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Poeton, Edward. The Winnowing of White Witchcraft. Ed. Simon F. Davies.

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Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533): Faith, Antiquity,
and the Witch Hunt

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la symbiose parfaite entre imprimeurs et hommes de science. Superbe volume, riche et neuf en de multiples aspects, il propose une approche renouvelée du Collège des Trois langues de Louvain, si célèbre, mais finalement fort peu connu.

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Poeton, Edward.

The Winnowing of White Witchcraft. Ed. Simon F. Davies.

Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 512 / MRTS Text for Teaching 10. Tempe: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2018. Pp. xxxv, 90. ISBN 978-0-86698-567-3 (paperback) US\$45.

Edward Poeton was a licensed physician who often practised surgery in London and, later, in Petworth in West Sussex. Sometime around the 1630s, he wrote *The Winnowing of White Witchcraft*—the only medical treatise to focus on the good, or white, witches. *The Winnowing of White Witchcraft* is the story of the activities of a “seventeenth-century wizard, seen through the eyes of a contemporary medical professional” (ix). The treatise, written in a dialogue form, follows the conversation between a clergyman, a physician, and an uneducated country Corydon (or shepherd/rustic) who is also a folk healer. This never-before-printed version of Poeton’s work is brilliantly introduced and brought to life by Simon Davies. This text is a worthwhile addition to any library and of value to scholars of witchcraft, early modern medicine, and the dialogue genre.

The original manuscript, scribed in Poeton’s hand, exists in the archives of the British Library. It is found in the Sloane fonds, bound together with Poeton’s other most important “Medical Treatises”: *The Midwives Deputie*, *The Ordering of Young Children*, and *Vrinall crackt in the carriage*. As a physician, Poeton in his treatises is concerned about the “appropriate” way of practising medicine (xii). *The Winnowing of White Witchcraft* was written as dialogue—a genre that was popular in this period among writers of witchcraft and demonology. Davies writes that this form of writing was also appealing to the less educated,

who likely were Poeton's intended audience (xvii). Poeton aims to be both entertaining and earnest in educating his reader, who witnesses in this work the process within which Gregory Groshead (the country Corydon) is educated by both the clergyman, Dr. Dreadnought, and the physician, Phylomathes, through a series of amusing yet instructional conversations.

This edition comes with an insightful introduction by Simon Davies, divided into four parts. First, Davies introduces Edward Poeton with some details about his personal and professional life. Davies then discusses Poeton's several works—in particular, the other medical treatises—to show the connection between the texts and the author's concern over the education of unlicensed medical practitioners. In the *Midwives Deputie*, Poeton is inspired by other authors but also writes from his own experiences. While midwives were considered professionals, Poeton expresses concern over the education of their practice. In the *Ordering of Young Children*, as a continuation of the previous treatise, he deals with the methods of choosing the right type of nurse who can deal effectively with a child's ailments and illnesses. In the *Vrinall*, Poeton is demonstrating his criticism of the medieval practice of uroscopy, a method used to determine illness through a visual examination of urine. Davies states that in the *Vrinall*, Poeton attacks unlicensed practices, as we find also in the *Winnowing* (xii–xix). The most valuable part of the introduction is the third: Davies places Poeton's *Winnowing* in the context of the anxieties over witchcraft, medicine, and magic in seventeenth-century Europe. Davies argues that while scholars in the early modern period tended to discuss the sources of witches' powers, common people were more worried about the harmfulness of witchcraft (xx). Davies suggests that the readers of *Winnowing* should analyze this text in the context of the works of European authors, mostly clergy, who condemned popular practitioners of magic, and more specifically English Puritan treatises on witchcraft (xxii). Davies here presents several works that inspired Poeton; however, his treatise is unique in that he writes about white, or good, witches. His thinking fits with many physicians during this period who were against unprofessional and unlicensed healers of any kind; white witches were commonly used by people, and this was alarming to Poeton. While they were harmful in their medical practices, however, Poeton argued that white witches were not seen as “witches”; common folks called them by other names, such as wise men/women or cunning folk. Davies claims that to prove his

argument, Poeton throughout his work “blurs” the line between the various types of unlearned and unpractised healers (xxvii).

For the modern reader, Poeton’s *Winnowing* is not a simple text. In the last part of the introduction, Davies gives hints on how to read *Winnowing* effectively. The translated text itself is accompanied by footnotes that are helpful for understanding the context of not only the subject matter but also the writings of Poeton (xvii–xix). This printed version includes margin notes, which are not Poeton’s but are nevertheless relevant to the book. Poeton’s *Winnowing* is not an ordinary book about witch hunts or witchcraft but rather a great read on the perception and opinions of medical professionals toward a group of witches who were often accepted by the common people.

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Potter, Ursula A.

The Unruly Womb in Early Modern English Drama: Plotting Women’s Biology on the Stage.

Late Tudor and Stuart Drama: Gender, Performance, and Material Culture. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications / Walter de Gruyter, 2019. Pp. 263 + 6 ill. ISBN 978-3-11-066201-6 (hardcover) US \$89.99.

Building upon recent scholarship interrogating early modern English medical notions of female embodiment, Ursula Potter’s study, much like Amy Kenny’s *Humoural Wombs on the Shakespearean Stage* (Palgrave 2019), explores the intersections of medical, religious, and dramatic depictions and suggests that drama (particularly that of Shakespeare) subversively challenges the standard ideology by depicting the womb not solely as a site of porousness, pollution, insatiable hunger, and illness but also as a potent source of potential defiance and autonomy for female characters. Organizing her book around a chronological survey of drama, rather than (as does Kenny) womb characteristics, Potter follows her introduction with a chapter treating early modern medical and religious conceptions of fertility, menarche, fits of the mother, the wandering womb, and green sickness, including sections on terminology, symptoms, etiology, and potential treatments.