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Klaassen, Frank, ed. Making Magic in Elizabethan England

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Klaassen, Frank, ed.

Making Magic in Elizabethan England.

University Park: Penn State University Press, 2019. Pp. 147 + 66 b/w ill. ISBN 978-0-271-08368-1 (hardcover) US\$89.95.

This book is a significant contribution to the established series, *The Magic in History*, which Penn State University Press has successfully expanded over the years. Magic swayed power of the minds, learning, and beliefs of people in early modern England, and it was deeply engrained in the popular culture and cultural memory. Print and manuscript records of the cultural preponderance of magic writing abound and it does not come as a surprise that, as this book shows, new finds still emerge from the archives. Klaassen has made a mark on the early modern study of magic already; with this scrupulously edited and well-contextualized and introduced document of hermetic and kabbalistic traditions of ritualistic magic, and of the writing on magic, he has expanded scholarship on magic and enriched both scholars' and students' understanding and appreciation of the ritualistic working of magic in further detail and within English and Continental thought and historiography. First, he brought to the light of print for the first time two different anonymous texts: "The Antiphoner Notebook" (from the Bodleian Library) and "The Boxgrove Manual" (from the British Library). The former is a mid-sixteenth-century document, the latter originated in 1600. The texts are both representative of the burgeoning culture of magical writing in the period, but each brings out new evidence about the philological description of magic and about its practical use in conjuring.

Each manuscript is transcribed in accordance with the scholarly standard for manuscript transcription as semi-diplomatic editions (in the case of "The Antiphoner Notebook," English and Latin texts are produced in parallel columns); each document is discussed in relation to its provenance and its intellectual and historical context; and for each document, the reader can rely on explanatory notes and annotations that expand the meanings, historical contexts, and uses of the documents. Together with the introductory preliminaries for each document, ample annotations offer a reliable and extended critical commentary and additional evidence and contexts. Klaassen's way of framing each document exemplifies the point he makes, that early modern manuscripts of magic "are seldom one-dimensional artifacts" (18). In line with this, his explanatory apparatus and introduction to each edited

text illuminate the complexities of what he calls a “set of archaeological layers” (18) revealed in these remarkable little documents, analyze scribal practice and idiosyncrasy in each case, and give historical explanations of the circulation and production of such documents in post-Reformation England and the closure of the monasteries—especially their transmission from medieval to sixteenth-century writing. Klaassen also explains succinctly the transformation that magic texts underwent when scribes transmitted them from Latin and for clerical purpose—“to vernacular and nonclerical contexts” (8)—in the sixteenth century. He maps carefully both the continuity and discontinuity with the past tradition. The notes explain semantic decoding of textual details as they relate to charms, rituals, conjuration practices, sources, charms (and their use in medical healing), and cosmologies of the “scripted magic” (7) in these texts.

Editors’ choices invite the question how newly edited texts can influence new critical and historiographic scholarship and research and how new primary texts enrich work in cognate disciplines. Klaassen makes these points, if not as directly as I put it here, when he states that “these two texts evince many important dimensions of that period [sixteenth century] in the history of magic, in particular how two scribes went about assembling or *making* a book of magic” (3). These two texts show that these sixteenth-century scribes, at least, acted not merely as copyists but as compilers, thus indirectly as critics, of other sources, adapting and blending them to serve their needs (3). Essentially, these scribes were re-creators and creators of magical knowledge for sixteenth-century readers and uses. Their scribal authority, Klaassen argues, shows intellectual habits and motivations (3) that look both ways: to the texts they transcribe and to the larger culture for which they are transcribing them.

In magical texts, the connection between text and illustration is especially close because pictures provide practical and concrete arrangements of the elements in a ritual and explain symbols and relationships between elements and steps in a ritual. For instance, a sixteenth-century reader will know how to “exorcise demons guarding a treasure” by following a round chart and explanatory symbols and fields for each of the acts within the ritual, as they are clearly depicted in a simple round image, which Klaassen reproduces meticulously on page 35. Each chart, each illustration in each of these two texts, extends a point made in a practical sense; the two texts in effect are user manuals, hands-on guides to turning ideas into acts and to understanding complex (and convoluted) relationships between constituent elements in a magical ritual.

Even more complex illustrations, like those on pages 88, 89, 96, 98, and 99, are carefully and clearly reproduced, which makes it easier to understand their role in a text but also makes them enjoyable to look at as visual traces of each of the scribes' drawing skills.

Klaassen has made an arcane subject appealing and easy to read for a modern reader. He has given both scholars and students a book that is a joy to read and hold—full of fresh insights and nicely synthesized familiar points that enable us to locate these books in their context. He has provided both historical and literary scholarship with a book that may fine-tune extant arguments about familiar texts. For instance, how do these two texts help readers of Christopher Marlowe's play, *Doctor Faustus*—written somewhere between the dates of the two texts presented in this edition—understand some of Doctor Faustus's ritual as falling somewhere between Marlowe's creative imagination and an actual knowledge that was recorded in script at roughly the same time? What new evidence about magic does this edition offer to anyone studying the subject of magic in early modern drama (which is full of magic)? Klaassen has provided a highly reliable book with some of the answers to these questions. The publisher must also be commended for high quality production and layout.

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Loh, Maria H.

Titian's Touch: Art, Magic and Philosophy.

London: Reaktion Books, 2019. Pp. 288 + 82 colour ill. ISBN 978-1-789914-082-8 (hardcover) US\$22.50.

In this engaging and compact biography, part of the Renaissance Lives series, Maria Loh presents Titian as a philosopher whose powerful tool of investigation was his paintbrush. She ties his evolving technical style to a philosophical quest for the essence and meaning of nature, supernatural phenomena, human nature and the body, and various forms of stuff and matter. She posits that Titian, much like his older contemporary Leonardo da Vinci, based his artistic practice in the close and exhaustive sensation of personal experience and the physical world around him. Indeed, one of the strongest contributions of the book is