle says, "Always learning yet never reaching the knowledge of truth." Where there is no truth, there necessarily is vanity and falsehood.[47]

Gerson's harshness toward the female sex is particularly striking given the fact that, as is well-known, he also penned a short tract in a defense of Joan of Arc's divine commission.[48] As Caciola has argued elsewhere, however, Gerson considered Joan to be the exception that proved the rule of women's incapacity: she acted with virile restraint and moderation, rather than displaying typically "feminine" histrionics. It helped, also, that Joan fought for a cause in which Gerson himself fervently believed: he had suffered personally at the hands of the Burgundian faction during the Hundred Years' War. Most important, however,

Joan claimed a legitimizing authority that was not based on extreme asceticism and weeping, on the one hand; and on direct divine revelations and altered states of consciousness, on the other. This alone set her apart from women like Brigit and Catherine (and, indeed, from most medieval women who aspired to achieve spiritual reputations). By contrast, Joan neither mortified her body nor engaged in extended meditations and lamentations; she remained conscious and present in this world, only hearing the voices of two female martyrs, encouraging her and guiding her along her path. In addition, Joan did not attempt to teach, to lead churchmen, or to proffer advice; she had no unique religious ideas to transmit and maintained a deep humility toward the clergy. Joan thus avoided what Gerson considered to be the excesses typical of feminine religious claims: hubristic reports of direct divine commerce or of miraculous endurance, and attempts to offer religious teachings based on these experiences. In sum, Gerson saw Joan as someone who had transcended the disability of her sex by modeling herself after a pair of physically courageous, virgin martyrs from the early days of the Church: her "voices," Margaret of Antioch and Catherine of Alexandria, often were characterized in sermons and hagiographies by the term "virile," and Gerson himself regarded the age of the martyrs as a time of masculine strength within the Church. The re-gendering of Joan was further suggested by her adoption of masculine forms of comportment and clothing. She was thus masculine in her actions, though female in sex—a differentiation between sex and gender that Gerson appears to be groping toward in his writing on the Maid.

In short, while Gerson was willing to countenance the idea that some laywomen could be spiritually inspired for specific purposes of God, the confines within which this seemed possible to him clearly were both narrow and exceptional. His broader discourse was strongly skeptical of women's claims to spiritual revelation, both in general terms and in specific reference to spiritual "idiom" of divine possession, so favored by women of the time. Gerson, in short, was not an innovator, but he did succeed in bringing a long tradition of simmering antifeminine discourse to the point of incandescence. The qualities and lifestyles to which he objected, the general skepticism with which he approached women (even if he was willing to admit of exceptions), none of it was new. As we have seen, there had been long-standing concern about precisely these issues ever since women first began to make claims of visionary authority. Rather, the importance of Gerson's work lies in the fact that he articulated a formerly inchoate and scattered set of ideas in the form of cohesive, targeted treatises dedicated to the topic of testing spirits. Viewed in this light, one may say that Gerson's works represent the final stage in the investigation of miracles as

epistemic things: the point at which they achieved a detached, coherent status within a self-referential discourse. The discernment of spirits finally had established itself as a separate realm of inquiry, rather than remaining embedded in fragmentary form within a multitude of other textual genres. Once articulated as a distinct form or genre, the discernment of spirits became a self-reproducing discourse that only gained momentum in the succeeding centuries.

More than one hundred additional theological treatises on the discernment of spirits were composed between 1500 and 1700, the vast majority by theologians and a few by practicing exorcists. Reading this large body of literature, one is immediately struck by its backward-looking character. The authors and compilers of these texts regularly borrowed entire sections from one another. All also referred repeatedly to Jean Gerson's discussions of the topic, either explicitly or, at least, by quoting him without attributing their explanations and recommendations to the Sorbonnist. During the same period, about a hundred manuals for exorcists, and many hundreds of chapters in diocesan compilations of authorized rites and liturgies, were published, all including short discussions of the discernment of spirits. This impressive number of references does not include the numerous chapters on the topic in other publications, from demonological treatises and anti-witchcraft tracts to manuals for confessors, to devotional literature and spiritual guides. The question then arises: Cui bono? What was at stake? Since discernment ideology and practices neither improved nor even transformed significantly over time, what were the theological, spiritual, and social circumstances that motivated so many people to try their hand at a task in which they all agreed (at least implicitly) that the final word already had been said? And in what ways, if any, did the practices, meaning, and discourse of discernment of spirits develop in the early modern period, given the treatises' obsessively repetitive nature?

While much of our information concerning practices of discernment in the medieval period derives from hagiographies and canonization inquiries, historical accounts of disputed inspiration, and preaching exempla (not discussed here), most of the early modern documentation is available in records of exorcism, in manuals for exorcists, and in descriptions by religious people (mostly nuns) of their spiritual travails, commonly general confessions and spiritual diaries and letters. These new literary genres, which had their origins in the later Middle Ages, indicate that the discursive frame of discernment evolved over the period from 1500 to 1700, and came to include a much larger group of participants. In tandem with this broadening of interest, the discussion about discernment also became more general in character rather than being fueled

by specific cases studies. Equally important, the proliferation of discussions of discernment in manuals for exorcists documents a new understanding of exorcism itself as an epistemic space—as a practice that was being used in the early modern period to test interior movements and occurrences even prior to a diagnosis of diabolic possession.

Three major developments, we argue in this section, made the discernment of spirits more visible in the early modern period than it had been before. First, the meaning and usage of exorcism itself expanded. For lack of a better means to discern spiritual presences and bodily interiority, observing external signs remained the only available method to assess the source of a claimant's experiences. By the early sixteenth century, and following Gerson's writings on the topic, it was agreed that there was nothing in the physiological symptoms themselves that could determine either a natural or a supernatural cause for ostensibly miraculous behaviors; therefore, exorcism was no longer only a method that was used a posteriori, once a possessing agency had been ruled to be diabolic, in order to expel possessing demons. From being a mere healing ritual that could be practiced by both the laity and the clergy, and by women as well as men, exorcism became by the sixteenth century the discernment mechanism itself. The rite became a diagnostic tool.

Second, and directly related to the new, expansive definition of exorcism, was the growing importance of the practice itself. Or, to put differently, it was only in the early modern period that clerical exorcists felt the need to define and regulate their practices and to separate themselves from lay exorcists, folk healers, trained physicians, and necromancers. While exorcism had begun to be codified and disseminated in ritual manuals since the beginning of the fifteenth century, this process was both vastly accelerated and significantly conventionalized by the introduction of print. Certain exorcists, like Girolamo Menghi, achieved a degree of fame for their compilations of liturgical exorcisms, which were then widely reprinted, read, and copied.

Third, the diabolization and discrediting of women's spiritual experiences, which had begun during the later Middle Ages, reached a peak when new spiritual practices (that were later to be condemned as quietist and whose unique characteristics will be addressed shortly) spread among the laity and gained in popularity. The anxiety that the new spirituality caused led early modern theologians to discern the vast majority of female aspirants for direct communication with the divine as mentally or physiologically ill; as possessed by demons rather than by the divine spirit; or as simulators and deceivers. The clerical

unease concerning the new unsupervised and unmediated access to spiritual virtuosity, combined with the morphological similarities between exterior signs of divine and diabolic possessions, mandated the development of a systematic theology of discernment of interior spirits and, with it, new discernment specialists. Exorcists were more than happy to claim this new professional expertise and identity.

EXORCISM AS AN EPISTEMIC THING

The expansion of exorcism into a method of discernment is vividly evident in the contrast between the following two examples. Sometime in the middle of the thirteenth century, a possessed woman was brought in front of Saint Anthony of Padua, a renowned exorcist. The saint's vita recorded that "so harshly was she tormented by the demon, that she filled the whole city with terror. She gave terrible bites with her teeth to the hands and feet of anyone who was able to catch her. She hurled insults and curses at everyone, mixing in terrible slanders. She threw her body about in almost unspeakable and foul ways. She even tried to burn down her house. . . . [Her family] became [so] impatient and fed up with this . . . that they tied her up with a strong chain like a dog."[49]

Three hundred years later, when Caterina Paluzzi (1573–1645)—an Italian lay visionary (and later a Dominican prioress) and a protégée of both Filippo Neri and Federico Borromeo, two of the most prominent Italian theologians of the sixteenth century—informed her spiritual director of a series of visions she had experienced, her director "said [that] if these still bothered me I should resort to exorcisms [*scongiuri*], and then come back and tell him whether they worked. I did what he said and still had the same effects and told him so, and he said I should have more exorcisms and this would help me find out if the devil was trying to deceive me."[50] Nothing in Paluzzi's autobiography would lead us to compare her to the possessed women who asked for Saint Anthony's help. Paluzzi did not exhibit any physiological signs of possession, nor did she curse, blaspheme, faint, or otherwise behave in what medieval lives of saints and exempla have taught us to expect from people who were diabolically possessed. It was visions and "internal movements" she experienced, not an affliction. And yet her confessor recommended exorcism.

Exorcism as means of discernment of spirits, let it be clear, did not replace exorcism as a healing technique. The process was one of expansion rather

than substitution. The earliest usage of exorcism in connection with discernment occurred in the early fifteenth century, when manuscript manuals of exorcistic rites based on the baptismal liturgy were first introduced into practice. At this time, they were used to discern and to verify cases of demonic possession, thus implicitly acknowledging that other causes could generate behaviors similar to those of the demonically possessed. Prescriptions for testing for demonic presences varied in form. Some texts recommended showing the suspected demoniac a picture of Saint Jerome, "which no demoniac can look at without pain."[51] Others suggested observing if the victim had a violent reaction to the recitation of biblical verses;[52] and certain manuscripts employed the conceit of "demonic language," a conjuration composed of senseless words that purportedly would force a demon to confess its presence.[53] Once the fact of demonic possession was definitively established, the officiant at the exorcism (usually, though not exclusively, envisioned as a priest) would proceed on to lengthy formulae intended to cast the demons out from the possessed body, limb by limb and part by part. Aside from highlighting this process of verification, manuscripts of exorcism provide other significant information to the historian of discernment as well, most notably their assumption that demoniacs are likely to be women. This is expressed by the clear preference, in many of these manuscripts, for feminine pronouns.[54] Just as writers like Gerson regarded women as unlikely bearers of the divine, so, too, the compilers of these manuals viewed women as the most likely victims of demonic possession. Thus these two genres converged, from opposite sides of the discernment issue, in narrowing the field of interpretation for women who claimed supernatural interventions into their lives.

It is important to note that exorcismal compilations of the fifteenth century employ a variety of methods that were shared by both the laity and the clergy, including such influential theologians as the Dominicans Johannes Nider and Heinrich Kramer. Nider was concerned about the proliferation of necromancy among the clergy, but did not find anything illicit, for example, in treating demoniacs with herbs and precious stones, as long as no incantations were used, a practice that was to be deemed superstitious the following century. He also advised exorcists to use amulets containing short prayers and blessings. Writing in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, Kramer, who relied heavily on Nider, agreed that the use of herbs and minerals in exorcism was permissible, as long as they were consecrated and as long as the rite was performed "in a simple way."[55] These are only two examples of the wide variety of exorcismal practices common in the later Middle Ages, and their approval by leading theologians. Kramer, admittedly, then went on to attack "improperly instructed priests," who,

like old women, don't observe the proper methods of exorcism. But he did not explain what constituted the proper method.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, the Catholic Church embarked on a major systematic attempt to define superstitious practices and combat them. This was due, in part, to the growing fear of demonism and to the Protestant challenge, but also to internal reform efforts.[56] This new definition of, and attack on, superstitious practices, combined with a growing body of accusations against clerical exorcists suspected of abusing their power, practicing vain rites, and even sexually abusing female demoniacs, led to the first effort to regulate exorcismal activities. Starting in the 1510s, the Spanish and later the Roman Inquisitions and leading bishops attacked exorcists (mostly Franciscan friars) for their ignorance, improper practices, and collaboration with lay healers, and for the fact that they were easily deceived by women who faked spiritual experiences or demonic possessions.

The *Libellus ad Leonem X*, an extensive program for reform, initiated by Pope Leo X in 1513, included a furious attack on priests who could not discern between licit and illicit practices and spiritual experiences. The Spanish theologian Pedro Ciruelo continued in this vein in his popular *Treatise Reproving All Superstitions and Forms of Witchcraft* of 1530. He attacked unauthorized priests who performed exorcisms by using formulae that were not approved by the Church, complaining that "such clerics are aligned with the devil." Their formulae were diabolic; they participated in a demonic scheme to deceive believers. These "ministros del Diablo" increased rather than decreased the number of demonic possessions.[57] In 1542 archbishop Gian Matteo Giberti of Verona restricted the activities of exorcists in his diocese. He ordered them to obtain a license from him or from his vicar, and threatened unlicensed exorcists with incarceration. Carlo Borromeo, archbishop of Milan, and his nephew and successor, Federico, followed suit. Between 1540 and 1630, local synods throughout Catholic Europe passed restrictions on the activities of Mendicant exorcists, limiting the practice of exorcism to a few licensed individuals under episcopal supervision. Exorcists were often censured for misuse of power, for claiming charismatic authority, and for mistaking natural afflictions for demonic possessions. By 1636 the Roman Inquisition itself, following Giberti, threatened mendicant exorcists with "severe punishments," including incarceration. That same year, during a mass possession in a convent in Carpi, the local Inquisition and the Roman Congregation intervened and forced the exorcists to cease their work, arguing that they mistook melancholy for possession, giving improper credence to women whose humors were unbalanced in order to pursue their own professional agenda and reputation.[58]

Moreover, many exorcists were accused in the early modern period of sexually abusing female demoniacs. Two dramatic cases brought before the Inquisition involved famous exorcists at the Cathedral of Modena, a shrine known throughout Europe for its efficacy against diabolic possession. In 1517 Father Guglielmo Campana, the chief *altarista* at the Cathedral, was put on trial for a multitude of superstitious practices, including smearing the Eucharist with a possessed woman's bodily fluids. In 1642 Modena was again shocked to learn of the unauthorized and heretical practices of another official exorcist. The Theatine Geminiano Mazzoni proudly explained to the Inquisition in a voluntary confession that during his fifteen years of practice as an exorcist and as a spiritual father, he had learned that demons often hide in women's vaginas. He therefore used his hand to manipulate his patients' genitalia until the demons were ejected. In rare cases, when the demons refused to exit, this exorcist used his mouth or tongue to whisper adjurations into the demon's ear; if all else failed, as a last resort he used his own sexual member to push the demon out. On a few occasions, when the demon escaped from the vagina and hid in the woman's throat, Mazzoni—determined to demonstrate to the demon that he had nothing but scorn for him, and that he was not afraid of sexual temptations—inserted his sexual organ into the possessed woman's mouth. All was done in good faith "and for the Glory of God."[59]

It was impossible, however, to condemn superstitious practices used by lay healers and unauthorized clerics and to distinguish them from authorized and proper rites of clerical exorcism, prior to the promulgation of legitimate and authorized rites. Hence the dramatic increase, starting in the first years of the sixteenth century, in the number of published manuals for clerical exorcists. All based their liturgical sections and the adjurations on early medieval rites of baptismal exorcism. In the fifteenth century, as we have seen, manuals of this nature began to be compiled and copied in manuscript form, and versions of such books are common in European libraries and archives. The most important sources for transmitting these rites to later generations, however, come from three printed versions of such manuals: two incunabula and one early sixteenth-century work. The *Coniuratio malignorum spirituum in corporibus hominum existentium* transcribed a conjuration that had been practiced in the Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome since at least the later Middle Ages; it was first put into print some time before 1495. Two years later, the *Coniurationes Demonum* was first printed in Rome. Finally, in 1502 the *Tractatulus Quid a diabolo sciscitari Et qualiter Malignos spiritus possit quisque expellere de obsessis* appeared in Bologna; this work, unlike the others, is attributed to a specific author, Silvestro

Mazzolini Prierio (or Prierias). These manuals instructed exorcists how and where to conduct exorcism and expel demons, as well as offering advice on how to negotiate with demons without falling into necromancy. They described the appropriate setting and unfolding of an exorcism, and they prescribed liturgical adjurations and rites. The manuals created a clear distinction between authorized (clerical) exorcists and lay folk healers, and instructed the former about the division of labor between physicians of the soul (as they liked to refer to themselves) and physicians of the body. As such, the manuals demarcated a new area of professional expertise. Exorcism was transformed from a set of idiosyncratic and individual practices into an art, a body of knowledge. This was obviously on the mind of the most prolific Italian exorcist, the Franciscan Girolamo Menghi, who titled his vernacular guide *A Compendium of Exorcismal Arts* (1576).[60]

Instructing exorcists on how to discern spirits was intrinsic to this legitimizing agenda. From Heinrich Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum*to Menghi's popular and often reprinted manuals, special attention was paid to the importance of discerning possessing spirits. These works repeatedly coached exorcists to remain skeptical about apparent cases of possession, and—to quote the Spanish Franciscan friar Martín de Castañega—to first "determine whether the afflicted person is really possessed by the Devil or whether he is suffering from an illness that attacks his heart or his brain." In such a case, a "wise physician should be consulted."[61] Menghi, too, insisted that the exorcist's first duty was to make sure he was confronting a genuine case of diabolic possession rather than a natural affliction, and to consult with physicians. Physical pains that resist natural medicine and that exhibit horror at sacred objects should raise suspicion of demonic possession, while the ability to speak foreign languages not previously learned by the afflicted person and to exhibit wisdom above one's level of education were clear demonic indications as well. Alas Menghi, too, ultimately was forced to admit that all these signs could also be signs of divine possession; likewise, that sometimes demons, in order to humiliate and ridicule the exorcist, pretended not to understand foreign languages (as had happened to Menghi himself).[62]

As these examples make clear, one of the exorcists' major concerns was to discern between natural and preternatural afflictions. This is an important issue. Some of the seminal works on the rise and decline of witchcraft accusations in early modern Europe have posited that magic declined as scientific thinking gained ground.[63] This view supports Weberian and other narratives of onward march toward progress, according to which the early modern period was a time of transition from a medieval acceptance of supernatural causality, to a more sophisticated, scientific, and rational way of conceptualizing an increasingly

disenchanted world. Our examination of discernment and exorcismal manuals, however, suggests a more nuanced view, and calls for a revision of this teleological interpretation. The employment of naturalistic and medical vocabularies in the early modern period was a change of quantity and systematization, but was neither innovation nor scientific progress.[64] Indeed, late medieval theologians, long before the supposed invention of a rationalistic and naturalistic episteme, already had insisted that afflicted individuals and their relatives should look first to natural causes and medical cures. The afflicted were to avail themselves of the help of physicians, or of more accessible folk healers who employed a mélange of natural and supernatural remedies. Only after the failure of a naturalist medical treatment should one posit a supernatural causality and turn to supernatural healers—namely, exorcists.

The late medieval and early modern Church was very explicit and persistent in its teaching: assuming a supernatural etiology of affliction, and having recourse to supernatural cures without careful examination, was a demonstration of vain credulity. As such, this was highly superstitious behavior. Consultation with trained physicians is required in all early modern guides for exorcists, including Heinrich Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum*.[65] More important, such consultation became an official policy of the Catholic Church when it was mandated by Cardinal Giulio Antonio Santori, who was commissioned in 1584 by Pope Gregory XIII to compile the first unified rite of the Catholic Church; and in the official Roman Rite of 1614.[66] Rule 3 of the latter document exhorts the exorcist "not to assume easily that someone is possessed." He must recognize the signs that distinguish the possessed from the melancholic or the mentally disturbed, and to discern between diabolic possession and physical illness. Indeed, the Rite returns time and again to the complex relations and external similarities between natural illness and demonic possession: rule 7warns that sometimes demons try to deceive exorcists to believe that possession is a natural affliction, while rules 11 and 18 address people who are both physically ill and possessed. The exorcist, who does not have the physician's training and competence, should not give "or recommend any sort of medication." This is the physician's task (rule 18).[67]

One should not, however, exaggerate the distinction between healers of the body and healers of the soul. Medieval and early modern exorcists used medical techniques and herbs as part of their healing rituals (we have seen both Nider and Kramer approving these practices), and physicians often advised patients to look for spiritual or supernatural cures.[68] Like exorcists and theologians, physicians, too, believed in preternatural and supernatural causality and

etiology of affliction. In fact, at the same time that theologians and exorcists were trying to demarcate boundaries between the natural and the preter- and supernatural, physicians were debating the likely natural causalities of what looked, externally, like demonic or divine possession. And while most of these physicians argued that many cases of alleged possession were nothing but natural pathologies, they nonetheless insisted that demonic and divine possessions were possible, and that in such cases *remedia ecclesiae* was the only cure. These physicians collaborated with, and were an integral part of the attempt by the Church authorities, to restrict the unsupervised, and often abusive, activities of folk healers and some Mendicant exorcists. Rather than positing a model of naturalist physicians versus preter- and supernaturalist ecclesiastics, medical treatises and exorcismal manuals present theologians and learned physicians working hand in hand to curtail activities of unlearned lay and clerical exorcists.[69]

Finally, collaboration between exorcists and physicians was not restricted to manuals and theological tracts. When sometime during the last years of the sixteenth century Milan established a special hospice for possessed individuals, it was to be staffed by both paid exorcists and physicians, who were to collaborate in healing demoniacs. It was the responsibility of these practitioners to make sure that people who were not possessed but merely insane, and those who suffered from melancholic humors, frenzy, and *mal della matrice* (a sensual hysteria common among women in general and nuns in particular), should not be mistaken for demoniacs. Exorcisms and confessions were to take place daily, medical examinations monthly.[70]

Obviously, there was a crucial difference between the mechanical and even routine nature of the formulae in exorcismal manuals and the more abstract and theoretical issue of the discernment of spirits. But there is no reason to assume that practicing exorcists were not concerned with the theological issue. As an example, the Dutch Franciscan friar Henrick van Ryssel, an exorcist practicing in the middle years of the sixteenth century, compiled his own manual, copying into a notebook numerous rites of exorcism that he must have found in different collections. These included established formulae, such as the exorcisms attributed to Saints Ambrose and Anthony, as well as familiar benedictions against vermin, storms, and hail. But the collection also included adjurations and spells against bewitchment, mostly potions consisting of herbs, wine, honey, and consecrated incense. One of its formulae, for example, calls for cutting the possessed person's hair and nails, and mixing them with the victim's urine. After boiling this concoction for a novena and using it during the exorcism,

the patient should recover. Van Ryssel, then, was typical of the traditional (likely itinerant) Mendicant practitioner, whose journal included methods only now being separated into authorized versus unauthorized rites. Yet this obscure friar also copied Jean Gerson's entire *On the Testing of Spirits*, and annotated it with personal observations and comments, clearly feeling the need to comprehend his practical expertise within the larger setting of the theological discourse of the discernment of spirits.[71]

DISCERNING WOMEN

Thus far we have argued that the systematization of exorcismal practices and the professionalization of exorcists is linked to the growing attention to practices of discernment of spirits in early modern Catholic Europe. A third, equally important cause for the proliferation of writings about discernment was the continued presence of self-proclaimed female visionaries and lay prophetesses, and the spread, first in Spain and later in France and Italy, of new spiritual tendencies. This new devotional movement emphasized passivity in order to achieve an emptying and annihilation of the self, rather than prayers and meditative exercises. Only after attaining a state of complete indifference to external feelings, images, and thoughts, could the practitioner become fully open to the divine spirit. This movement—really a loose set of practices—was later to be known as quietism, and it aroused intense suspicion from its inception. Who was to judge the reliability of such interior experiences? Who had the authority to supervise them? How should such supervision be practiced? And who was to tell whether the possessing spirit that entered the emptied self was divine, as the practitioner hoped, or, alas, diabolic? Once again, anxieties about the spread of new, lay forms of spirituality and purported access to the divine provided a frame for writings about the discernment of spirits. The chronological and geographical overlap is striking.

Both Castañega and Ciruelo crafted their guides for exorcists in the very same years that the form of mental prayer and meditation known as recollection (*recogimiento*)—previously practiced chiefly in Franciscan houses and hermitages—was percolating into the laity. The practice quickly gained popularity and its adherents came to be known as Illuminated (*Alumbrados*). Since many Alumbrados were women, it is therefore not surprising to find Castañega warning that women, given their more carnal, credulous, curious, and talkative natures, were more easily tricked by the demon than were men. Given women's

weakness, they were also likely to simulate divine or diabolic possession: "They do so because of some dissatisfaction they have with their lovers or husbands, or because of the great carnal passion they have for someone, or because of the terrible temptations of the flesh that demons ignite in them."[72]

Writing the following year, Ciruelo echoed these fears.[73] Both theologians argued that divine and demonic possessions were more likely to be deceptions or natural illnesses. By so doing, these Spanish theologians went beyond Gerson's diabolization of feminine spirituality, and the apprehension in exorcismal manuals against mistaking natural afflictions for demonic possessions. By applying strict doubts about all purported cases of possession, regardless of whether they were divine or demonic, and by warning that altered states of consciousness in women always were more likely due to natural causes such as illness or criminal deception, they discredited the entire spiritual school of *Alumbradismo*. Their contemporary compatriot Luis de Granada put it succinctly: Women who prophesy and pretend to enjoy divine revelations, he stated, end up possessed by the demon, who perverts and deceives them.[74]

In the second half of the sixteenth century, as pre-quietist and quietist tendencies spread to Italy and France, so, too, did manuals for the discernment of spirits proliferate in those countries. These manuals systematically narrowed the space for "authentic" possessions, whether divine or diabolic. Writing in the mid-sixteenth century, Filippo Neri, himself a renowned exorcist, argued that "for all sorts of reasons, women simulate possession by the demon."[75] Santori's draft for a Roman Rite concurred, positing that, due to human depravity, "it often happens that some simulate possession, whether due to material or carnal lust, or to avoid punishment, or due to hatred or desperation."[76] Simulated possession was soon to be joined by the revival of another category, simulated sanctity. Theoretically, this was no different from the traditional accusations of false prophecy and hypocrisy. But growing suspicions about feigned sanctity were to reshape the entire discourse of spirituality from the later half of the sixteenth century, until the successful eradication of quietist spiritual pursuits in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. While discussions of false prophecy usually referred to human error in deciphering the content of a revelation, detection of simulated sanctity demanded scrutiny of the personal morality and comportment of the protagonist. As such, it was discerned not according to the characteristics of the spiritual experience itself, but according to a set of social criteria that referred to unacceptable behaviors characteristic of simulating women (and a few men)—who, the argument went, merely mimicked the external characteristics of a living saint.

The Ambrosian brother Francesco Maria Guazzo, the most prominent synthesizer of Italian thinking about possession, exorcism, and the discernment of spirits, argued in his *Compendium Maleficarum* of 1608 that, "concerning revelations or visions, and as to the character of the person who sees them, much must be taken into consideration if the true is to be distinguished from the false." It must first be determined "whether the visionary or demoniac is a good Catholic, and whether the person's honesty and virtues point to the sincerity of his faith . . . for we must not believe the proud and ambitious, the impatient, the carnally minded, drunkards, those who cherish anger or stir up hatred and spread dissent, or those who defame others; nor hypocrites who display and parade some exceptional proof of devotion and penitence, against the approval of their superiors in the Church."

The exorcist should also verify that the person does not suffer from poor health, excessive fasting, or want of sleep. Brain damage may cause "clouding of the imagination," and people who fall into any of the above categories sometimes see, hear, or taste things that are not there, "for the devil easily deludes them, since they eagerly accept and believe images and false appearances." More important, demons can increase the humor of black bile and thereby engender a melancholic balance—then they take advantage of melancholic people to afflict and possess them. The age and sex of the person also are crucial. The old are known to be delirious, the young, stupid, and "as for the female sex, it is agreed that it must be regarded with the greater suspicion."[77] People who adhere to a spiritual regimen are especially suspect; it is interesting to note that when Guazzo talked about these people, he unconsciously slipped from the generic masculine to the feminine pronoun: "If the person is an old practitioner of spiritual exercises, or whether *she* is only a novice; whether the devil has in other ways attempted, with or without success, to deceive her . . . there must be suspicion of fraud."[78]

With simulation, hypocrisy, and intentional deception increasingly displacing a supernatural etiology of spiritual possessions, practitioners were to be punished rather than exorcized. This was the fate of Magdalena de la Cruz, the prioress of the convent of the Poor Clares in Cordova. She had widely been regarded as a mystic and a living saint, until she admitted in 1543 that she had been aligned with Satan since early childhood, and that she had faked her sanctity. She was imprisoned and spent the rest of her life in jail. This was also the experience of the illiterate Neapolitan laywoman Alfonsina Rispola, who spent the 1580s and 1590s in prison while being examined as "suspected of simulating sanctity." Since the Inquisition could not determine the veracity of her visions,

she remained incarcerated.[79] Similar arrests, banishments, and public acts of supplication followed in the seventeenth century.

By this time many prominent sources—including Jean Gerson, Johannes Nider, Heinrich Kramer, Francisco Guazzo, the French jurist Jean Bodin, and the Jesuit demonologist Martín del Rio—had succeeded in crafting an authoritative litany: Women's fervor is too eager, their minds too weak, their bodies too humid. They are more prone to perceive phantoms, and slower to resist temptations. Women are more lascivious, luxurious, and avaricious. They are also more foolish than men, have less reasoning power, and are "more apt to mistake natural or diabolic suggestions for ones of divine origin."[80] Guazzo, while admitting the possibility of divine possession in theory, ruled it out in practice by arguing that all cases of possession, both divine and diabolic, were more likely deceptions, simulations, or simple natural illnesses, for women should never be trusted. By ascribing most cases of possession to women's deceptive nature, imbecility, melancholic humors, or uterine vapors, he (like many contemporary theologians and physicians) made femininity itself the major reason for distrusting women's ecstatic and spiritual experiences.

By the 1620s and 1630s, simulation of sanctity became a legal category used to criminalize individuals (again, mostly women) who alleged that they had received visions, even when nothing heretical was found in the content of their revelations.[81] In the 1630s, Cardinal Desiderio Scaglia compiled a *Handbook for Proceedings in Cases Before the Holy Office* (*Prattica per procedere nella cause del S. Offizio*), in response to cases of what he termed "false devotion" and "Free Spirit indiscrete devotion." The work, circulated in manuscripts among exorcists, devoted an entire section to the legal issues surrounding simulated sanctity, and directly connected this crime to women, especially those who were spiritually inclined. These sorts of women, it argued, were all deceivers, hypocrites, and frauds. Due to their "weak-mindedness, sometimes through pretense motivated by the prideful ambition to be considered holy and dear to God, and sometimes through [diabolic] illusion, they say that they have received revelations from God . . . and that they have been favored by divine visions, and that God and the saints speak to them."[82]

But how exactly were such frauds to be exposed? When it came to actual practices for discerning spirits, Scaglia admitted that, "given the devil's deceits and subtle stratagems, it is very difficult to determine which apparitions and revelations are divine and which are [diabolical] illusions, and similarly, [to tell] which ecstasies are caused by God, distinguishing them from that lulling of the senses brought about by the devil, [natural] indisposition, or the imbalance of

tempers termed 'ecstasy' or 'rapture' due to weakness."[83] In the end, all he could offer to his readers was a recommendation to consult Gerson! Since it remained impossible to discern interior experiences, naturalizing cases of possession, and the arguing that they were more likely pathologies or criminal activities than actual supernatural interventions, provided a way out of the impasse.

By 1630 the discernment of spirits in Italy had become a systematic means of restricting the space for the spiritual claims of women. This centuries-long discrediting process reached its peak in 1643, when the Roman Inquisition ruled that "the Sacred Congregation does not incline to believe easily" in claims of supernatural experiences made by women. These experiences, the Inquisition argued, often resulted from the melancholic humors of malcontent nuns, forced into enclosed convents against their will.[84] The newly stringent rules for discerning spirits used two naturalistic vocabularies that, when taken together, delegitimized the latest forms of female spirituality: pathologization and criminalization. Female mystics, like female demoniacs, now were more likely to be found either melancholic or mentally ill, or deceivers. In fact, it was the very nature of woman—the frailty of her humoral balance, the perturbations of her womb, her carnality, weakness, and credulity, and above all, her untrustworthiness—that automatically discredited her.

In no other place was the attack on pre-quietist and quietist forms of spirituality more vicious than in France. To take just one example, François de Sales, himself a prominent mystic and a proponent of female mystics, tried his hand at developing a method of discerning spirits. In his *Treatise on the Love of God* he devoted an entire chapter to the "signs of good rapture," and, like his predecessors in Spain and Italy, admitted that he was writing in response to contemporary events: "There have been many in our age who believed, and other with them, that they were very frequently ravished by God in ecstasy, and yet in the end it was discovered that all were but diabolical illusions and operation." There was nothing mysterious about it. The Devil, "to play the ape, to beguile souls, to scandalize the weak, and to transform himself into an angel of light, causes raptures in certain souls who are not solidly instructed in solid piety."[85]

By 1630 the French term for a spiritual woman, a *spirituelle*, acquired the meaning of a *folle*, a foolish or silly woman.[86] Most of the leading French theologians of the seventeenth century, including luminaries such as Louis Bourdalou, Jean-Pierre Camus, Pierre Nicole, Bossuet, and even Fénelon (who is better known for his defense of the quietist Madame Guyon), participated in the curtailment of female mysticism. All agreed that the female claimants to mystical experiences were, like all their sex, controlled by carnal desires and their naturally

melancholic natures. Their *imaginations hypocondriaques* required treatment rather than an audience. Women's natural imbecility, vanity, self-love, arrogance, and ignorance made them fall victim to natural self-illusions and demonic delusions. Due to these biological, physiological, and mental frailties, women were dangerous. Left unrestricted, their lack of self-control and their insolence would destroy not only the Church, but also the familial and the political orders.[87] In France, as in other Catholic countries, by the 1650s the crucial demarcation line in matters of female spirituality no longer was between the divine and the diabolic (two supernatural categories); rather, learned observers now sought to distinguish between the moral categories of sincerity and deception, between the medical categories of healthy and sick, or between the legal categories of licit and illicit. The new category pairs all had two things in common. First, by shifting the discussion from the supernatural realm to the natural, these different heuristic combinations transformed the epistemic concern of discerning spirits into a natural and social matter. But second, and at the same time, they thereby left unresolved the unsolvable theological problem of discerning spirits in supernatural terms. They abandoned the latter question through a shifting epistemic gaze.

Quietist spirituality (in all its various incarnations) forced the Church to ask what constituted a genuine spiritual experience, what was possible, what was natural, and what was illusory. As such, the discernment of spirits was an epistemic endeavor, an integral component of the early modern attempt to redraw boundaries between the natural and the supernatural realms. The process was accompanied by the naturalization and medicalization of both divine and diabolic possessions, the demarcation of clearer boundaries between authorized and superstitious practices, and the professionalization of exorcists. But most important, the process dramatically restricted women's ability to pursue lay forms of unsupervised and unregulated spirituality, and it discredited claims by women to supernatural interactions.

In coauthoring this article, we have aimed to illuminate trends in the cultural practice known as the discernment of spirits, over the somewhat unconventional time frame of the thirteenth through the seventeenth centuries. We were trained on different sides of the medievalist–early modernist divide, yet one particularly fruitful result of our collaboration has been that it forced us to interrogate the nature of this historiographical construct. We have found that our joined research destabilizes much of the conventional teleology of historical periodization, at least as it concerns our particular areas of expertise. To be sure,

we see changes over the long course of our study, but these were evolutionary rather than disjunctive; dialogical rather than teleological; meandering rather than progressive or direct. Thus we would like to close with some brief reflections both on what we have found during our collaboration, as well as what we have not found.

To begin, the discernment of spirits was, throughout the period covered in this study, a multifaceted form of knowledge production that unfolded in a multitude of different sources and evidentiary genres at once. Indeed, discernment was never a singular issue, but a set of complexly interlinked queries: as a discursive practice, it seems to have exerted an almost gravitational pull on all contiguous intellectual constructs. Conceived most narrowly, discernment juxtaposed divine and demonic possession. But it also implicated questions about how to differentiate among the realms of the supernatural, the preternatural, and the natural; it addressed the possibilities of the demonic deception of well-meaning individuals, and of calculated human cunning; and it pulled into its vortex various medical pathologies and mental disorders. Discernment was thus a religiously originated idiom employed to discuss many different sources of unease throughout centuries of European history. Social and cultural ruptures over religious leadership, proper gender roles, and changing definitions of macro- and microcosmic spheres often came to be displaced into the language of testing spirits.

Hence sources for the historical study of the discernment of spirits are as varied and shifting as the discourse itself. Treatments of discernment appear in many different evidentiary genres, from hagiographies to exorcismal manuals, from spiritual journals to medical treatises. Throughout the period covered by our work, various textual genres tended to shift in value and prominence as prime sources for tracing the history of discernment. In the thirteenth and fourteenth century, for example, canonization proceedings, natural philosophy, and medical treatises constituted significant sources of information, while in the fifteenth century, manuscript exorcism manuals and the first treatises dedicated to the discernment of spirits began to appear. In the sixteenth century, manuals of exorcism suddenly became the major locus of the enterprise, while in the seventeenth, records of exorcisms ceded place to spiritual journals and biographies as prime sources for this issue. Eventually even legal sources were pulled into this sphere of debate. Though nearly all these types of text existed throughout the entire period under consideration, their positioning within this larger heteroglossic debate, and the ways these shifts shaped the overall debate

as a result, varied significantly over time. This process, in turn, made for a highly recombinative historical development to the discernment of spirits, one that did not proceed along a singular, neat trajectory.

Against this background, however, we found certain themes to be more continuous over the longue durée than others. The drive toward medicalization and naturalization, for instance, once it became one of the terms of discussion for the discernment of spirits in the thirteenth century, maintained a fairly stable position thereafter. Thirteenth-century encyclopedists attributed vision and trance behavior to uterine pathologies or a melancholic temperament; so, too, did Gerson in the fifteenth century, Jean Bodin in the sixteenth century, and Federico Borromeo in the seventeenth. While some historians have been tempted to locate the birth of empiricism within the early modern period, our research suggest that the discernment of spirits already was putting theories of medicine and physiology to empiricist ends quite early on. From its inception, the testing of spirits required the testing of bodies in stringent, meticulous ways, as a means to disprove a natural causation for the disputed behaviors at the center of the debate.

Though few wholly new sources were added to this debate over the course of its long history, we have identified two textual genres that reshaped much of the enterprise of testing spirits: exorcism manuals, disseminated for the first time in the fifteenth century but based on earlier liturgical models, and treatises on the discernment of spirits. The contrasting later history of these two types of texts is instructive. Manuals of exorcism vastly expanded in both scope and popularity in succeeding centuries, accreting new elements, gaining some degree of fame for their authors, and, for a time, achieving significant prominence within the debate. The discernment of spirits genre, by contrast, stagnated. Though a multitude of discernment treatises were published, they remained extremely close to their roots in Gerson's works and found little to add to his foundational model. Gerson's reputation as an authority on discerning spirits, while somewhat ambiguous during his own lifetime (none of his advisories on specific cases ever was complied with), incontestably attained a lofty height of reverence among later generations. In consequence, most early modern authors in this genre preferred to pay him homage rather than to attempt to surpass him. We may say that discernment of spirits texts were a genre whose foundation and intellectual apogee almost completely coincided. The major development we posit in regard to this textual genre is an increasing trend toward generality. Whereas Gerson's studies were all occasional in nature, arising from

specific cases of disputed inspiration, later texts became more abstract. By the 1550s, they became "how-to" guides for nuns, confessors, and spiritual fathers, instructing them how to discern all sorts of routine "interior movements," not just dramatic states such as trances or visions.

Whatever its vicissitudes, one clearly identifiable long-term effect of the discernment of spirits was the gradual erosion of the interpretive terrain that underlay visionary claims to authority. Indeed, the medieval revival of interest in the question of testing spirits was provoked by the late twelfth-century laicization and feminization of religious life, and the main medieval targets of this new form of skepticism were Beguines, Tertiaries, individual recluses, and other religious laywomen. Such movements, while immediately popular in the burgeoning towns of Europe, were regarded as dangerous and potentially heretical by some in positions of ecclesiastical authority—many of whom regarded the laity as too ignorant to guide their own religious lives or to declare their own saintly cults. From the formalization and centralization of canonization procedures beginning in the late twelfth century under Pope Innocent III, to the composition of discernment treatises in the fifteenth that questioned the value of (chiefly women's) visionary claims, the medieval history of the discernment of spirits was an escalating attempt to discipline religious practices by narrowing the field of the genuinely miraculous. The feminization of lay religious life that was characteristic of this period ultimately became a precipitating factor in the discrediting and even diabolization of most forms of feminine spirituality by the sixteenth century.

Throughout the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, several forces joined together to further impel this process of narrowing the realm of the supernatural. Fear of Protestantism and of the growing activities of witches; a renewed, and highly systematic, Catholic campaign against superstitious practices; the need to regulate exorcism; and new anxieties concerning female spiritual experiences, either of the traditional, affective school or the more recent Quietist movement, all contributed to the persistence of this drive to restrict the supernatural sphere. Indeed, seventeenth-century Quietists were regarded as a new avatar of the Beguines, equally as enervating in their effects and as untrustworthy in their claims. The new female mystics should be ignored, just as their predecessors "were never listened to at the Council of Vienne [1311]. Despite their boasts concerning their [bodily manifestations of spiritual worth], [the Council] looked on [them] as signs of the Devil's deception, and in any case as vain transports of an overheated imagination," declared Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, the

leader of the French opposition to Quietism.[88] All this, obviously, was part of an even larger process, namely, the long-term tightening of control over miracles, sainthood, and rituals. In 1599 the French physician Michel Marescot argued that "nothing should be attributed to the demons unless it is extraordinarily above the law of nature."[89] By about 1650, this rule—according to which whenever an event could be attributed to naturalistic explanation, it should not be assumed to be miraculous—was shared by the Catholic Church itself.

An additional finding that became possible through the wider lens of our combined research concerns the connection between discernment and epistemology more broadly. The regularization and systematization of canonization, of exorcism, and of medical discourses, combined with the emergence of theoretical writings on the discernment of spirits, acted to increase dramatically the employment of naturalistic and empiricist modes of explanation for many events formerly classed as inexplicable—that is, as "miracles." Though these different heuristic devices all had roots in the Middle Ages, one change from the medieval to early modern discourses on the testing of spirits was the shift from an occasional approach, driven by specific cases of disputed inspiration or behaviors, to an outlook that increasingly sought to predicate the whole discernment of spirits enterprise on invariant rules and general principles. In fact, one could argue that the century preceding the birth of experimental science was characterized by a systematic attempt by theologians and exorcists to develop "objective" or "scientific" criteria for the testing of spirits, and that discernment developed into what we shall call, following the French mystic and exorcist Jean-Joseph Surin, "an experiential science." Surin first used this term in 1663 to describe a method of examining and discerning people's internal spiritual experiences and evaluating their etiology, content, and external manifestations, in order to determine their worthiness and reliability.[90] As such, the term encapsulates both the ideology and the techniques employed during the later Middle Ages and the early modern period to recast the discernment of spirits as a scientific enterprise with its own set of empiricist rules.

In its systematization of preexisting and long standing epistemological and diagnostic methods of investigation, and in its trust in objective laws and the importance of observation, experiential science resembled the new experimental science. And like the latter, the former assisted in dramatically curtailing the realm of the supernatural in daily life. Yet it did so without putting into doubt the existence of the supernatural tout court, and without advancing a newly disenchanted rationality. Significantly, in fact, the shrinking realm of the supernatural

led theologians to pay ever more attention to the preternatural. This third category became crucial for the reconfiguration of the boundaries between the natural and the supernatural, for a process of naturalizing the world without actually disenchanting it.[91] As had ever been the case, however, the ever more systematic use of naturalistic and medical interpretations for what ostensibly looked like supernatural events continuously failed to draw clear boundaries—whether between divine or diabolic possessions, or even to demarcate where possessions ended and organic afflictions began. Preternatural and supernatural phenomena could still occur due to natural as well as supernatural first causes, while natural events could—upon thorough investigation—still be discovered to result from supernatural causes. Thus, as both a leading physician and a leading Jesuit demonologist of the period agreed, a demon could possess an individual by taking advantage on this individual's natural physiological feebleness, or by stirring black bile and uterine vapors, thus causing melancholy or suffocation of the womb.[92] Alternatively, a person could present symptoms of a purely natural affliction and still be discerned to be possessed by demons, who chose, for whatever reason, to manifest their presence through purely natural signs.

The discourse of discerning spirits and the new experiential science to which it gave rise created a new epistemic space that contributed, in its own way, to the curtailment of the supernatural and to the disenchantment of Europe. As a collaborative venture between a medieval and an early modern historian, this article has sought to complicate received historical narratives about the origins of certain heuristics and rationalities. Like experimental science, the disciplining endeavor known as the testing of spirits encouraged the systematic questioning of the exact boundaries among the natural, the supernatural, and the ever elusive preternatural. Their pursuit was parallel to, but not necessarily shaped by, the rise of mechanical philosophy, experimental science, and clinical medicine in the seventeenth century. A lingering hesitancy as to whether materialistic or supernatural explanations better account for specific events continuously shaped the emergence of experiential science. Thus, the testing of spirits—a purely religious discourse—developed in tandem and in dialogue with two relatively profane discourses: natural philosophies and scientific inquiries. Yet the goal of all three epistemologies was the same: to categorize the sensory world with greater regularity and accuracy; to probe hidden aspects of reality in order fully to grasp the harmony and grandeur of the cosmos. That the end result of such endeavors would be to disenchant the world and to remove many of its religious mysteries, divine and demonic alike, could not have been foreseen by the authors we have examined.

NOTES

This collaborative article draws on research conducted for our two books: Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); and Moshe Sluhovsky, *"Believe Not Every Spirit": Possession, Mysticism, and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). For a further, extensive bibliography on the topic of the discernment of spirits, we refer the reader to these works. A first version of this article was presented at the "Miracles as Epistemic Things" conference at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin, in 2004, and we thank the participants in this conference for their valuable comments.

1. Vatican City, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, MS Riti 2929, fol. 45v. Apropos of this incident, see the article of Katharine Park, "The Criminal and the Saintly Body: Autopsy and Dissection in Renaissance Italy," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 47, no. 1 (1994): 1–33. See also Katharine Park, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York: Zone, 2006).

2. Studies of this topic that focus chiefly on the medieval period include Gabriella Zarri, ed., *Finzione e santità tra medioevo ed età moderna* (Turin: Rosenberg and Sellier, 1991); Richard Kieckhefer, "The Holy and the Unholy: Sainthood, Witchcraft, and Magic in Late Medieval Europe," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 24, no. 3 (1994): 355–85; Peter Dinzelbacher, *Heilige oder Hexen? Schicksale auffälliger Frauen im Mittelalter und Frühneuzeit* (Zurich: Artemis and Winkler, 1995); Barbara Newman, "Possessed by the Spirit: Devout Women, Demoniacs, and the Apostolic Life in the Thirteenth Century," *Speculum* 73, no. 3 (1998): 733–70; Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writings of Late Medieval Women Visionaries* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 1999); Nancy Caciola, "Mystics, Demoniacs, and the Physiology of Spirit Possession in Medieval Europe," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 2 (2000): 268–306; Deborah Fraioli, *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate*(Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2000); Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*; Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Gábor Klaniczay, "The Process of Trance: Heavenly and Diabolic Apparitions in Johannes Nider's *Formicarius*," in *Procession, Performance, Liturgy and Ritual: Essays in Honor of Bryan R. Gillingham*, ed. Nancy van Deusen (Ottawa: Institute of Medieval Music, 2007), 203–58.

3. Alain Boureau, "Miracle, volonté et imagination," in *Miracles, prodiges et Merveilles au Moyen Age: XXVe Congrès de la SHMES (Orléans, juin 1994)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1995), 164. All translations from foreign languages are by the authors unless otherwise noted.

4. Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, *Toward a History of Epistemic Things: Synthesizing Proteins in the Test Tube* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 89.

5. William of Auvergne, *De universo*, in *Guilelmi Alverni Opera Omnia*, 2 vols. (Paris: André Pralard, 1674), 1:1035.

6. Ibid., 1:1024. There have been few dedicated studies of this fascinating author, excepting Thomas B. de Mayo, *The Demonology of William of Auvergne: By Fire and Sword* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2007).

7. *Vita Benevenutae de Bojanis* in *Acta Sanctorum, quotquot toto orbe colunturi, vel a Catholicis Scriptoribus celebrantur*, ed. Société des Bollandistes, 68 vols. (Brussels and Antwerp: Victor Palme, 1863–87) (hereafter cited as *AASS*), vol. 61 (29 Oct.), 185.

8. On canonization as the assertion of an exclusive papal prerogative, see Dick Harrison, "*Quod magnonobis fuit horrori*: Horror, Power, and Holiness Within the Context of Canonization," in *Procès de canonisation au Moyen Âge/Medieval Canonization Processes*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2004), 39–52. The study of canonization is vast, but the touchstone study for the medieval period remains André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

9. "Il Processo Castellano," in M.H. Laurent, ed., *Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis Historicae* (Milan: Fratelli Bocca, 1942), 9:515.

10. This line of interpretation begins with Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, but is best known through the work of Caroline Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). See also the important contributions of Gabriella Zarri, *Le sante vive: Profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra'400 e '500* (Turin: Rosenberg and Sellier, 1990); and Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

11. See Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, for more discussion of this phenomenon.

12. Alfons Hilka, "Altfranzösische Mystic und Beginentum," *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 47 (1927): 167.

13. Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, amply documents the masculine, noble, and clerical aspects of sainthood. See 268, 184, 256, respectively.

14. For the terms "sex-related" and "sex-specific," see Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: The Witch-Hunt in Scotland* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1981).

15. In the period before 1500, the number of contemporary laywomen canonized was four; see Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, 369. They are Elizabeth of Thuringia (d. 1231, canonized 1234), Hedwig of Silesia (d. 1243, canonized 1267), Brigit of Sweden (d. 1373, canonized 1391, 1415, and 1419), and Catherine of Siena (d. 1380, canonized 1460). Of this number, two—Hedwig of Silesia and Elizabeth of Thuringia—conformed to a non-visionary pattern of sanctity, being known, rather, for their aristocratic charity and noble dynastic status. The remaining two women, Catherine of Siena and Brigit of Sweden, are the only lay female visionaries to be canonized in the Middle Ages. It is noteworthy that Brigit's case was so controversial that she had to be canonized repeatedly. The only additional woman successfully sainted during this period was Clare of Assisi (d. 1253, canonized 1255), founder of the Poor Clares order of Franciscan nuns.

16. See the remarks of Alain Boureau addressing canonization and discernment in precisely this period, "Saints et démonsdans les procès de canonisation," in Klaniczay, *Procès de canonisation au Moyen Âge*, 199–221.

17. Background to the ideas developed here may be found in Jacques Berlinerblau, "Toward a Sociology of Heresy, Orthodoxy, and Doxa," *History of Religions* 40, no. 4 (2001): 327–51; Bruce Lincoln, *Authority: Construction and Corrosion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Arthur Droge, "Retrofitting/Retiring 'Syncretism,'" *Historical Reflections/Relexions Historiques* 27, no. 3 (2001): 375–87; Joan W. Scott, "Experience," in *Feminists*

Theorize the Political, ed. J. Butler and J. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 22–40; Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053–75, but particularly 1066–75; Mark Vessey, "The Forging of Orthodoxy in Latin Christian Literature: A Case Study," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*4, no. 4 (1996): 495–513.

18. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000), 66.

19. Innocent III, letter 46, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: Migne, 1841–66), 214:697.

20. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*, q. 16, art. 8:14, in *Opera Omnia*, ed. Leonine Commission (Rome: Leonina, 1982), 23:320.

21. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. R. Potter (London: Blackfriars, 1964–81), vol. 45, *Prophecy and Other Charisms*, 96 (2a 2ae, q. 175, reply art. 1).

22. *Vita S. Lutgartis Virginis*, in *AASS*, vol. 24 (16 June), 198.

23. *Vita Catharinae Senensis*, in *AASS*, vol. 12 (30 April), 893.

24. *Miracula B. Rainerii*, in *AASS*, vol. 63 (1 Nov.), 399.

25. Richer of Sens, *Chronicisenoniensis*, 4.18, in *Spicilegium sive Collectio veterum aliquot scriptorum qui in Galliae bibliothecis delituerunt*, ed. L. d'Achery (Paris: Montalant, 1723), 634–36. A French version can be found in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptorum* (Hannover: Hahn, 1880), 25:308n1. For detailed discussion of the incident, see Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 87–98.

26. Laurent, "Processo Castellano," 269.

27. For more on sex, gender, and illness, see especially Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Differences in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Also useful are Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 B.C.–A.D. 1250* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985); Nancy Siraisi, *Medieval and Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Jole Agrimi and Chiara Crisciani, *Les "consilia" médicaux* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1994); Agrimi and Crisciani, "Savoir médical et anthropologiereligieuse: Les représentations et les fonctions de la vetula (XIIIe–XVe siècle)," *Annales ESC* 48, no. 5 (1993): 1281–1308; Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

28. Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Doctrinale* (Graz: Akademishce Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1965), 13.96, col. 1232.

29. Bartholomew the Englishman, *De rerum proprietatibus* (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1601), 4.8, p. 105.

30. Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, *De Secretis Mulierum*, translated by Helen Rodnite Lemay as *Women's Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus' "De Secretis Mulierum" with Commentaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 134. The translation has been slightly altered, with the rendering of *rapere* changed from "snatched out of" to "rapt from."

31. Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Doctrinale*, 13.121, col. 1248.

32. Antoninus of Florence, *Summa Theologica* (Verona: Typographia Seminarii, 1740), 1.2.6, p. 92.

33. See Laurent, "Processo Castellano," 263; *Vita B. Osannae Mantuanae*, in *AASS*, vol. 24 (18 June), 571; *Acta B. Christinae Stumblensis*, in *AASS*, vol. 25 (22 June), 278. A treatment of this phenomenon can be found in Daniel E. Bornstein, "Violenza al corpo di unasanta: Fraagiografia e pornografia: A proposito di Douceline di Digne," *Quaderni medievali* 39 (1995): 31–46.

34. Johannes Nider, *Formicarius sive myrmecia bonorum* (Douai, France: Belleri, 1602), 230.

35. Jean Gerson, *De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis*, in *Jean Gerson: Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, 10 vols. (Paris: Desclée, 1960–66), 3:40.

36. R. Warnock and A. Zumkeller, eds., *Der Traktat Heinrichs von Freimar über die Unterscheidung der Geister* (Würzburg: Augustinus Verlag, 1977). For more on the formation of this discursive tradition, including discussion of Henry and the other authors mentioned only briefly here, see Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, chap. 6.

37. For more on Langenstein, see Anna Morisi Guerra, "Il silenzio di Dio e la voce dell'anima: Da Enrico di Langenstein a Gerson," *Cristianesimo nella storia* 17 (1996): 393–413; C.G. Heilig, "Kritische Studien zum Schriften der beiden Heinriche von Hessen," *Römische Quartalschrift* 40 (1932); F.W.E. Roth, "Zur Bibliographie des Heinricus Hembuche de Hassia," *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1888); Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 5 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 3:473–510.

38. The treatise numbered "Tractatus II" probably was the first in order of composition, dating from before 1395. See Laura Smoller, *History, Prophecy, and the Stars: The Christian Astrology of Pierre d'Ailly, 1350–1420* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 100–101, 191n92. Both treatises are published in *Joannis Gersonii Opera Omnia*, ed. Louis Ellies Dupin, 5 vols. (Antwerp: Sumptibus Societatis, 1706), 1:497–604. A biographical sketch of d'Ailly can be found in Bernard Guenée, *Between Church and State: The Lives of Four French Prelates in the Late Middle Ages*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 102–258.

39. A chronology of Gerson's works can be found in Glorieux, "Introduction Générale," in *Jean Gerson: Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 1. For a biographical sketch and selected translations, see Brian McGuire, trans., *Jean Gerson: Early Works* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1998). See also Brian McGuire, "Late Medieval Care and Control of Women: Jean Gerson and His Sisters," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 92, no. 1 (1997), 4–37; Catherine Brown, *Pastor and Laity in the Theology of Jean Gerson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Guerra, "Silenzio di Dioe la voce dell'anima"; and Brian Caiger, "Doctrine and Discipline in the Church of Jean Gerson," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41, no. 3 (1990): 389–407.

40. For a discussion of the delayed impact of Gerson's works, see Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 309–19.

41. A recent study of the profound impact of this event can be found in Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints, and Visionaries of the Great Schism, 1378–1417* (College Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

42. Henry of Langenstein, *Concilium pacis de unione et reformatione ecclesiae in concilio universali quaerenda*, in Dupin, *Joannis Gersonii Opera Omnia*, 2:839.

43. Jean Gerson, *De probatione spirituum*, in Glorieux, *Jean Gerson: Oeuvres Complètes*, 9:179.

44. Ibid.

45. Gerson, *De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis*, 3:51.

46. Jean Gerson, *De examinatione doctrinarum*, in Glorieux, *Jean Gerson: Oeuvres Complètes*, 9:16.

47. Gerson, *De probatione spirituum*, 9:184.

48. Jean Gerson, *De puella Aurelianensi*, in Glorieux, *Jean Gerson: Oeuvres Complètes*, 9:661–65. See also Jules Quicherat, ed., *Procès de condamnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc, dite la Pucelle* (1841; New York: Johnson, 1965); Fraioli, *Joan of Arc*; André Vauchez, "Jeanne d'Arc et le prophétisme féminin des XIVe et XVe siècles," in *Les Laïcs au Moyen Age: Pratiques et expériences religieuses*, ed. André Vauchez (Paris: Persee, 1998), 277–86; and Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 307–10, for a fuller discussion of Joan and a comparison with Saint Joseph, another lay figure whose cult was promoted by Gerson.

49. *Analecta S. Antonii Paduae*, in *AASS*, vol. 22 (13 June), 759.

50. Giovanni Antonazzi, ed., *Caterina Paluzzi e la sua autobiografia* (Rome: Storia e letteratura, 1980), 189; English translation from Brendan Dooley, ed., *Italy in the Baroque: Selected Readings* (New York: Garland, 1995), 546. For similar cases, see, for example, Alison Weber's "Between Ecstasy and Exorcism: Religious Negotiation and Sixteenth-Century Spain," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 23 (1993): 221–34; and "Saint Teresa, Demonologist," in *Culture and Control in Counter-Reformation Spain*, ed. Anne J. Cruz and Mary E. Perry (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 171–95.

51. Vatican City, Biblioteca Vaticana (hereafter cited as BV), MS Pal. Lat. 794, 68r, part of the marginal exorcism squeezed in at the top.

52. BV MS Pal. Lat. 794, 68r; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliotek (hereafter cited as BS), MS Clm. 23325, 3r.

53. A typical version of demonic language runs thus: "Omimara chentazirim post hossita lossita lux / Ebulus lepolpes mala raphamius allilous / Helmo starius sed poli polisque / Lux capit horrontis latet vertice montis." BS MS Clm. 23325, 32v. See the similar formula in BV MS Pal. Lat. 794, 83v, and a fragmentary version in the margin of the same MS, 74r; and BS MS Clm. 10085, 2v. For more on this and other fifteenth-century exorcisms, see Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, chap. 5.

54. BS MS Clm. 10085 switches between different genders: the usage suggests a compiler who wished to retain the masculine neutral, but continually backslid into feminine endings. BS MS Clm. 23325 begins using feminine endings on fol. 12v and retains this usage throughout the rest of the manual. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), MS Lat. 3576 uses feminine endings only. BNF MS Lat. 3501 begins with double endings stacked on top of one another, uses the masculine ending alone on fol. 131v, then switches to the feminine on fol. 132v and for the remainder. BV MS Pal. Lat. 794 uses the masculine only on the recto side of the first folio (68), thereafter preferring the feminine exclusively. The exorcism squeezed into the top and bottom margins of BV MS Pal. Lat. 794 likewise uses only feminine endings. BV Vat. Lat. MS 10812 uses masculine endings only. An exorcists' manual from Schlägl Praemonstratensian Institute, Plaga, Austria, MS Lat. 194, uses feminine endings, as cited in Adolph Franz, *Die Kirchlichen Benedictionenim Mittelalter*, 2 vols. (1909; Graz: Akademische Druck, 1960), 1:571n4.

55. Joannes Nider, *Preceptorium divine legis* (Milan: Honate, 1489), 1.11.ii; Heinrich Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, pt. 2, q. 2, chaps. 5–6 (1487; Göppingen, Germany: Kümmerle Verlag, 1991), 170–79; English version ed. and trans. Montague Summers (London: Hogarth, 1948), 170–72, 179, 185–87.

56. See Mary R. O'Neil's pioneering 1982 Ph.D. dissertation "Discerning Superstition: Popular Errors and Orthodox Responses in Late Sixteenth-Century Italy" (Stanford University); and Euan Cameron, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

57. *Libellus ad Leonem X*, in *Annales Camaladulenses ordinis Sancti Benedicti* (Venice: Monasterium Sancti Michaelis de Muriano, 1723), 9, col. 688; Pedro Ciruelo, *Reprouacion de las supersticiones y hechizerias* (Valencia: Albatros Hispanófila, 1978), 108–17; *A Treatise Reproving All Superstitions and Forms of Witchcraft, Very Necessary and Useful for All Good Christians Zealous for Their Salvation*, ed. D'Orsay W. Pearson, trans., Eugen A. Maio (London: Associated University Press, 1977), 270–85.

58. Gian Matteo Giberti, *Constitutiones* (Verona: Putelle, 1542), bk. 4, chap. 29, fol. 30r; bk. 5, chap. 25, fol. 36v–37r; *Acta ecclesiae mediolanensis* (Milan: Pacificum Pontium, 1583), 16r; Gaspar Navarro, *Tribunal de superstición ladina, explorador del saber, astucia, y poder del demonio: En que se condena lo que suele correr por bueno en Hechizos* (Heusca, Spain: Pedro Bluson, 1631), 35r; Cesare Carena,"Ad modum procedendi in causis Strigum," in *Tractatus de Officio sanctissimae Inquisitionis* (Bonn, Germany: Monti, 1668), 442; Romano Canosa, *Storia dell'Inquisizione in Italia dalla metà del Cinquecento alla fine del Settecento*, vol. 1, *Modena* (Rome: Sapere, 1986), 78–80, 167.

59. Matteo Duni, *Tra religione e magia: Storia del prete modenese Guglielmo Campana (1460?–1541)* (Florence: Olschki, 1999); Archivio di Stato de Modena, Inquisizione b. 80, reproduced and analyzed in Giovanni Romeo, *Esorcisti, confessori e sessualità femminile dell'Italia della Controriforma* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1998), 13–48, 210–60. See many additional examples in Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*, chap. 2.

60. Girolamo Menghi, *Compendio dell'arte essorcistica, et possibilita delle mirabili et stupende operationi delli Demoni, et de'Malefici* (1576; Genoa: Nuova Stile Regina Editorice, 1987). See also his *Flagellum daemonum, seu exorcismi terribiles, potentissimi, et efficacies in malignos spiritus effugandos de obsessis corporibus, cum sui benedictionibus et omnibus requisites ad eorum explusionem* (Venice: Guerrea, 1576); for a partial English translation of the Flagellum, see Girolamo Menghi, *The Devil's Scourge: Exorcism During the Italian Renaissance*, trans. and commentary by Caetano Paxia (Boston: York Beach, 2002). See also *Fustis daemonum adiurationes formidabiles, potentissimas et efficaces in malignos spiritus fugandos de oppressis corporibus humanis* (Bologna: G. Rossi, 1584); *Parte seconda del compendio dell'arte essorcistica* (Venice: Georgio Varisco, 1601).

61. Martín de Castañega, *Tratado de las supersticiones y hechicerías* (Buenos Aires: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1997), 193.

62. Menghi, *Compendio dell'arte essorcistica*, 225, 151, 291–92.

63. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1971); Robert Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVII siècle* (Paris: Plon, 1980). For more recent example of these assertions, see Stephen Haliczer, *Between Exaltation and Infamy: Female Mystics in the Golden Age of Spain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002);

Brian P. Levack, "The Decline and End of Witchcraft Prosecutions," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, vol. 5, *The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 1–94.

64. In this, our work contributes to the historiographical transition from the disenchanted model of progress, to a recognition of the rationality of premodern systems of thought and epistemologies. See especially Stuart Clark's magisterial *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

65. Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, pt. 2, q. 2, chap. 5; 1487 ed., p. 176; Summers ed., p. 175.

66. Giulio Antonio Santori, *Rituale sacramentorum romanum Gregorii XIII Pont Max iussu* (Rome, 1584), 673–74. On Santori, see Mario Rosa, "Carriere ecclesiastiche e mobilità sociale: Dall'Autobiografia del Cardinale Giulio Antonio Santoro," in *Fra Storia e Storiografia: Scritti in onore di Pasquale Villani*, ed. Paolo Macry and Angelo Massafra (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994), 571–85.

67. *Rituale Romanum Pauli V Pontificis Maximi* (Mechelen, Belgium: Hanicq, 1851): "De exorciziandis obsessis a daemonio," 416–50. On the history of the Roman Rite, see Herbert Haag, *Teufelsglaube* (Tübingen, Germany: Katzmann, 1974), 391–439; Emil J. Lengeling, "Der Exorzismus der katholischen Kirche: Zu einer verwunderliche Ausgabe," *Liturgishces Jahrbuch* 32, no. 4 (1982): 249–57; Patrick Dondelinger-Mandy, "Le rituel des exorcismes dans le Rituale Romanum de 1614," *La Maison-Dieu* 183/184 (1990): 99–121; and Adelbert Schloz-Dürr, "Der traditionelle kirchliche Exorzismus im Rituale Romanum—biblisch-systematisch betrachtet," *Evangelische Theologie* 52 (1992): 56–65. For a detailed analysis and interpretation by a practicing exorcist, see Adolf Rodewyk, *Die Dämonische Besessenheit in der Sicht des Rituale romanum* (Aschaffenburg, Germany: Paul Pattloch Verlag, 1963).

68. See, for example, Giovanni Battista Codronchi, *De morbis venefici ac veneficiis* (Venice, 1595; we have used the Milan: Bidelli, 1618 edition), 43–45, 215–217; Floriano Canale, *De secreti universali racoolti, et esperimentati trattati nove* (Venice: Pietro Bertano, 1613), 179–81; and Zaccaria Visconti, *Complementum artis exorcisticae* (Venice: Barilettus, 1619), 47.

69. Valerio Polidori, *Practica exorcistarum . . . ad daemones et maleficia de Christi fidelibus expellendum* (Padua: Meietus, 1585), 17v–32v; Giovanni Battista Codronchi, *De Christiana ac tuta medendi ratione* (Ferrara: Mammarellus, 1591), 61–62 (on uterine suffocation as a major source of women's confusion between natural and demonic/divine possession). See also the discussion of demonic possession by the most prominent legal-medical early modern expert, Paolo Zacchia, *Questiones medico-legages, opus iurisperitis apprime necessarium*, 9 vols. (Rome, 1625–34; we have used the Lyon: Anisson et Posuel, 1701 edition), vol. 1, bk. 2, title 1, q. 18: "De Daemoniacis." For additional examples of the collaboration between exorcists and physicians, see Michele Miele, "Malattie magiche di origine diabolica e loro terapia secondo il medico beneventano Pietro Piperno (+ 1642)," *Campania sacra* 6 (1975): 166–223; François Azouvi, "Possession, révélation, et rationalité médicale au début du XVIIe siècle," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 64 (1980): 355–62; Angelo Turchini, *La fabbrica di un santo: Il processo di canonizzazione di Carlo Borromeo e la Controriforma* (Casale Monferrato, Italy: Marietti, 1984), 101–27; Manuel Simon, *Heilige, Hexe, Mutter: Der Wandel des Frauenbildesdurch die Medizinim 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: D. Riemer, 1993); Stuart Clark, "Demons and Disease: The Disenchantment of the Sick (1500–1700)," in *Illness and Healing Alternatives in Western Europe*, ed. Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, Hilary Marland, and Hans

de Waardt (London: Routledge, 1997), 38–58; Oscar di Simplicio, *Inquisizione, stregoneria, medicina: Siena e il suo stato (1580–1721)* (Siena: Il Leccio, 2000), 99–110; Ottavia Niccoli, "L'esorcista prudente: Il Manuale exorcistarum ac parochorum di Fra Candido Brugnoli da Sarnico," in *Il piacere del testo: Saggi e studi per Albano Biondi*, 2 vols., ed. Adriano Prosperi (Rome: Bulzoni, 2001), 1:193–215. On Zacchia, see Giovanni Pierini, *Venefici: Dalle Questiones medico legages di Paolo Zacchia* (Milan: Mimesis, 2001), 1–112.

70. Archivio Arcivescovile di Milano, se. 14, ms. 80: "Pro Energumenis et Maleficiatis"; reprinted in Maria Rosario Lazzati, "'Pro Energumenis et Maleficiaties': Un progetto di assistenza per gli indemoniati a Milano tra XVI e XVII secolo," *Quaderni Milanesi* 3 (1982): 74–81.

71. The Hague, Koningklijke Bibliotheck, MS NL-DHk 74 F 25: Rite of Saint Anthony, fol. 1; Rite of Saint Ambrose, 91; Bewitchments, 186v and 197v; Gerson's treatise, 24. And see Hans de Waardt, *Toverij en samenleving, Holland, 1500–1800* (The Hague: Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1991), 66–67.

72. Castañega, *Tratado de las supersticiones y hechicerías*, 28–29, 63–65, 115–16, 191–92.

73. Ciruelo, *Treatise Reproving All Superstitions*, 282. See also Lu Ann Homza, *Religious Authority in the Spanish Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

74. Luis de Granada, "Sermón contra los escándalos de las Caídas Públicas" (1587), in *Obras*, ed. Justo Cuervo, 14 vols. (Madrid: Gómez Fuentenebro, 1904–6), 14:571–72.

75. "La Vita di S. Filippo Neri," in *Opere*, ed. Alfonso Capecelatro, 10 vols. (Rome: Desclée, Lefebvre, e Cia, 1901), 1:423.

76. Santori, *Rituale sacramentorum romanum*, 674.

77. Cf. Menghi, *Compendio dell'arte essorcistica*, 150; Navarro, *Tribunal de la superstición ladina*, 32.

78. Francesco Maria Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, bk. 2, 16 (emphasis added); English ed., trans. Montague Summers (London: John Rodker, 1929), 19–39, 136–47. The passage makes an apt comparison with Jean Gerson's similar gender switch, in his discussion of the personality typical of the possessed individual: "The testing of spirits demands that the person to whom visions . . . are reported should behave prudently and cautiously. . . If it is a woman, it is especially necessary to consider how she acts," he warned in his *De probatione spirituum* (see above).

79. Cf. Henry Charles Lea, *Chapters from the Religious History of Spain Connected with the Inquisition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), 332–43; Peter Dinzelbacher, "Sante overro streghe: Alcuni casi del tardo medioevo," in Zarri, *Finzione e santità tra medioevo ed età moderna*, 52–87; Giovanni Romeo, "Una 'simulatrice di santità' a Napoli nel '500: Alfonsina Rispola," *Campania Sacra* 8/9 (1977/78): 159–218. See also Jean-Michel Sallmann's "La sainteté mystique feminine à Naples des XVIe et XVIIe siècles," in *Culto dei santi, istituzioni e classi sociali in età preindustriale*, ed. Sofia Boesch Gajano and Lucia Sebastiani (Rome: Japadre, 1984), 693–98; and *Visions indiennes, visions baroques: Les métissages de l'inconscient* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 57–83.

80. Jean Bodin, *De la demonomanie des sorciers* (Paris: Jacques du-Puys, 1587), bk. 1, 3; translation from the English edition *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, trans. Randy A. Scott (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1995), 66–67. On Jean Bodin's and Martín Del Rio's discussions of women's unreliability, see Jean Céard's "Folie

et démonologie au XVIe siècle," in *Folie et déraison à la Renaissance* (Brussels: University de Bruxelles, 1976), 129–49; and "Médecine et démonologie: Les enjeux d'un débat," in *Diable, diables et diableries au temps de la Renaissance* (Paris: Touzot, 1988), 97–112. See also Candido Brugnoli, *Manuale Exorcistarum ad parochorum: Hoc est tractatus de curatione ac protection divina* (Venice: Pezzana, 1683); [Pierre Yvelin], *Examen de la possession des religieuses de Louviers* (Paris, 1643); and [Yvelin], *Apologie pour l'autheur de l'Examen de la possession des Religieuses de Louviers* (Rouen, 1643).

81. The literature on simulated sanctity is growing fast. See Albano Biondi, "L'inordinata devozione' nella *Prattica* del Cardinale Scaglia (ca. 1635)," in Zarri, *Finzione e santità tra medioevo ed età moderna*, 306–25 (and, in fact, Zarri's entire edited collection). See also Lucetta Scaraffia, "Tra fede e simulazione: Questioni aperte sulla religiosità femminile," *Memoria*28 (1990): 177–83; Richard L. Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams: Politics and Prophecy in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 431–64; Cecilia Ferrazzi, *Autobiography of an Aspiring Saint*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Sophie Houdard, "Des fausses saintes aux spirituelles à la mode: Les signes suspects de la mystique," *XVIIe siècle* 200 (1998): 417–32; Paola Zito, *Giulia e l'Inquisitore: Simulazione di santità e misticismo nella Napoli di primo Seicento* (Naples: Arte tipografica, 2000); Daniela Berti, "L'autobiografia di una visionaria," *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 28, no. 3 (1992): 473–508; and especially Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints: Pretense of Holiness, Inquisition, and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618–1750* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), who meticulously traces the construction of the legal category "simulated sanctity."

82. Translated by Anne Schutte in *Aspiring Saints*, 69; cf. the very popular treatise by the Jesuit Giovanni Bona, *De discretione spirituum* (Rome: Tinassi, 1672), chap. 20.3, 3.

83. Schutte, trans., *Aspiring Saints*, 71.

84. Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza*, 460.

85. François de Sales, *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, 2 vols. (Paris: Bonne presse, 1925), 2:20–21; English edition, *Treatise on the Love of God*, trans. Henry B. Mackey, 2 vols. (London: Burnes Oates and Washbourne, 1932–33), 2:298 (quotation from the English edition).

86. Alain Rey, ed., *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, 3 vols. (Paris: Le Robert, 1995), 2:2266. Cf. Nicolas Malebranche, *De la recherché de la vérité*, 2 vols. (Paris: Pralard 1675), 1:337. In Spain at the same time, a popular saying described the lifecycle of a poor woman as "a prostitute in the spring, a procuress in the autumn, and *beata* [a lay devout woman] in the winter." See Luis Martinéz Kleiser, *Refranero genera, ideológico español* (Madrid: Real Academia española, 1935), 618.

87. See the detailed discussion in Linda Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture (1598–1715)* (Paris: Champion, 1993), 621–59.

88. Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, "Instruction sur les états d'oraison," in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. F. Lachat, 31 vols. (Paris: Louis Vivès, 1865), 18:371; see also 18:391.

89. Michel Marescot, *Discours veritable sur le fait de Marthe Brossier, de Romorantin, prétendue démoniaque* (Paris: Patisson, 1599), 15.

90. Jean-Joseph Surin, *Science expérimentale des choses de l'autre* vie (Grenoble, France: Millon, 1990). In French, *expérience* and *expérimental* mean both experience and experiment,

and experimental and experiential. Surin use the term in a meaning closer to "experience" than to "experiment," but his use of the term "science" indicates, we believe, that he cherished the ambivalence. It is plausible that he was challenging François de Sales's presentation of science and experience as complete opposites: "Who loves God more, I ask you, the theologian Ockham, whom some called the most subtle of mortals, or Saint Catherine of Genoa, an illiterate woman? The former knew him more by science, the latter by experience, and the latter's experience led her much faster to seraphic love, while the former, with his science, remained far from this excellent perfection." François de Sales, *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, bk. 6, chap. 4; *Treatise on the Love of God*, 1:243. François Guilloré used the term in 1668 to degrade and ridicule women who pursue spiritual exercises. Guilloré was a Jesuit, like Surin, and might have seen a manuscript version of Surin's work. See his *Maximes spirituelles pour la conduits des ames* (Nantes: Pierre Averro, 1668), 100.

91. Our argument here follows Lorraine Daston's findings in both "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (1991): 93–124; and "The Nature of Nature in Early Modern Europe," *Configurations* 6, no. 2 (1998): 149–72.

92. Scipione Mercuri, *Degli errori popolari d'Italia* (Venice: Giovanni Batista, 1599), 101v–102r; Martín del Rio, *Disquisitionum magicarum* (Louvain, Belgium: Cardon, 1599–1600), bk. 2, q. 30, sec. 3.