

**Roper, Lyndall:** *The Witch in the Western Imagination*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012. 240 pp. ISBN 978-0-8139-3297-2. Price: \$ 39.50

This book's title might lead a prospective buyer to assume wrongly that it is a broad survey of the witch in Western culture. Instead, it is a collection of essays describing some symbolic and expressive aspects of witchcraft in southwestern Germany in the 16th, 17th and, briefly, 18th centuries. It consists of an introduction and seven chapters, three published here for the first time and the rest revisions of articles previously published elsewhere (2005–09). These all had their origins in lectures delivered at the University of Virginia in 1998. The introduction attempts to set the subsequent essays within a broader sociocultural context of renaissance and post-renaissance Germany. Roper remarks that at that time "the figure of the witch became so ubiquitous, invoked not just in treatises devoted to witchcraft but in sermons, moral literature, scientific studies (and, one might add, works on theater, poetry, masques, and entertainment), that it makes little sense to demarcate 'demonology' as a distinct genre" (3). Even so, I doubt that she is justified in repeatedly characterizing this time as "obsessed" with witchcraft. The term "obsessed" suggests her inclination to relate such cultural beliefs to a presumably disturbed, fixated psychology, somewhat like the worst passages in Ruth Benedict's ethnocentric and overstated "patterns of culture." The first essay investigates witchcraft through renaissance German popular illustrations in books, broadsheets, and pamphlets. The second describes the theme of a heroic, yet at times demonic legendary female figure popular in 16th-century Germany, a figure Roper calls "the Gorgon of Augsburg," suggesting roots in earlier, pre-Christian folk beliefs. The third chapter considers a large carved picture-frame designed by Albrecht Dürer which presents both seductive and menacing aspects of witch-like women, as young, beautiful, seductive temptresses and also as repulsive, rapacious, sterile hags. Roper relates these to other works of the period. The fourth chapter discusses 16th-century ideas about envy which she convincingly argues to be the single-most powerful emotion behind witchcraft and the motives and fears of accusations. The fifth chapter discusses the persecution of Magdalena Belman in Swabia in 1747, over a century after the "witch-craze" had ended in southern Germany. Roper contrasts this case with a growing local literature on peasant beliefs and practices. Chapter six discusses how southern German witches were often involved in cases of witchcraft as accusers, accused, and witnesses. Roper emphasizes children's problematic and ambiguous social roles in such situations. Chapter seven describes the accusation of witchcraft and resultant suicide of an Augsburg youth in 1680. Here she explores the complexities and vagaries of someone who seemed to have believed himself possessed by demonic powers.

Each of these chapters can be read independently of any other. There is no concluding section that pulls them together. Yet a few common themes may be extracted from all of this. The powerful emotion of envy, especially in terms of age, gender, and class, seems a common fac-

tor rooted in changing and conflicting notions about social roles. A growing prominence of popular printed media may have prompted a growing set of common themes employed to describe deviance and malevolence. (There are 44 useful illustrations provided in this book.) Given the vast available literature on witchcraft in Europe and elsewhere, it may be that useful, general conclusions about witchcraft are not possible, but then why does the book have such a sweepingly broad title?

Roper earlier published a study of family and religion in 16th-century Augsburg. That was followed by a feminist-oriented study of witchcraft in southwestern renaissance Germany. That second volume revealed Roper's growing reliance on psychoanalytical theory for many of her analyses. Now, in this third book, here under review, she continues to associate beliefs about witchcraft with disturbed sexual roles and demands, as though ideas about conflict and oppression are necessarily always rooted in abnormal or pernicious forms of nurturance and resultant sexual frustrations. We need to remember that even in more modern times serious conflicts, ill-will, sexual repression, and frustrations still persist and yet witchcraft no longer commonly occurs in modern European societies. The sociocultural reasons for the rise in witchcraft in the 15th century and the steady decline in witchcraft beliefs in Western Europe in the late 17th century both continue to remain only partly explained. Perhaps we seek too simple answers.

Roper's book is full of provocative case material and clever observations related to multiple issues of conflict, deviance, gender/sexuality, and frustrated desires. I recommend it. Yet the book's perspective seems somewhat antiquarian. We study the past because it can inform us about the present and future. Yet Roper does little to explain exactly why we should remain keenly interested in the topic of witchcraft, even when it occurred centuries ago. Her book reflects her keen interest in the details of the past, but it fails to engage a reader in the questions of why the past remains important. History attempts to make the past relevant and of interest to the present, just as anthropology attempts to make alien societies and cultures relevant and interesting to our own. R. G. Collingwood tried to make this point about anthropology and history to historians, and later E. E. Evans-Pritchard tried to make the same point in reverse to anthropologists. Witchcraft remains interesting and relevant because the forms of personalized and negative thinking, persecution and related conflicts associated with witchcraft resemble many features of the contemporary world. This also explains why the last decades have seen a striking increase in publications about witchcraft in both history and anthropology. It would enliven Roper's narrative if she picked up on these broader issues. Similarly, Roper's book would have benefitted if she has made reference to more of the important historical studies of witchcraft in Europe. For example, there is no mention of Carlo Ginzburg, William Monter, Wolfgang Behringer, Gustav Henningsen, Robert Muchembled, H. C. Midelfort, Brian Levack, and many others. Nor is there any consideration of the question of whether German witchcraft has any particular sociocul-

tural characteristics different from witchcraft elsewhere in Western Europe, or even whether witchcraft varied significantly within Germany. A brief consideration of the large (though far from thorough) bibliography provided in Behringer's "Witches and Witch Hunts" (2004) reveals the many possibilities for some comparisons and supplementations with Roper's material.

Except for an unhelpful citation of Clifford Geertz's stale notion of "thick description," no anthropological work of any consequence is cited in Roper's study. In my earlier reviews of books on witchcraft written by anthropologists I noted that anthropologists today cannot write usefully about witchcraft without referring to some of the important works published by historians. In reviewing Roper, I need likewise to state that today historians writing about witchcraft cannot afford to ignore the works of anthropologists. This is especially important for two reasons. First, unlike historians, anthropologists who write about witchcraft have met and spoken with people who still believe in witchcraft and who act in response to those beliefs. In many cases (myself included) anthropologists have actually spoken with people who claim to have witnessed supernatural events related to witchcraft, have employed magic, medicine, and violence to combat witchcraft, and some who even claim to be some kind of witches themselves. Such firsthand comparative data may be invaluable for historians seeking insights for evaluating their documents. Second, anthropologists continue to encounter witchcraft in the modern world, because such beliefs and practice are not entirely in the past. Indeed, beliefs in witches and witchcraft seem on the rise in much of Africa despite the influences of modern technology and science. Even in Europe, the remarkable work of Jean Favret-Saada, "Les morts, le mort, les sorts" ("Deadly Words" – 1979) describes witchcraft flourishing in a part of modern rural France. Belief in witchcraft involves intellectual and emotional struggles to explain misfortune and suffering in terms of human wickedness rather than in depersonalized ways. It is not scientific or objective, but as Evans-Pritchard observed, it has its own internal logic. Clearly, the issues involved in the study of witchcraft have immediate and contemporary implications and applications today. This is partly because of witchcraft's relation to the broader study of explicatory modes of thought and to pressing concerns about social control and conflict, but it is also because thinking in terms of witchcraft or ideas similar to it remains widespread. Consequently the topic remains pertinent and not only of antiquarian interest. Scholars should repeatedly make this clear in their writings. The study of witchcraft remains timely and important, so scholars in history, folklore, sociology, and anthropology should keep abreast of one another's work.

Finally, the University of Virginia Press does disservice to readers by its current format for footnotes and scholarly references, especially in its failure to provide the names of the publishers of the works it cites.

T. O. Beidelman

**Schindler, Helmut:** Sakrale Rituale und Verwandtschaft. Ethnografische Texte zur transkulturellen Lebenswelt der Mapuche in Sahuelhue; 2 Bde. München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2013. 350 pp.; 474 pp. ISBN 978-3-8316-4159-8. Preis: € 79.00

Dieses zweibändige Werk präsentiert Forschungsergebnisse einer bereits längere Zeit zurückliegenden Feldforschung im Sahuelhue-Tal, das im südlichen Chile liegt, und ist zugleich ein Resümee der intensiven langjährigen Studien, die Helmut Schindler seit den 1980er Jahren in der Region unternommen hat. Das hohe Reflektionsniveau macht diese Veröffentlichung zu einer ausgezeichneten Grundlage für weitere zukünftige Forschungen bei den Mapuche.

Der Text beginnt mit einer ausführlichen Darstellung eines Festes, das die Mapuche in allen Gegenden ihres traditionellen Siedlungsraums im südlichen Südamerika sowie in transformierter Weise auch in der chilenischen Hauptstadt Santiago de Chile feiern und das in Sahuelhue *kamarikun* und andernorts auch *ngillatun* genannt wird. Die langwierigen Vorbereitungen auf das Fest, auf die Helmut Schindler nur geringfügig weniger Aufmerksamkeit legt als auf das Fest selbst, lassen bereits erahnen, welche Wichtigkeit die (regelmäßige) Durchführung für die Mapuche hat. Die Gründe dafür erfahren wir aber erst nach und nach, u. a. anhand der autobiografischen Erzählungen. Das Fest hat eine politische Dimension, indem es den Häuptlingen zur Bestätigung ihres Amtes dient, eine soziale Funktion, da es z. B. verstreut lebende Großfamilien zusammenführt, sowie einen rituellen Kontext, der sich anhand von Bittgebeten, Tänzen und Opferungen zeigt. Darüber hinaus hat das Fest aber auch biografische Relevanz für seine Teilnehmer bzw. die Bewohner der Reduktion. Diesem Aspekt hat Helmut Schindler besondere Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet. Die biografische Bedeutungsebene stellt für ihn den Schlüssel zum Verständnis des Festes dar.

Die an die Beschreibung des Festes anschließende fundierte Darstellung der "transkulturellen Lebenswelt der Mapuche in Sahuelhue" entspricht einer klassischen Ethnografie (Geschichte, Sozialstruktur, Wirtschaft, Kosmologie, Rituale) und lehnt sich dabei stets sehr eng an die Lebensgeschichten an, die der Autor in der Region Sahuelhue im südlichen Andengebiet aufgenommen hat. Ausführlich wiedergegebene Gespräche und Erzählungen lassen "die Mapuche selbst ... zu Wort kommen" und machen "ihre Gefühle deutlich", wie es der Klappentext verspricht. Der narrative und subjektive Erzählstil Schindlers ist eine der großen Stärken dieser Veröffentlichung, da zudem nicht – wie durchaus vermutet werden könnte – ein sehr starker *male bias* vorherrscht, sondern weibliche Lebensläufe und Sichtweisen mit in den Kanon aufgenommen wurden. Neben den Erzählungen seiner Hauptgesprächspartner lässt Schindler auch weitere "Charaktere und Schicksale" durchscheinen, z. B. den "bedürfnislosen Alten", den "musterhaften Landwirt" oder "zwei Witwen". Schade ist, dass dieser biografische Stil nicht noch konsequenter eingehalten wurde, denn die differenzierten Forschungsprozesse und die Perspektiven der daran Beteiligten wären dann noch deutlicher hervorgetreten.