

ROPER, Lyndal – *The Witch in the Western Imagination*. Charlottesville & London: University of Virginia Press, 2012. Pp. 240.

Historians of the early modern witch trials have worked over the past couple of decades to reveal an underlying rationality in demonology, showing it to be a reflection of the ways in which Europeans structured their society and reinforced values of class, gender, and political power. From the beginnings of her research, Lyndal Roper has steered a different course, seeking the motives for witch-hunting in the inner worlds of the unconscious. Roper has drawn on the resources of psychoanalysis to explore the elements of emotion and fantasy that informed the concept of witchcraft and drove the actions of the witch-hunters. Her latest book is a collection of independent essays. Most of the essays have been published elsewhere; yet read together they offer a powerful series of case studies that illustrate and reinforce Roper's approach to the study of European witchcraft beliefs.

The book looks beyond the archival sources that have occupied so much of the research into witchcraft and demonology. Roper says it was her recognition of the fold-out image of the witches' sabbath by Jan Ziarnko in Pierre de Lancre's *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et démons* as a work of Baroque art that inspired her to look at elite and popular culture as a whole, including works of art, entertainment, household objects, and landscapes. She argues that neither the linguistic analysis of texts as networks of signs nor the other investigative framework common to early modern studies, historical anthropology as inspired by the work of Clifford Geertz, are adequate to recognize and analyze the ambiguities, contradictions, and diversity in the cultural images of the witch. To move beyond these traditional methods Roper uses microhistory informed by psychoanalytic theory to "illuminate culture and psychology through reconstructing the subjectivities of individuals" (p. 11).

As Roper points out, traditional studies of demonology have emphasized theology, metaphysics, and philosophy. By contrast, in her first chapter Roper examines the contribution of demonological works to the literature of entertainment, referring to the ways in which the best known of the demonological writers drew upon classical references as well as personal experience to construct their marvelous stories. These stories led to the Faust literature and to the Devil's Books of Lutheran literature, which make full use of humour and of the aesthetics of the Baroque, to entertain and titillate. The second chapter investigates the role of female figures in the history of Augsburg, including the mythical origin of the city with a race of Amazons, and the legend of Agnes Bernauer, a common Augsburg girl who was betrothed to the Duke of Bavaria but drowned by his father. These images of women match the pagan image of a witch in their fundamental ambiguity as both goddesses of fertility and as enchantresses and destroyers of fertility. This contrast of extremes, "luxuriant fertility and destruction of fruitfulness and Christianity" (p. 75), is explored in the third chapter through a close investigation of a picture frame designed by Albrecht Dürer and the painting that it originally held, showing how Dürer had planned to present the contrast through the picture and its frame. Roper argues that Dürer and his student, Hans Baldung Grien, were not obsessed with the female body, as might easily be imagined, but rather with the reproductive powers of women's bodies.

Chapter Four defends the history of emotions as an addition and corrective to individual psychoanalysis. Roper focuses here on the emotion of envy arising from the tensions

between fertile younger women and those beyond the age of fertility, which she has long argued played a major role in the construction of witchcraft. She emphasizes the image of the witch as an old hag with sagging breasts, which is also found in classical traditions and reproduced in the emblem books of the Renaissance. Following some of her earlier work, her interpretation of these images draws on the psychoanalytic theories of Emily Klein, who gives envy a central place in psychology.

In Chapter Five Roper moves away from the Renaissance image of the witch to contrast two documents that present rural culture in the eighteenth century in the same region in fundamentally different ways. In 1774 Magdalena Bollman was accused of killing children through witchcraft and was brutally tortured to death. At about the same time, Sebastian Sailer, a monk who had served as a priest in Bollman's village, penned vernacular tales of the antics of rustic peasants and their rough but tender religiosity. Here Roper shows how stark the contrasts could be in individuals' experiences of culture in the Baroque period. Where Bollman was trapped in a cruel world of female gossip, Sailer made the peasants into buffoons, "turning their murderous hatred into petty squabbles" (p. 131).

The final two chapters of the book turn again to psychoanalytic theory to explore how witchcraft beliefs and demonology can reveal the inner mental worlds of people in the Renaissance. Chapter Six looks at the changing and conflicting portrayals of children in images and treatises of witchcraft. Roper argues that in later witch trial records, which contain detailed accounts of testimony, it is possible to see into the world of children's fantasies of the period. She draws heavily on the trial of two women accused by two young siblings of seducing them into witchcraft. In the children's testimony she finds not the conventional stories of witchcraft but tales that expose the mental world of the children and the possibility of childhood sexual trauma.

The final chapter is perhaps the most complex. Roper tells the curious tale of a young man who voluntarily gave the mayor of Augsburg an account of a pact he had made with the Devil. In this story Roper reconstructs the tormented inner life of a boy of humble origin educated by the Jesuits and simultaneously fascinated by and rebellious against the authority figures in his life, and she compares this case with a similar one analyzed by Sigmund Freud. While the details cannot be made clear, Roper argues that in both cases we find evidence of conflicting sexual identity. The comparison illustrates the way in which the application of psychoanalytic techniques can explore the unconscious forces in history that drive behavior.

The strength of Roper's book – the scope of its investigations and the variety of sources and cultural factors – is occasionally a weakness. She broadens the concept of a witch to include all forms of powerful frightening female figures, such as Medusa and Circe, although the relations of such figures to the accused witches of early modern Europe are not clear. There are some generalized assertions that are not well supported. An example is Roper's claim that trial records in Germany became lengthy and detailed in the late seventeenth century because the legal system and the church were "beginning to become absorbed with questions of individual motivation, psychology, dreams, and sexual identity" (p. 176). The reason probably had much more to do with formal changes in the legal system, since such records were kept of all criminal investigations, even the most banal cases of repetitive thievery.

This is, then, a book that simultaneously covers broad swatches of Renaissance and Baroque culture and carefully reconstructs microhistories of individual experience, both to give a glimpse of how people of the period conceived of witchcraft and the Devil and to defend Roper's approach to her subject in her search for inner subjectivities. This will remain a landmark book in the fields of witchcraft studies and Renaissance culture.

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SANGSTER, Joan – *Through Feminist Eyes: Essays on Canadian Women's History*.
Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011. Pp. 429.

Joan Sangster, one of Canada's preeminent labour feminist historians, recently compiled a highly useful collection of some of her seminal texts under the title, *Through Feminist Eyes: Essays on Canadian Women's History*. This prolific scholar, currently teaching in Trent University's department of history, provides readers with an insightful synthesis of major trends and developments in Canadian women's history from its inception in the 1970s until today. Through Sangster's collection of essays, we come to appreciate the intellectual journey undertaken by one of the leaders in the field, who has made her mark on the discipline by consistently combining historical materialism with feminist analyses and the latest historiographical advances.

Through Feminist Eyes contains a strong pedagogical element, a relief to graduate students looking to navigate the field and perhaps also professors trying to explain the hybrid influences shaping Canadian women's history to their students. In the introduction, Sangster describes the multiple international currents shaping women's history writing in Canada, "emanating from the United States, Britain, and France (the last more so in Quebec)". Historians have drawn upon these historiographical tendencies to further analyze questions of gender paired with the salient themes of Canadian history, namely patterns of social and economic development, migration, and the nation-state and nationalisms (p.3). In recent years, the history of the country's distinct brand of colonialism has taken on greater significance, as well as "scholarship on empire, and comparative research on British white settler societies" (p.2). Here like elsewhere, women's history has been infused with a highly political edge, leading to much contentious debate, the latter, according to Sangster, less openly conducted in Canada due to a certain "debata-phobia".

Staking her claim in the scholarly discussion surrounding women's experiences, Sangster has had a "dual devotion to women's and labour history" since the early days of graduate school, a commitment continuing to the present day despite shifting theories and methodologies (p.2). In order to assist the reader in discerning the author's intellectual trajectory, *Through Feminist Eyes* contains highly useful opening chapters to six sections, situating the ten chapters historiographically. From the opening essay, "The 1907 Bell Telephone Strike: Organizing Women Workers", Sangster stresses women's agency in the face of a patriarchal, paternalist culture, emphasizing their role in leftist organizing. Similarly, the second piece, "The Communist Party and the Woman Question,