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LYNDAL ROPER, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), xiv + 362 pp. ISBN 0 300 10335 2. £25.00. German trans. *Hexenwahn: Geschichte einer Verfolgung* (Munich: Beck, 2007).

Following the basic argument of her earlier work *Oedipus and the Devil*,¹ Lyndal Roper in her new study sees witch beliefs and witch hunts as motivated by the unconscious. She stresses that the unconscious is not ahistorical. Rather, it is shaped by cultural conditions and expressed in products of culture beyond the purely individual sphere, for example, in the accusations and testimonials of witch trials. Elaborating on another idea from *Oedipus and the Devil*, Roper also argues that witchcraft is essentially about motherhood and fertility. She does not discuss any alternative interpretation of the multi-layered phenomenon of witch beliefs and witch hunts. Goethe would have applauded her approach. The *Geheimrat* already suspected that we need a psychological explanation of witch hunts: 'There is the famous era of witches in history which, it seems to me, has not received an adequate psychological explanation.'²

In terms of organization the lavishly illustrated book consists of nine chapters arranged in four parts.³ Part I, 'Persecution', provides an overview of the denominational, economic, legal, and administrative background of the German witch hunts. Here Roper is not afraid of generalizations. Some of her statements, however, are too sweeping; a few are simply wrong (for example, Bishop Peter Binsfeld, an influential demonologist and supporter of the witch hunts, is said to have been a Jesuit, p. 64). Part II, 'Fantasy', explores the more outlandish aspects of witchcraft: cannibalism, that is, the witches' taste

¹ Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Germany* (London, 1994).

² Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to Frau von Stein, 1787, quoted in Wolfgang Behringer (ed.), *Hexen und Hexenprozesse* (3rd edn.: Munich, 1995), p. 457.

³ Some parts of *Witch Craze* have been published before. Ch. 3 is based on a German text published in 1997: 'Kinder ausgraben, Kinder essen: Zur psychischen Dynamik von Hexenprozessen in Nördlingen', in Nada Boškowska Leimgruber (ed.), *Die Frühe Neuzeit in der Geschichtswissenschaft: Forschungstendenzen und Forschungserträge* (Paderborn, 1997), pp. 201–28. Ch. 9 is partly identical with an article in *Past and Present*: 'Evil Imaginings and Fantasies', *Past and Present*, 167 (2000), pp. 107–39.

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for infants, sex with demons, and witches' Sabbaths or nocturnal gatherings of witches and demons. Witches allegedly killed children and stole the dead bodies of infants from their graves to eat them. In order to explain the gruesome stories told in the torture chambers, Roper resurrects Freud: judges forced the suspects, mostly elderly women, into the role of the evil mother who, in an act of identification, consumes her child. The judges, Roper suggests, might to a certain degree have identified with the cannibalistic witches. As they had inherited their power from an older generation, they had in a way 'swallowed' their predecessors. When the judges condemned the women of that older generation – some the widows of their predecessors – as witches, they rid themselves of the remnants of the past.

Considering that demons do not have material bodies, sex with them is a fascinating topic. Following her main argument Roper stresses that the spirits of hell were sterile. Even in this respect, witchcraft remained alien and hostile to procreation and fecundity. Finally, as far as the nocturnal gatherings are concerned, Roper gives an accurate picture of the Sabbaths of the witches' confessions, not the Sabbaths of some demonologists' fantasies. Contemporaries imagined the witches' gathering as a banquet – starving people dreaming about finally eating their fill might have played a part here – a dance, and the opportunity to engage collectively in malevolent magic. The Sabbath of popular imagination was certainly not a Black Mass nor even a pagan ritual.

In part III, 'Womanhood', Roper discusses the wider background of witch beliefs. She presents the witch as an infertile old woman. Even though these problems sound strangely modern, Roper identifies delayed marriage and a fascination with fertility as basic elements of early modern culture. Economic matters placed practical restrictions on marriage. There were laws against marriage between people whose income was judged insufficient to support a family. Yet these restrictions were not intended to imperil the existence of peasant households. The fertility of the lawfully married couple, therefore, was of great importance. Fertility, Roper argues, was not only an economic necessity; it became an obsession for early modern culture. Thus, the woman past menopause became the ultimate outsider. At best expendable and ridiculed, the old woman could be feared as envious of the young and fertile. Young mothers and their babies, livestock, and fields whose fertility were crucial to the sur-

vival of the peasant household were thus the prime targets of malevolent magic. In order to strengthen her argument Roper discusses the caricature-like images of old women in Baroque art. She draws not only on Hans Baldung Grien's pictures that appear in many books on witch trials, but also on other works that she integrates admirably into her narrative. She has no patience with that out-dated feminist bogeyman 'the patriarchy', and demonstrates that women shared the dislike of the 'old crone'. In fact, the fertile young woman and the young mother who felt especially vulnerable and was more attentive to any potentially dangerous influence than anyone else were deeply suspicious of their significant other, the infertile old woman. Thus, women were responsible for a large number of witchcraft accusations against other women. As Roper also shows, contemporaries more readily attributed authority and wisdom to old men. Nevertheless, one wonders why the impotent old man was apparently not considered a threat to the fertility of the younger members of his sex.

The last part of the study, entitled 'The Witch', presents variants of that theme and investigates the decline of witch beliefs in the eighteenth century. Roper interprets witch trials against children involving illicit sex as a symptom of the decline of the demonological pattern of witchcraft. The elaborate symbolism of demonology was no longer used as a code for tensions between parents and children, the old and the young. The new role of the mother in the bourgeois household and the reduced interest in agricultural fertility in an increasingly urbanized society helped to rid German society of the fear of witches. That fascinating and potentially dangerous oddity of the mother past child-bearing, the witch, metamorphosed into the fairy-tale character of the nineteenth century. Fittingly enough, the story that, according to Roper, was always about children finally becomes a story for children. As she emphasizes, even the Grimms' fairy tale 'Hänsel und Gretel' points to maternity as the centre of the witchcraft imagination. Although the epilogue about the harmless nineteenth-century witch might be read as a conclusion to the book, the reader would have wished for a summary.

As the starting point for her discussions, Roper describes several witch trials in her individual chapters. These extensive narratives are extremely detailed and concentrate exclusively on source materials from the German heartland of the witch hunts. Roper focuses on

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cases from Augsburg, Marchtal, and Nördlingen and mostly provides transcripts of the records in the original language along with her translation. The language of German witch trials is extremely complicated. Not only is it written in the contemporary regional dialect, but it also swarms with unusual expressions, allegations, and images. Even though there are minor mistakes (for example, on pp. 109, 128, 205), Roper demonstrates great command of that most difficult idiom. Unfortunately, however, the lengthy narratives offer little that is new or surprising to professional historians. For anyone beginning to read about witchcraft, less narrative and more analysis would have been helpful. Nevertheless, *Witch Craze* does give the reader a very good idea about many aspects of everyday life, especially women's lives, in early modern Germany, and it undoubtedly does so in a most entertaining way.

Roper is a much more gifted writer than most historians. She presents the highly complex historical material in a way that the reader, especially the general reader, can connect with. This is certainly one of the reasons why *Witch Craze* has rekindled the slackening interest in witchcraft as a historical topic. The reader gains the impression that he or she has at last understood a phenomenon that is very difficult to understand. The problem might be that the reader – contrary to Roper's intention – gains the impression that he or she has understood *everything* about the witch hunts, not just one aspect of them. This does not mean that *Witch Craze* is simplistic – it certainly is not. This reviewer likes best those books that teach you a lot and yet show you that there is a great deal more to learn. Unwary readers, however, might read *Witch Craze* as their first and last book about witch hunts.

This is problematic since Roper tends to overstate her case in some respects. She certainly overestimates the importance of cannibalism for the witchcraft imagination. It would be easy to quote hundreds of trials in which that element played no part. In addition, although there can be no doubt that the cultural image of the witch as an old crone was dominant, it is next to impossible to say anything conclusive about the actual percentage of women beyond child-bearing age among the victims of the witch trials, as Roper admits. Roper's arguments are also often daring. Her assertive insistence on the paramount importance of fertility is not free of the odd non sequitur. And is it really convincing to group the magical murder of

children, charms for stealing wine out of the cellar, harmful magic against male potency, the magical destruction of livestock, and weather magic that destroyed the harvest together under the label 'magic against fertility'? In this context it is revealing that Roper underestimates weather magic. The supporters of witch hunts, especially among the so-called common men, peasants, and townspeople, did not tire of pointing out that witches destroyed their livelihood by weather magic. In large parts of Germany, the witch was first and foremost a weather magician. Weather magic, mostly hail and thunder storms, did not damage the fertility of the fields. It simply destroyed the crops. The same holds true for magic against livestock. Of course, witches were said to make farm animals infertile, but mostly they were believed simply to kill them. It could be said that witchcraft was more about property than fertility.

The imagery of magic in popular culture that might have provided links between demonology and the utterances of the suspects, the political aspects of the witch hunts, and their administrative necessities also play little part in Roper's book. However, there are other experts on these aspects of the witch trials. Roper wants to tell a different story. And she does so with great skill. Her study is erudite, sophisticated, and marvellously eloquent. She challenges other interpretations of the witch hunts with a well-argued case for the imagery of maternity as the basis for witch beliefs. Thus Roper's book provides rich food for thought. It is a valuable contribution to the historiography of witchcraft and one which no scholar with a serious interest in the subject can afford to ignore. In addition, *Witch Craze* is a fascinating read. It comes close to uniting historiography and art. However, for students just starting to read about witchcraft and the role of magic in German history a more conventional survey might be more advisable.⁴

⁴ E.g. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (eds.), *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials* (Philadelphia, 2002); Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History* (Cambridge, 2004).

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HELKE RAUSCH, *Kultfigur und Nation: Öffentliche Denkmäler in Paris, Berlin und London 1848–1914*, Pariser Historische Studien, 70 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2006), 797 pp. ISBN-13: 978 3 486 57579 8. ISBN-10: 3 486 57579 1. EUR 79.80

Although published by Oldenbourg in the GHI Paris series Pariser Historische Studien, this weighty tome makes little attempt to disguise its origins as a German doctoral dissertation, written under the supervision of Volker Sellin at Heidelberg and submitted in 2002. If its excessive length, copious references—single sentences are often interrupted by as many as four or five footnotes—and rather tortuous style make the book difficult to digest, however, no one could deny that Rausch has made a serious and valuable contribution to the growing scholarly literature on nineteenth-century monuments. Its comparative perspective in particular will be welcomed in a field still dominated by single-country studies. As such it joins a small and select band of works that seek to test fashionable theories of nationalism and nation-building—first and foremost Benedict Anderson’s ‘imagined communities’, but also Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s ‘invented traditions’, and Alon Confino’s ‘nation as a local metaphor’¹—by examining monuments in more than one national context.² Rausch’s specific focus is on monuments to named individuals (*Personendenkmäler*): Nelson, Napoleon, and Bismarck, of course, but also hundreds of less prominent figures from the armed services, politics, science, and the arts who were commemorated in monumental form during the long nineteenth century. The book aims to provide a ‘symbolic topography’ of such monuments in the three capital cities, concentrating less on issues of iconography than on the

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationality* (London, 1992); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983); Alon Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997).

² Earlier examples include Franz Bauer, *Gehalt und Gestalt in der Monumental-symbolik: Zur Ikonologie des Nationalstaats in Deutschland und Italien 1860–1914* (Munich, 1992); Charlotte Tacke, *Denkmal im sozialen Raum: Nationale Symbole in Deutschland und Frankreich im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1995); Rudolf Jaworski and Witold Molik (eds.), *Denkmäler in Kiel und Posen: Parallelen und Kontraste* (Kiel, 2002).