

Religion And The Decline Of Magic Studies In Popular Beliefs In Sixteenth And Seventeenth Century England Penguin History

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In Pursuit of Civility - Keith Thomas
2018-06-05

Keith Thomas's earlier studies in the ethnography of early modern England, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, *Man and the Natural World*, and *The Ends of Life*, were all attempts to explore beliefs, values, and social practices in the centuries from 1500 to 1800. *In Pursuit of Civility* continues this quest by examining what English people thought it meant to be "civilized" and how that condition differed from being "barbarous" or "savage." Thomas shows that the upper ranks of society sought to distinguish themselves from their social inferiors by distinctive ways of moving, speaking, and comporting themselves, and that the common people developed their own form of civility. The belief of the English in their superior civility shaped their relations with the Welsh, the Scots, and the Irish, and was fundamental to their dealings with the native peoples of North America, India, and Australia. Yet not everyone shared this belief in the superiority of Western civilization; the book sheds light on the origins of both anticolonialism and cultural relativism. Thomas has written an accessible history based on wide reading, abounding in fresh insights,

and illustrated by many striking quotations and anecdotes from contemporary sources.

The Night Battles - Carlo Ginzburg 2013-10-15

In his new preface, Ginzburg reflects on the interplay of chance and discovery, as well as on the relationship between anomalous cases and historical generalizations.

Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays - Bronislaw Malinowski 2014-04-10

This book contains three prolific essays by the world renown polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski. First published in 1926, *Magic, Science and Religion* provides its readers with a seminal collection of texts exploring the concepts of magic, religion, science, rite and myth, detailing how they interlink to offer exciting and informative insights into the Trobrianders of New Guinea. A must-have for any students of anthropology and collectors of Malinowski's work, we are republishing this classic work with a new introductory biography of the author.

Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England - Alan MacFarlane 2002-09-10

This is a classic regional and comparative study of early modern witchcraft. The history of witchcraft continues to attract attention with its

emotive and contentious debates. The methodology and conclusions of this book have impacted not only on witchcraft studies but the entire approach to social and cultural history with its quantitative and anthropological approach. The book provides an important case study on Essex as well as drawing comparisons with other regions of early modern England. The second edition of this classic work adds a new historiographical introduction, placing the book in context today.

Religion and the Decline of Magic - Keith Thomas 1991

Presents an analysis of the religious beliefs of English society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including the use of popular magic, and the role the Protestant Reformation played in taking magic out of religion.

Cursed Britain Thomas Waters 2019-10-07

The definitive history of how witchcraft and black magic have survived, through the modern era and into the present day. *Cursed Britain* unveils the enduring power of witchcraft, curses and black magic in modern times. Few topics are so secretive or controversial. Yet, whether in the 1800s or the early 2000s, when disasters struck or personal misfortunes mounted, many Britons found themselves believing in things they had previously dismissed - dark supernatural forces. Historian Thomas Waters here explores the lives of cursed or bewitched people, along with the witches and witch-busters who helped and harmed them. Waters takes us on a fascinating journey from Scottish islands to the folklore-rich West Country, from the immense territories of the British Empire to metropolitan London. We learn why magic caters to deep-seated human needs but see how it can also be abused, and discover how witchcraft survives by evolving and changing. Along the way, we examine an array of remarkable beliefs and rituals, from traditional folk magic to diverse spiritualities originating in Africa and Asia. This is a tale of cynical quacks and sincere magical healers, depressed people and furious vigilantes, innocent victims and rogues who claimed to possess evil abilities. Their spellbinding stories raise important questions about the state's role in regulating radical spiritualities, the fragility of secularism and the true nature of magic.

The Transformations of Magic Frank Klaassen

2013

"Explores two principal genres of illicit learned magic in late Medieval manuscripts: image magic, which could be interpreted and justified in scholastic terms, and ritual magic, which could not"--Provided by publisher.

Religion and the Decline of Magic - Simon Young 2017-07-04

Keith Thomas's classic study of all forms of popular belief has been influential for so long now that it is difficult to remember how revolutionary it seemed when it first appeared. By publishing *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Thomas became the first serious scholar to attempt to synthesize the full range of popular thought about the occult and the supernatural, studying its influence across Europe over several centuries. At root, his book can be seen as a superb exercise in problem-solving: one that actually established "magic" as a historical problem worthy of investigation. Thomas asked productive questions, not least challenging the prevailing assumption that folk belief was unworthy of serious scholarly attention, and his work usefully reframed the existing debate in much broader terms, allowing for more extensive exploration of correlations, not only between different sorts of popular belief, but also between popular belief and state religion. It was this that allowed Thomas to reach his famous conclusion that the advent of Protestantism - which drove out much of the "superstition" that characterised the Catholicism of the period - created a vacuum filled by other forms of belief; for example, Catholic priests had once blessed their crops, but Protestants refused to do so. That left farmers looking for other ways of ensuring a good harvest. It was this, Thomas argues, that explains the survival of what we now think of as "magic" at a time such beliefs might have been expected to decline - at least until science arose to offer alternative paradigms.

Witchcraft, Witch-hunting, and Politics in Early Modern England - Peter Elmer 2016

A wide-ranging overview of the place of witchcraft and witch-hunting in the broader culture of early modern England. Based on a mass of new evidence extracted from a range of archives, both local and national, it seeks to relate the rise and decline of belief in witchcraft,

alongside the legal prosecution of witches, to the wider political culture of the period. Building on the seminal work of scholars such as Stuart Clark, Ian Bostridge, and Jonathan Barry, it demonstrates how learned discussion of witchcraft, as well as the trials of those suspected of the crime, were shaped by religious and political imperatives in that period.

Thinking with Demons - Stuart Clark 1999

Dr Clark offers an interpretation of the witchcraft beliefs of European intellectuals of the period, based on their publication in the field of demonology. This work will increase our understanding of the cultural history of early modern Europe.

Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism
Henrik Bogdan 2012-09-20

Henrik Bogdan and Martin P. Starr offer the first comprehensive examination of one of the twentieth century's most distinctive occult iconoclasts, Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), one of the most influential thinkers in contemporary western esotericism.

Magic, Mystery, and Science Dan Burton 2004

"[P.D. Ouspensky's] yearning for a transcendent, timeless reality—one that cancels out physical disintegration and death—figures into science at some fundamental level. Einstein found solace in his theory of relativity, which suggested to him that events are ever-present in the space-time continuum. When his friend Michele Besso passed on shortly before his own death, he wrote: 'For us believing physicists the distinction between past, present, and future is only an illusion, even if a stubborn one.'" —from *Magic, Mystery, and Science* The triumph of science would appear to have routed all other explanations of reality. No longer does astrology or alchemy or magic have the power to explain the world to us. Yet at one time each of these systems of belief, like religion, helped shed light on what was dark to our understanding. Nor have the occult arts disappeared. We humans have a need for mystery and a sense of the infinite. *Magic, Mystery, and Science* presents the occult as a "third stream" of belief, as important to the shaping of Western civilization as Greek rationalism or Judeo-Christianity. The occult seeks explanations in a world that is living and intelligent—quite unlike the one supposed by science. By taking these beliefs seriously,

while keeping an eye on science, this book aims to capture some of the power of the occult. Readers will discover that the occult has a long history that reaches back to Babylonia and ancient Egypt. It proceeds alongside, and frequently mingles with, religion and science. From the Egyptian Book of the Dead to New Age beliefs, from Plato to Adolf Hitler, occult ways of knowing have been used—and hideously abused—to explain a world that still tempts us with the knowledge of its dark secrets.

Man and the Natural World - Keith Thomas
1997-07-01

Throughout the ages man has struggled with his perceived place in the natural world. The idea of humans cultivating the Earth to suit specific needs is one of the greatest points of contention in this struggle. For how would have civilization progressed, if not by the clearance of the forests, the cultivation of the soil, and the conservation of wild landscape into human settlement? Yet what of the healing powers of unexploited nature, its long-term importance in the perpetuation of human civilization, and the inherent beauty of wild scenery? At no time were these questions addressed as pointedly and with such great consequence as in England between the sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries.

"Between 1500 and 1800 there occurred a whole cluster of changes in the way in which men and women, at all social levels, perceived and classified the natural world around them," explains Keith Thomas. "New sensibilities arose toward animals, plants, and landscape. The relationship of man to other species was redefined; and his right to exploit those species for his own advantage was sharply challenged." *Man and the Natural World* aims not just to explain present interest in preserving the environment and protecting the rights of animals, but to reconstruct an earlier mental world. Thomas seeks to expose the assumptions beneath the perceptions, reasonings, and feelings of the inhabitants of early modern England toward the animals, birds, vegetation, and physical landscape among which they spent their lives, often in conditions of proximity which are now difficult for us to appreciate. It was a time when a conviction of man's ascendancy over the natural world gave way to a new concern for the environment and sense of

kinship with other species. Here, for example, Thomas illustrates the changing attitudes toward the woodlands. John Morton observed in 1712, "In a country full of civilized inhabitants" timber could not be "suffered to grow. It must give way to fields and pastures, which are of more immediate use and concern to life." Shortly thereafter, in 1763, Edwin Lascelles pronounced the "The beauty of a country consists chiefly in the wood." People's relationships with animals were also in the process of dramatic change as seen in their growing obsession with pet keeping. The use of human names for animals, the fact that pets were rarely eaten, though not for gastronomic reasons, and pets being included in family portraits and often fed better than the servants all demonstrated a major shift in man's position on human uniqueness. The issues raised in this fascinating work are even more alive today than they were just ten years ago. Preserving the environment, saving the rain forests, and preventing the extinction of species may seem like fairly recent concerns, however, *Man and the Natural World* explores how these ideas took root long ago. These issues have much to offer not only environmental activists, but historians as well, for it is impossible to disentangle what the people of the past thought about plants and animals from what they thought about themselves.

Witchcraze - Anne L. Barstow 1995-06-24

"In the sixteenth century, a rise in sexual violence in European society was exacerbated by pressure from church and state to change basic sexual customs...As the centuries since have shown escalating levels both of violence, general and sexual, and of state control, the witchcraze can be considered a portent, even a model, of some aspects of what modern Europe would be like." Over three centuries, approximately one hundred thousand persons, most of whom were women, were put to death under the guise of "witch hunts", particularly in Reformation Europe. The shocking annihilation of women from all walks of life is explored in this brilliant, authoritative feminist history Anne Llewellyn Barstow. Barstow exposes an unrecognized holocaust -- the "ethnic cleansing" of independent women in Reformation Europe -- and examines the residual attitudes that continue to influence our culture. Barstow

argues that it is only with eyes sensitive to gender issues that we can discern what really happened in the persecution and murder of these women. Her sweeping chronicle examines the scapegoating of women from the ills of society, investigates how their subjugation to sexual violence and death sent a message of control to all women, and compares this persecution of women with the enslavement and slaughter of African slaves and Native Americans. Ultimately Barstow traces the current backlash against women to its gynophobic torture-filled origins. In the process, she leaves an indelible mark on our growing understanding of the legacy of violence against women around the world.

The Ends of Life - Keith Thomas 2010-02-25

How should we live? That question was no less urgent for English men and women who lived between the early sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries than for this book's readers. Keith Thomas's masterly exploration of the ways in which people sought to lead fulfilling lives in those centuries between the beginning of the Reformation and the heyday of the Enlightenment illuminates the central values of the period, while casting incidental light on some of the perennial problems of human existence. Consideration of the origins of the modern ideal of human fulfillment and of obstacles to its realization in the early modern period frames an investigation that ranges from work, wealth, and possessions to the pleasures of friendship, family, and sociability. The cult of military prowess, the pursuit of honour and reputation, the nature of religious belief and scepticism, and the desire to be posthumously remembered are all drawn into the discussion, and the views and practices of ordinary people are measured against the opinions of the leading philosophers and theologians of the time. *The Ends of Life* offers a fresh approach to the history of early modern England, by one of the foremost historians of our time. It also provides modern readers with much food for thought on the problem of how we should live and what goals in life we should pursue.

Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe -

Jonathan Barry 1998-03-12

This important collection brings together both established figures and new researchers to offer

fresh perspectives on the ever-controversial subject of the history of witchcraft. Using Keith Thomas's *Religion and the Decline of Magic* as a starting point, the contributors explore the changes of the last twenty-five years in the understanding of early modern witchcraft, and suggest new approaches, especially concerning the cultural dimensions of the subject.

Witchcraft cases must be understood as power struggles, over gender and ideology as well as social relationships, with a crucial role played by alternative representations. Witchcraft was always a contested idea, never fully established in early modern culture but much harder to dislodge than has usually been assumed. The essays are European in scope, with examples from Germany, France, and the Spanish expansion into the New World, as well as a strong core of English material.

Magic in the Modern World - Edward Bever
2017-04-18

This collection of essays considers the place of magic in the modern world, first by exploring the ways in which modernity has been defined in explicit opposition to magic and superstition, and then by illuminating how modern proponents of magic have worked to legitimize their practices through an overt embrace of evolving forms such as esotericism and supernaturalism. Taking a two-track approach, this book explores the complex dynamics of the construction of the modern self and its relation to the modern preoccupation with magic. Essays examine how modern "rational" consciousness is generated and maintained and how proponents of both magical and scientific traditions rationalize evidence to fit accepted orthodoxy. This book also describes how people unsatisfied with the norms of modern subjectivity embrace various forms of magic—and the methods these modern practitioners use to legitimate magic in the modern world. A compelling assessment of magic from the early modern period to today, *Magic in the Modern World* shows how, despite the dominant culture's emphatic denial of their validity, older forms of magic persist and develop while new forms of magic continue to emerge. In addition to the editors, contributors include Egil Asprem, Erik Davis, Megan Goodwin, Dan Harms, Adam Jortner, and Benedek Láng.

The Myth of Disenchantment Jason Ananda Josephson Storm
2017-05-16

A great many theorists have argued that the defining feature of modernity is that people no longer believe in spirits, myths, or magic. Jason A. Josephson-Storm argues that as broad cultural history goes, this narrative is wrong, as attempts to suppress magic have failed more often than they have succeeded. Even the human sciences have been more enchanted than is commonly supposed. But that raises the question: How did a magical, spiritualist, mesmerized Europe ever convince itself that it was disenchanting? Josephson-Storm traces the history of the myth of disenchantment in the births of philosophy, anthropology, sociology, folklore, psychoanalysis, and religious studies. Ironically, the myth of mythless modernity formed at the very time that Britain, France, and Germany were in the midst of occult and spiritualist revivals. Indeed, Josephson-Storm argues, these disciplines' founding figures were not only aware of, but profoundly enmeshed in, the occult milieu; and it was specifically in response to this burgeoning culture of spirits and magic that they produced notions of a disenchanted world. By providing a novel history of the human sciences and their connection to esotericism, *The Myth of Disenchantment* dispatches with most widely held accounts of modernity and its break from the premodern past.

Physical Evidence for Ritual Acts, Sorcery and Witchcraft in Christian Britain Ronald Hutton
2016-01-26

This volume investigates the physical evidence for magic in medieval and modern Britain, including ritual mark, concealed objects, amulets, and magical equipment. The contributors are the current experts in each area of the subject, and show between them how ample the evidence is and how important it is for an understanding of history.

Witchcraft in England, 1558-1618 - Barbara Rosen
1991

Anyone interested in manifestations of witchcraft in Elizabethan and Jacobean England will find this book an invaluable source. Barbara Rosen has gathered and edited a rare collection of documents--pamphlets, reports, trial accounts, and other material--that describes the

experience, interpretation, and punishment of witchcraft in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In her introduction, Rosen explores the full range of practices and beliefs associated with witchcraft and situates these phenomena in historical context. She explains how ignorance of science and medicine combined with social circumstance and religious ideology to shape popular perceptions and superstitions. Distinguishing between English and Continental forms of witchcraft, she also examines the legal definitions, disciplines, and punishments applied to wizards, witches, wise women, and conjurers in the Elizabethan age. The pamphlets and other original texts have been modernized in certain respects to make them more accessible to general readers. But the book retains its value for scholars: omissions are detailed in the notes and additions marked; obsolete words and grammar are explained in the glossary. Originally published in England in 1970 under the title *Witchcraft*, this book appears now for the first time in paperback and includes a new preface by the editor.

Civil Histories - Peter Burke 2000-05-04

Sir Keith Thomas is one of the most innovative and influential of English historians, and a scholar of unusual range. These essays, presented to him on his retirement as President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, concentrate on one of the broad themes illuminated by his work - changing notions of civility in the past. From the sixteenth century onwards, civility was a term applied to modes of behaviour as well as to cultural and civic attributes. Its influence extended from styles of language and sexual mores to funeral ceremonies and commercial morality. It was used to distinguish the civil from the barbarous and the English from the Irish and Welsh, and to banish superstition and justify imperialism. The contributors - distinguished historians who have been Keith Thomas's pupils - illustrate the many implications of civility in the early modern period and its shifts of meaning down to the twentieth century.

Reading Witchcraft - Marion Gibson
2005-08-08

In this original study of witchcraft, Gibson explores the stories told by and about witches and their 'victims' through trial records, early news books, pamphlets and fascinating personal

accounts. The author discusses the issues surrounding the interpretation of original historical sources and demonstrates that their representations of witchcraft are far from straight forward or reliable. Innovative and thought-provoking, this book sheds new light on early modern people's responses to witches and on the sometimes bizarre flexibility of the human imagination.

Vexed with Devils - Erika Gasser 2019-12-15
Stories of witchcraft and demonic possession from early modern England through the last official trials in colonial New England Those possessed by the devil in early modern England usually exhibited a common set of symptoms: fits, vomiting, visions, contortions, speaking in tongues, and an antipathy to prayer. However, it was a matter of interpretation, and sometimes public opinion, if these symptoms were visited upon the victim, or if they came from within. Both early modern England and colonial New England had cases that blurred the line between witchcraft and demonic possession, most famously, the Salem witch trials. While historians acknowledge some similarities in witch trials between the two regions, such as the fact that an overwhelming majority of witches were women, the histories of these cases primarily focus on local contexts and specifics. In so doing, they overlook the ways in which manhood factored into possession and witchcraft cases. *Vexed with Devils* is a cultural history of witchcraft-possession phenomena that centers on the role of men and patriarchal power. Erika Gasser reveals that witchcraft trials had as much to do with who had power in the community, to impose judgement or to subvert order, as they did with religious belief. She argues that the gendered dynamics of possession and witchcraft demonstrated that contested meanings of manhood played a critical role in the struggle to maintain authority. While all men were not capable of accessing power in the same ways, many of the people involved—those who acted as if they were possessed, men accused of being witches, and men who wrote possession propaganda—invoked manhood as they struggled to advocate for themselves during these perilous times. Gasser ultimately concludes that the decline of possession and witchcraft cases was not merely a product of

change over time, but rather an indication of the ways in which patriarchal power endured throughout and beyond the colonial period.

Vexed with Devils reexamines an unnerving time and offers a surprising new perspective on our own, using stories and voices which emerge from the records in ways that continue to fascinate and unsettle us.

Daughters of Hecate Kimberly B. Stratton 2014 Interrogating the magic-gender connection /

Kimberly B. Stratton -- From goddess to hag: the Greek and the Roman witch in classical literature /

Barbette Stanley Spaeth -- "The most worthy of women is a mistress of magic": women as witches and ritual practitioners in I Enoch and rabbinic sources /

Rebecca Lesses -- Gendering heavenly secrets?: women, angels, and the problem of misogyny and "magic" /

Annette Yoshiko Reed -- Magic, abjection, and gender in Roman literature /

Kimberly B. Stratton -- Magic accusations against women in Tacitus's Annals /

Elizabeth Ann Pollard -- Drunken hags with amulets and prostitutes with erotic spells: the re-feminization of magic in late antique Christian homilies /

Dayna S. Kellerses -- The bishop, the pope, and the prophetess: rival ritual experts in third century Cappadocia /

Ayşe Tuzlak -- Living images of the divine: female theurgists in late antiquity /

Nicola Denzley Lewis -- Sorceresses and sorcerers in early Christian tours of Hell /

Kirsti Barrett Copeland - - The social context of women's erotic magic in antiquity /

David Frankfurter -- Cheating women: curse tablets and Roman wives /

Pauline Ripat -- Saffron, spices, and sorceresses: magic bowls and the Bavli /

Yaakov Elman -- Victimology, or: how to deal with untimely death /

Fritz Graf -- A Gospel amulet for Joannia (P. Oxy. VIII 1151) /

Annemarie Luijendijk.

Early Mormonism and the Magic World View D. Michael Quinn 1998

In this ground-breaking book, D. Michael Quinn masterfully reconstructs an earlier age, finding ample evidence for folk magic in nineteenth-century New England, as he does in Mormon founder Joseph Smith's upbringing. Quinn discovers that Smith's world was inhabited by supernatural creatures whose existence could be both symbolic and real. He explains that the Smith family's treasure digging was not unusual for the times and is vital to understanding how

early Mormons interpreted developments in their history in ways that differ from modern perceptions. Quinn's impressive research provides a much-needed background for the environment that produced Mormonism. This thoroughly researched examination into occult traditions surrounding Smith, his family, and other founding Mormons cannot be understated.

Among the practices no longer a part of Mormonism are the use of divining rods for revelation, astrology to determine the best times to conceive children and plant crops, the study of skull contours to understand personality traits, magic formula utilized to discover lost property, and the wearing of protective talismans. Ninety-four photographs and illustrations accompany the text.

An Analysis of Keith Thomas's Religion and the Decline of Magic Simon Young 2017-07-05

Keith Thomas's classic study of all forms of popular belief has been influential for so long now that it is difficult to remember how revolutionary it seemed when it first appeared. By publishing *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Thomas became the first serious scholar to attempt to synthesize the full range of popular thought about the occult and the supernatural, studying its influence across Europe over several centuries. At root, his book can be seen as a superb exercise in problem-solving: one that actually established "magic" as a historical problem worthy of investigation. Thomas asked productive questions, not least challenging the prevailing assumption that folk belief was unworthy of serious scholarly attention, and his work usefully reframed the existing debate in much broader terms, allowing for more extensive exploration of correlations, not only between different sorts of popular belief, but also between popular belief and state religion. It was this that allowed Thomas to reach his famous conclusion that the advent of Protestantism - which drove out much of the "superstition" that characterised the Catholicism of the period - created a vacuum filled by other forms of belief; for example, Catholic priests had once blessed their crops, but Protestants refused to do so. That left farmers looking for other ways of ensuring a good harvest. It was this, Thomas argues, that explains the survival of what we now think of as "magic" at a time such beliefs

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might have been expected to decline - at least until science arose to offer alternative paradigms.

The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West - David J. Collins, S. J. 2015-03-02

This book presents twenty chapters by experts in their fields, providing a thorough and interdisciplinary overview of the theory and practice of magic in the West. Its chronological scope extends from the Ancient Near East to twenty-first-century North America; its objects of analysis range from Persian curse tablets to US neo-paganism. For comparative purposes, the volume includes chapters on developments in the Jewish and Muslim worlds, evaluated not simply for what they contributed at various points to European notions of magic, but also as models of alternative development in ancient Mediterranean legacy. Similarly, the volume highlights the transformative and challenging encounters of Europeans with non-Europeans, regarding the practice of magic in both early modern colonization and more recent decolonization.

FDA Enforcement Report - 1992

Witch Craze - Lyndal Roper 2006-01-01

A powerful account of witches, crones, and the societies that make them. From the gruesome ogress in Hansel and Gretel to the hags at the sabbath in Faust, the witch has been a powerful figure of the Western imagination. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries thousands of women confessed to being witches--of making pacts with the Devil, causing babies to sicken, and killing animals and crops--and were put to death. This book is a gripping account of the pursuit, interrogation, torture, and burning of witches during this period and beyond. Drawing on hundreds of original trial transcripts and other rare sources in four areas of Southern Germany, where most of the witches were executed, Lyndal Roper paints a vivid picture of their lives, families, and tribulations. She also explores the psychology of witch-hunting, explaining why it was mostly older women that were the victims of witch crazes, why they confessed to crimes, and how the depiction of witches in art and literature has influenced the characterization of elderly women in our own

culture.

The Last Witches of England John Callow 2021-10-07

"Fascinating and vivid." *New Statesman*
"Thoroughly researched." *The Spectator*
"Intriguing." *BBC History Magazine* "Vividly told... extremely moving." *BBC History Revealed*
On the morning of Thursday 29 June 1682, a magpie came rasping, rapping and tapping at the window of a prosperous Devon merchant. Frightened by its appearance, his servants and members of his family had, within a matter of hours, convinced themselves that the bird was an emissary of the devil sent by witches to destroy the fabric of their lives. As the result of these allegations, three women of Bideford came to be forever defined as witches. A Secretary of State brushed aside their case and condemned them to the gallows; to hang as the last group of women to be executed in England for the crime. Yet, the hatred of their neighbours endured. For Bideford, it was said, was a place of witches. Though 'pretty much worn away' the belief in witchcraft still lingered on for more than a century after their deaths. In turn, ignored, reviled, and extinguished but never more than half-forgotten, it seems that the memory of these three women - and of their deeds and sufferings, both real and imagined - was transformed from canker to regret, and from regret into celebration in our own age. Indeed, their example was cited during the final Parliamentary debates, in 1951, that saw the last of the witchcraft acts repealed, and their names were chanted, as both inspiration and incantation, by the women beyond the wire at Greenham Common. In this book, John Callow explores this remarkable reversal of fate, and the remarkable tale of the Bideford Witches.

Magic in the Middle Ages - Richard Kieckhefer 2014-11-06

A fascinating study of natural and demonic magic within the broad context of medieval culture.

The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England - Carol F. Karlsen 1998-04-17

"A pioneer work in...the sexual structuring of society. This is not just another book about witchcraft." —Edmund S. Morgan, Yale University
Confessing to "familiarity with the

devils," Mary Johnson, a servant, was executed by Connecticut officials in 1648. A wealthy Boston widow, Ann Hibbens was hanged in 1656 for casting spells on her neighbors. The case of Ann Cole, who was "taken with very strange Fits," fueled an outbreak of witchcraft accusations in Hartford a generation before the notorious events at Salem. More than three hundred years later, the question "Why?" still haunts us. Why were these and other women likely witches—vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft and possession? Carol F. Karlsen reveals the social construction of witchcraft in seventeenth-century New England and illuminates the larger contours of gender relations in that society.

Witchcraft and Magic in Ireland - Andrew Sneddon 2015-08-25

This is the first academic overview of witchcraft and popular magic in Ireland and spans the medieval to the modern period. Based on a wide range of un-used and under-used primary source material, and taking account of denominational difference between Catholic and Protestant, it provides a detailed account of witchcraft trials and accusation.

Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt - Rosalie David 2002-10-03

The ancient Egyptians believed that the Nile - their life source - was a divine gift. Religion and magic permeated their civilization, and this book provides a unique insight into their religious beliefs and practices, from 5000 BC to the 4th century AD, when Egyptian Christianity replaced the earlier customs. Arranged chronologically, this book provides a fascinating introduction to the world of half-human/ half-animal gods and goddesses; death rituals, the afterlife and mummification; the cult of sacred animals, pyramids, magic and medicine. An appendix contains translations of Ancient Egyptian spells.

Witchcraft and Folk Belief in the Age of Enlightenment - Lizanne Henderson 2016-04-08

Taking an interdisciplinary perspective, *Witchcraft and Folk Belief in the Age of Enlightenment* represents the first in-depth investigation of Scottish witchcraft and witch belief post-1662, the period of supposed decline of such beliefs, an age which has been referred to as the 'long eighteenth century', coinciding

with the Scottish Enlightenment. The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were undoubtedly a period of transition and redefinition of what constituted the supernatural, at the interface between folk belief and the philosophies of the learned. For the latter the eradication of such beliefs equated with progress and civilization but for others, such as the devout, witch belief was a matter of faith, such that fear and dread of witches and their craft lasted well beyond the era of the major witch-hunts. This study seeks to illuminate the distinctiveness of the Scottish experience, to assess the impact of enlightenment thought upon witch belief, and to understand how these beliefs operated across all levels of Scottish society.

British Gods - Steve Bruce 2020-08-28

The big picture is well-known: over the last century, religion in Britain has lost power, popularity, and plausibility. Here, Steve Bruce charts the quantifiable changes in religious interest and observance over the last fifty years by returning to a number of towns and villages that were the subject of detailed community studies in the 1950s and 1960s, to see how the status and nature of religion has changed. Drawing on both detailed data on baptism rates, church weddings, church attendance and the like, and on his extensive fieldwork, he considers the broader picture of religion today: the status of the clergy, the churches' attempts to find new roles, links between religion and violence, and the impact of the charismatic movement. Along the way, Bruce encounters and engages with the contemporary rise of secularism, considering our everyday secular tensions with religion: arguments over moral issues such as abortion and gay rights, the effect of social class on belief, the impact of religion on British politics, and the ways that local social structures strengthen or weaken religion. Analysing the obstacles to any religious revival, he explores how the current stock of religious knowledge is so depleted, religion so unpopular, and committed believers so scarce that any significant reversal of religion's decline in Britain is unlikely.

Magic and Witchcraft - Michael David Bailey 2014

Witchcraft in Early Modern England - James Sharpe 2014-06-06

With the renewed interest in the history of witches and witchcraft, this timely book provides an introduction to this fascinating topic, informed by the main trends of new thinking on the subject. Beginning with a discussion of witchcraft in the early modern period, and charting the witch panics that took place at this time, the author goes on to look at the historical debate surrounding the causes of the legal persecution of witches. Contemporary views of witchcraft put forward by judges, theological writers and the medical profession are examined, as is the place of witchcraft in the popular imagination. Jim Sharpe also looks at the gender dimensions of the witch persecution, and the treatment of witchcraft in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. Supported by a range of compelling documents, the book concludes with an exploration of why witch panics declined in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century.

Religion and the Decline of Magic - Keith Thomas 2003-01-30

Witchcraft, astrology, divination and every kind of popular magic flourished in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, from the belief that a blessed amulet could prevent the assaults of the Devil to the use of the same charms to recover stolen goods. At the same time the Protestant Reformation attempted to take the magic out of religion, and scientists were developing new explanations of the universe. Keith Thomas's classic analysis of beliefs held on every level of English society begins with the collapse of the medieval Church and ends with the changing intellectual

atmosphere around 1700, when science and rationalism began to challenge the older systems of belief.

Making Magic - Randall Styers 2004-01-15

Since the emergence of religious studies and the social sciences as academic disciplines, the concept of "magic" has played a major role in defining religion and in mediating the relation of religion to science. Across these disciplines, magic has regularly been configured as a definitively non-modern phenomenon, juxtaposed to distinctly modern models of religion and science. Yet this notion of magic has remained stubbornly amorphous. In *Making Magic*, Randall Styers seeks to account for the extraordinary vitality of scholarly discourse purporting to define and explain magic despite its failure to do just that. He argues that this persistence can best be explained in light of the Western drive to establish and secure distinctive norms for modern identity, norms based on narrow forms of instrumental rationality, industrious labor, rigidly defined sexual roles, and the containment of wayward forms of desire. Magic has served to designate a form of alterity or deviance against which dominant Western notions of appropriate religious piety, legitimate scientific rationality, and orderly social relations are brought into relief. Scholars have found magic an invaluable tool in their efforts to define the appropriate boundaries of religion and science. On a broader level, says Styers, magical thinking has served as an important foil for modernity itself. Debates over the nature of magic have offered a particularly rich site at which scholars have worked to define and to contest the nature of modernity and norms for life in the modern world.