



Detestable and wicked arts: New England and witchcraft in the early modern Atlantic world

by Paul B. Moyer, Ithaca, NY and London, Cornell University Press, 2020, xiv + 276 pp., with 19 b/w halftones, \$115.00 (hardback), \$29.95 (paperback), \$14.99 (e-book), ISBN 9781501751073

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sprinkling holy water and a priest whose eyes are fixed on a prayer book. Morris speculates at some length on p. 162 as to what this might mean. But the contemporaneous textual account of the festival by Georg Rudolf Weckherlin (listed in Morris's bibliography and available online) solves the mystery by explaining on pp. 34 and 35 that the mountain is Croagh Patrick in Ireland ("Patricii Hill" he also calls it!), that the bishop is St Patrick ("der Irländer Apostel") who is driving the snakes out of Ireland, and the whole entry, which includes Irish pilgrims and musicians playing the Irish harp, is that of the Irish knights ("Irländische Ritter"). Weckherlin makes no anti-Catholic comments in this passage and the Irish are simply introduced as one of a number of exotic groups. This entry supports Morris's argument that in these festivals there "is a lack of any direct hostility or fanning of the flames when it came to religious sensitivities" (162), so it is a pity that he did not read the Weckherlin account. He would have arrived at the opposite conclusion, however, if he had read the section labelled "Sectarian Tournaments" on pp. 20–22 of *Court Culture in Dresden from Renaissance to Baroque* (2002), a work which is also listed in his bibliography. In spite of these lacunae, which can be corrected in a later edition, this is a valuable addition to the literature on festivals, on the Holy Roman Empire, and on the question of early modern German identity.

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Atlantic world, by Paul B. Moyer, Ithaca, NY and London, Cornell University Press, 2020, xiv + 276 pp., with 19 b/w halftones, \$115.00 (hardback), \$29.95 (paperback), \$14.99 (e-book), ISBN 9781501751073

Paul B. Moyer's book examines witchcraft cases in the British colonies of New England before 1670. These cases have been written about before, as Moyer notes, most famously by John Demos in *Entertaining Satan* (1982), Richard Weisman in *Witchcraft, Magic and Religion* (1984) and Carol Karlsen in *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman* (1987). But most scholars of witchcraft in early New England have dipped into these cases one way or another. Moyer's reasons for focusing on these cases are that "they deserve a fresh look . . . to provide an engaging exploration that brings together existing scholarship on the topic and offers some new interpretations" (xi). Moyer specifically wants to avoid the "jargon" of this earlier generation of scholars, producing a book that is more "plainspoken and accessible". And, while these earlier works remain central to the field, Moyer is quite right that this earlier generation's "romance with anthropology, sociology and psychology" (xii) has passed. Moyer's analysis is in line with recent early European witchcraft scholarship, specifically how witchcraft cases intersected with gender, class, religion, and the law. Moyer, also in keeping with current historiography, moves away

from a strict division between elite and popular witchcraft cultures, and presents witchcraft prosecution as a corporate activity.

Over an Introduction and seven chapters, Moyer re-examines the pre-1670 witchcraft cases in New England. Chapter One establishes a narrative of witchcraft prosecution in New England between 1630 and 1670. Chapter 2 considers how New Englanders conceived of witchcraft. Chapters 3 and 4 look at “traits that characterised the accused”. Chapter 4 examines witchcraft and the construction of gender. Chapter 5 examines the dynamics of accusation. Chapter 6 looks at witch panics (though interestingly, not the Salem trials, of which more below), including bewitched accusers. Chapter 7 examines the judicial process of how accusations became prosecutions. Across these eight chapters, Moyer creates a new history of these witchcraft cases in New England, bringing our understanding of them in line with the current trends in witchcraft historiography so successfully that this book covers new ground, rather than rehashing previous studies. Moyer’s central conclusion is not startling: “the story of witchcraft in early New England is part of a broader tale of a campaign against black magic across the English Atlantic and especially those parts of it where Puritans predominated” (6). But this contextualisation of witchcraft prosecution in New England within the “Puritan Atlantic” is the key achievement of this book. Moyer very successfully argues that these witchcraft cases can only be understood in relation to the witchcraft cultures of the seventeenth century in England. This may appear self-evident but has never been fully examined due to the isolationist tendencies of American witchcraft historiography. Hopefully, this framework will be emulated in future studies, ending the exceptionalist, self-referential tendencies of the American scholarship of New England witchcraft cases.

There are some issues. Moyer’s periodisation maintains the American historiographical dividing line between the Salem trials of 1692, and other witchcraft cases in New England, because Salem is “outside the norm” (xi) and “an outlier” (7) in New England’s history. This suggests that the 1692 trials are somehow not part of the authentic history of New England witchcraft. This divide is nonsensical and needs to go. The Salem trials were extraordinary, but are part of the history of New England witchcraft nonetheless. Why these colonies produced such an extensive event, after years of endemic prosecution and small scale witch hunts remains a key, but largely unexplored, question in New England’s witchcraft historiography.

There is a lack of precision in Moyer’s use of terms that detracts from the excellence of his scholarship. Throughout the book, Moyer uses “witch hunting” and “witch prosecution” interchangeably and refers throughout to “occult crimes”. Early modern New Englanders had a lexicon of descriptors for magical crimes, which described economies of magical harm and benefit, which were deployed by, and attached to, people in different ways at different times. Witchcraft was only one of a number of occult crimes. Likewise, not every witchcraft prosecution was a witch hunt. Here Moyer has not separated his study enough from earlier work which used anthropological, sociological and psychological methods which de-prioritised witch beliefs to establish “what really happened”. Early modern Europeans accused witches because they believed that witches existed, and witchcraft was possible. Witchcraft prosecution was the quotidian articulation of witch beliefs about an individual or individuals, whereas witch hunts were an articulation of perceptions of assault by the forces of evil. Scale and geography were not necessarily the only factors. The way the crime of witchcraft was articulated by accusers, and by jurists and clergy, and whether this articulation produced a witchcraft prosecution or a witch hunt, are fundamental to understanding how witchcraft accusations intersected with gender, class, religion and law.

That said, Moyer's study is an extremely well-researched, fully considered, well-structured study of events that are, by their very nature, incoherent and messy. He brings these cases into focus in a way that an earlier generation of scholars did not. This book should attract a readership from scholars of early modern European witchcraft, who have tended to regard New England witchcraft cases as marginal and remote from their areas of interest. But it will be particularly useful for students and scholars new to the history of witchcraft in early seventeenth-century New England.

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The histories of Alexander Neville (1544-1614): a new translation of *Kett's Rebellion and The City of Norwich*, edited by Ingrid Walton, Clive Wilkins-Jones and Philip Wilson, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2019, liv + 399 pp., with 4 b/w plates. £75.00 (hardback), ISBN 9781783273324

The Great Blow: examinations and informations relating to the Great Blow in Norwich 1648, edited by Andrew Hopper, Jean Agnew and Wilbur Alley, Norwich, The Norfolk Record Society, 2018, xliv + 195 pp., £12.00 (hardback), ISBN 9780995773615

Not only was it one of the most interesting counties in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period, Norfolk is especially well served by its publishers and historians today. These two handsomely produced volumes provide accounts of major events in the region that both had far-reaching significance. Kett's Rebellion (1549) is by far the better known, a rebellion largely precipitated by the spread of enclosure, the uprising was a significant threat to the power of Edward VI, which has been most recently interpreted by Andy Wood. The Great Blow took place 99 years later when 98 barrels of gunpowder ignited during a riot, killing many of the rioters. Contemporary Parliamentarians saw that event as God's punishment of the wickedly ungodly supporters of the king, but it also shows the level of popular support for the monarchy in the county at the time.

Alexander Neville (1544–1614) was a humanist scholar, historian and poet working as a secretary to Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Neville was especially proud of his Norfolk origins and produced two major works recording the history of the county, an account of Kett's Rebellion (1575) and a history of the city of Norwich (1576), both written in Latin. The current volume produces parallel texts with translations of both histories. Neville was eager to demonstrate the achievements of the citizens of Norwich, then England's second city, and provide lasting monuments of their loyalty to the crown and civic pride. Writing in Latin gave the histories an international audience and, the editors speculate, the lack of subsequent editions of the works was probably because so many were printed as a first edition in anticipation of a wide readership. Neville was an elegant stylist, with a "fondness for lengthy and elaborate periodic sentences . . . use of repetition, alliteration and assonance . . . , rhetorical questions and indirect speech; and a taste for parenthesis" (xxxix). The history of Norwich is dominated by the vocabulary of virtue, demonstrating the self-control, restraint