

up urgent questions about how scarcity, the state, conservation, commerce, and colonialism interacted to transform environments at the dawn of English empire.

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ERIC PUDNEY, ed. *A Defence of Witchcraft Belief: A Sixteenth-Century Response to Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021. Pp. 232. \$120.00 (cloth).

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Over the past twenty-five years there has been a concerted effort to transcribe and publish late medieval and early modern manuscripts relating to witchcraft and the supernatural. These manuscripts have ranged from manuals of ritual practices, like John of Morigny's *Liber florum celestis*, edited by Claire Fanger and Nicholas Watson, to texts condemning magic's use, like the French treatise *Contre les devineurs* (1411), edited by Jan Veenstra. All have contributed significantly to understanding of the place the supernatural held in premodern society, lending insight into the heterogenous, nuanced, and often conflicting attitudes held towards magic. Eric Pudney's *A Defence of Witchcraft Belief: A Sixteenth-Century Response to Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft*, an edition of a largely overlooked, and certainly never printed, treatise is a valuable addition to this corpus.

The manuscript presented here is a part of Harley MS 2302 housed by the British Library, and, as Pudney ably shows, it is a treatise written in response to an unpublished draft of Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Internal evidence suggests that it was written, at the earliest, in late 1580, and surely before the publication of the *Discoverie* in 1584. Despite missing pages at both the beginning and end of the treatise, the treatise is made up of 103 “reasons” or responses to the *Discoverie*'s arguments, making it “the only extant text that responds directly and at length to Scot” (6). The familiar tone of the text and friendly recommendations—despite largely rejecting Scot's premises and methodologies—suggests that it was written at Scot's request, probably by a friend or even kinsman whose opinion was sought some time before the *Discoverie* went to print. Pudney is reticent to conclusively name an author for the text, but proposes the suffragan bishop of Dover, Richard Rogers, as a likely candidate. Whoever the author, they certainly had extensive theological knowledge and sufficient affection for Scot, or concern regarding his ideas, to compose an extensive reply.

A useful introduction prefaces the treatise, situating the work and its author. Attention is given to proving the text was indeed written as a response to Scot's *Discoverie*—though less evidence would have been enough to convince—and that the work was composed in response to an earlier draft of the *Discoverie* than the one that has survived in print. The implications of this, as Pudney outlines, are exciting. The text sheds light on Scot's process in the composition of the *Discoverie*, including where Scot reworked his argument in response to criticism and (more often) where he doubled down on his assertions. Aside from acting as a foil to Scot, though, the *Defence* has value in its own right: it adds another voice to the range of opinions about witches during the later sixteenth century. As was the case with Henry Holland and James VI of Scotland, the author disagrees with Scot's conclusion that witches do not have the powers ascribed to them. What is original about this author, though, is the tone that he strikes in doing so. The author does not seem to be invested in proving the full extent of witches' powers—indeed, he goes as far as stating that he will not “justify all to be true which is testified about witches by the most learned and godly writers, though I do credit

much more thereof than you [Scot] do” (Reason 6, page 69). Despite this level of discernment, he does not readily dismiss Catholic demonologists like Heinrich Kramer and Jean Bodin, thus setting himself apart from some of the more fervent Puritan authors of his day. As Pudney notes, the treatise’s author “seems *not* to have any particular interest in witchcraft, notwithstanding his involvement in witchcraft cases” (39), allowing us to glimpse a more measured set of opinions than historians are normally privy to.

Such a dispassionate, measured, and open-minded approach to the topic is fascinating. Pudney posits that the author was able to present a more thoughtful, less guarded reflection on the existence of witches because the treatise was written for private consumption—perhaps only ever intended to be read by one person. In which case, the *Defence* may well be useful to those interested in the divide between public and private discourse in the early modern period.

The treatise itself is presented in a highly accessible way. Professional scholars and undergraduate readers alike will probably welcome the modernized spelling, and extensive explanatory notes elucidate obsolete words and phrases and provide contextual information. With the aid of table 2 in the introduction, Pudney helpfully delineates how each “reason” corresponds to books or chapters of the *Discoverie*, making it easy to read the texts alongside one another if desired. The table also notes where the responses do not clearly map onto any section of the *Discoverie*, revealing where Scot might have omitted some arguments before final publication. To further aid cross-comparison of the *Discoverie* and the *Defence*, Pudney heads each “reason” with relevant extracts from Scot. Different fonts are used to signpost each author’s work.

The edition contains eleven images, seven of which are of MS 2302. These are used to demonstrate both the treatise’s layout and provide examples of the author’s hand, the latter feature being used to compare with samples of the hands of William Redman, John Coldwell, Tobias Matthew, and Richard Rogers. Pudney highlights, though does not explain, the omission of a sample from his final contender, Thomas Goodwin. This does not materially detract from the overall argument, but the absence is regrettable from the stance of completeness.

Overall, there is very little to critique and much to praise in this book. A newly accessible primary source will doubtless be appreciated by many scholars, especially when it allows insight into more private thoughts than allowed by pamphlets or other printed literature.

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GILLIAN RUSSELL. *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century: Print, Sociability, and the Cultures of Collecting*. Cambridge Studies in Romanticism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. 350. \$99.99 (cloth).
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In her sophisticated study, *The Ephemeral Eighteenth Century: Print, Sociability, and the Cultures of Collecting*, Gillian Russell engages multiple disciplinary frameworks—including literary studies, theater history, textual materialism, book history, and comparative bibliography—to analyze eighteenth-century ephemera as both a concept and a type of material document embedded in day-to-day commercial and cultural interactions. Russell addresses several inter-related questions: How did the linked concepts of ephemerality and the everyday converge and evolve across the period? How was ephemera used to define the changing boundaries of literature and literary value? What, according to commentators and collectors, was the value of printed ephemera, a diverse and capacious media category that includes most everything