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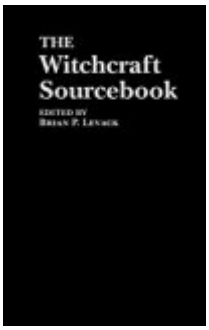
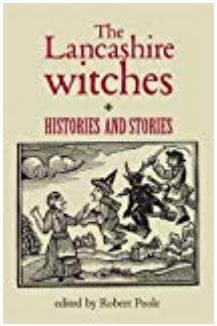


Brian P. Levack. *The Witchcraft Sourcebook.* New York: Routledge, 2004. xiii + 348 pp. $130.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-415-19505-8.



Robert Poole, ed.. *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002. xiv + 226 pp. $26.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-7190-6204-9.

Reviewed by Barry Reay

Published on H-Albion (January, 2005)

The turn of the millennium has seen an exponential growth in academic studies of early modern American and European witchcraft. It represents a boom industry, with multi-volume encyclopedias, a 12-volume work of reprinted articles, a 2,000-page long collection of English witchcraft pamphlets, collected histories, Witchcraft Readers, translations of key texts, edited documents and hundreds of monographs and learned disquisitions. Who could have predicted that the work of Keith Thomas and Alan Macfarlane in the late 1960s and early 1970s would have been the precursor for such activity? Indeed, the disenchanted world's fascination with the enchanted is a phenomenon that in itself cries out for further study! The two books here, one an annotated collection of source material, the other a collection of essays, are further examples of the genre.

Poole's book, the collection of essays, focuses on a famous English case, the trials of the Lancashire witches in 1612. As James Sharpe points out in his introduction, although there was little that was unusual in the combined elements of the case, what was uncharacteristic (by English though not European standards) was the level of executions: ten, or eleven if we include a related case.

The text is divided into three sections. The first focuses on the trials themselves and includes what this reviewer thought the two most interesting chapters in the collection. Stephen Pumfrey demonstrates that the standard account of the

episode, Thomas Potts's ***The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches*** (1613), sometimes read as a direct account of the affair, closely followed the tropes, and sometimes the precise wording, of James I's even more famous ***Daemonologie*** (1597). In a closely linked chapter, Marion Gibson skillfully demonstrates the textual construction of Potts's account in which the messiness of accusation and court procedure was molded into a seamless narrative displaying "the shining efficiency and justice of the legal system" (p. 53).

The second part of the book deals with the socio-economic context of the communities involved in the trials. John Swain discusses the local economy of the affected area of Pendle, where the majority of households were engaged in cattle rearing and woolen cloth production. He also deals with the social backdrop, discussing the likelihood that some of the accused witches actually earned a precarious living as good (white) or bad (black) witches. However, as Swain admits, the patchy survival of local records, including the actual court accounts, severely limits analyses of this kind.

The third and final section of the book, though of value to students of literature, is less directly related to the trials of 1612. Richard Wilson deals with the witches in Shakespeare's ***Macbeth*** (1606), and Alison Findlay revisits Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome's ***The Late Lancashire Witches*** (1634). However, by the time we have reached Jeffrey Richards's chapter on the nineteenth-century novelist William Harrison Ainsworth, and Joanne Pearson's account of modern day witchcraft, we are worlds away from our original quarry.

With Brian Levack's book, we move from the local to the global, from witchcraft and magic in the ancient world to twentieth-century Norway. Clearly aimed at a student market for university courses on the history of witchcraft, this wide-ranging collection of short extracts from primary source material, utilizes some of the recently edited translations referred to earlier. The samples from the work of Martin Del Rio, Jean Bodin, and Friedrich Spee all come from editions published after 2000. Levack's aim is to provide a selection of the widest possible range of documents: demonological tracts, trial transcripts, confessions, woodcut prints, and drama. He is also impressively multinational in his choices: America, England, France, Germany, Norway, Russia, Scotland, and Spain are all represented. The reader can encounter the demonologist Pierre de Lancre's claim (1612) that the Devil "takes more pleasure in sexual relations from the back than from the front" (p. 108), and Johann Weyer's assertion (1563) that women were more easily tricked by Satan into believing that they had entered into a pact with him because they were, by nature, "inconstant, credulous, wicked, [and] uncontrolled in spirit" (pp. 281-282). We have Henri Boguet's assurance (1602) that Satan assumed the form of a goose to copulate with a woman, and that he (Satan, not Boguet) had copious amounts of semen because he also acted as a succubus (p. 81)!

Some of the selections are predictable, though this is not to question their inclusion: ***Malleus Maleficarum***, Remy, Perkins, Guazzo, Mather, and Scot. Other sources are more innovative. For example, Robin Briggs has provided a transcript of a fascinating trial in Lorraine in 1598. Another document is a translated excerpt from Alonso de Salazar Frias's skeptical assessment of the witchcraft panic in Navarre in the early seventeenth century, the subject of a classic study by Gustav Henningsen. One or two of Levack's choices are somewhat idiosyncratic; the inclusion of the modern Norwegian play baffled this reviewer. The English contribution is a pamphlet, included, Levack implies, because of the paucity of accounts by trial witnesses. But it would be misleading to think that no depositions survive for that country. The records of Assizes of the Northeast contain riveting material of this kind, used to compelling effect by Sharpe and others.

With shades of Thomas Potts, the editor has imposed order on his threateningly unruly material. Each of the book's eight sections, and every document, is preceded by helpful editorial comments as the reader moves from the magic of the ancient world and the medieval origins of what came to be the demonological strand of witchcraft beliefs, through early modern witchcraft beliefs and trials (three parts), to demonic possession, somewhat limited skepticism, and witchcraft in plays.

It is easy to be critical of collections with such range. Levack focuses primarily on the demonological tradition of witchcraft. He seems less concerned with another tradition, sometimes called "primary witchcraft," the belief that there were those in the community capable of doing harm (maleficium) by magical means without any necessary link to Satan or his minions. His selection hints at, but does not systematically address, the variety of demonological beliefs, nor does it sufficiently explore the interaction between what used to be termed the popular and learned strands of witchcraft discourse. R. Bernard's ***A Guide to Grand-Jury Men*** (1629) is not included by Levack, though it would have provided a clear instance of an intermingling of intellectual traditions. This guide drew on the Bible, the classics, English theology, continental demonology, and English popular literature. The trial pamphlets that Bernard used (including the Lancashire trials) were the product of interactions between accuser, inquisitor, witch, judge, and community, filtered, of course, through an authorial lens. They then became narratives informing both written and oral discourses of witchcraft. We write of traditions, but they were constantly modified ones. Unlike the analyses of Sharpe and Gibson referred to earlier, Levack's commentary and selection convey little sense of such processes. When Levack writes, "the early modern stereotype of witchcraft had been fully formed" by the mid sixteenth century (p. 69), he is in danger of disguising a far more interesting and complex picture.

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Citation: Barry Reay. Review of Levack, Brian P. *The Witchcraft Sourcebook.* ; Poole, Robert, ed. *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories.* H-Albion, H-Net Reviews. January, 2005.

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