

De la démonomanie des sorciers. Jean Bodin.

Ed. Virginia Krause, Christian Martin, and Eric MacPhail. *Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 559. Geneva: Droz, 2016. 528 pp. \$93.60.

Modern scholarship has shown that Jean Bodin's *De la démonomanie des sorciers* does not represent an aberration in the career of a man who in so many ways incarnates the enlightened spirit of Renaissance humanism. Yet this treatise, originally published in 1580, had never been given a modern critical edition. Krause, Martin, and MacPhail have remarkably accomplished this challenging task, providing a well-documented edition supplemented by a thorough introduction that clearly assesses the impact of Bodin's work in late sixteenth-century France and beyond.

The editors have highlighted relevant elements in the biography of an author who, in spite of having been arrested due to his heterodox views in 1568, held the function of *procureur* in Poitiers and Laon, and was a delegate at the 1576–77 *Etats de Blois*. They argue that Bodin's belief in his own *discretio spirituum*, as described through a possibly

autobiographical anecdote recounted in the second chapter of the *Démonomanie*, explains his dogmatism in matters of witchcraft. Krause and her colleagues also remind us of the paradoxical nature of Bodin's endeavor. The *Démonomanie* was not conceived as a theoretical treatise, but was clearly presented by its author as a manual to be used by magistrates dealing with witchcraft. However, unlike fellow demonologists Henri Boguet and Pierre de Lancre, Bodin never presided over a witchcraft trial. Although his alleged participation in the 1578 trial of Jeanne Harvillier is presented as a catalyst for the writing of his *Démonomanie*, his knowledge of witchcraft cases generally derived from secondhand information, gathered through exchanges with judges working in France's lower courts.

The introduction and copious annotation contained in this edition provide a thorough assessment of Bodin's contribution to the development of demonology as a science grounded on a methodical, exhaustive examination of witchcraft. Unlike Johann Wier and other contemporaries, the author of the *Démonomanie* firmly subscribed to what Françoise Lavocat has called the "realist hypothesis" concerning the flight of witches, the Sabbat, and the hereditary nature of witchcraft. His extensive erudition, however, is what differentiates Bodin from predecessors like Nider and Sprenger, as well as from contemporaries like Benoist and Daneau. In his attempt to provide a universal definition of *witchcraft*, Bodin relied on multiple contemporary sources and eyewitness accounts, as much as on classical Greek, Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew sources. The editors convincingly demonstrate that this comparative approach, coupled with Bodin's competence as a magistrate and humanist, provides a key to understanding the *Démonomanie's* success in France and Europe.

Krause, Martin, and MacPhail have carefully examined the context of the publication of the *Démonomanie*, a book that, along with Nodé's *Declamation contre l'erreur execrable des maleficiers*, Benoist's *Traicté enseignant en bref les causes des malefices*, and other texts written in the vernacular, heralded a new wave of repression of witchcraft in late sixteenth-century France, and represented an intellectual trend that Montaigne decried in his essay "Des boyteux." With its thirteen reprints published between 1580 and 1616, as well as its translations into Latin, German, and Italian, the *Démonomanie* was clearly an early modern best seller. However, the editors rightfully remind us that the real impact of the treatise should not be overstated, and point out that it is difficult to assess the extent of its actual use by judges beyond anecdotal evidence. Bodin became an authority for a younger generation of demonologists that included Henri Boguet and Pierre de Lancre, yet his treatise was indexed in 1594 and violently criticized by Jesuit Antoine Poissevin and others.

The editors have logically chosen to use the first edition of the *Démonomanie* (Paris: Jacques Du Puys, 1580) as the basis for their work, systematically taking into account all variations added by Bodin in the 1587 edition of his text. This later version of the treatise contains important accounts and information that the author added as he continued to meet witnesses and researched judicial records. It was also supplemented by a transcription of the trial of Abel de la Rue, who was accused of witchcraft and executed in 1582. One very minor

regret is that this flawless critical edition does not contain an index that would have facilitated the work of scholars researching the history of law and demonology.

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