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Barbara Rieti, *Making Witches: Newfoundland Traditions of Spells and Counterspells* by John Bodner

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In his analysis Webb must, of necessity, depend more on the records of the content producer than of the listener. As he notes, much of 1930s and 1940s radio is ephemeral — once broadcast it is lost. Webb, therefore, relies on the bureaucratic records of the BCN, program scripts and the few remaining letters to the BCN from listeners that detail their opinions on what they heard. Perhaps oral history — accounts of what any surviving listeners recall listening to and why — might have helped balance this dialogue. Despite this minor quibble, Webb should be commended for providing us with an important book that explains the impact radio broadcasting had on the social, cultural and political history of modern Newfoundland.

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Barbara Rieti. *Making Witches: Newfoundland Traditions of Spells and Counterspells* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008. ISBN 0773533605

RIETI'S *MAKING WITCHES* makes a significant contribution to the increasingly popular study of historic and contemporary witch traditions, as well as Newfoundland folk culture and regional history/culture. Prior to this work we had scant accessible information on the phenomenon outside Mark Ferguson's *Book of the Black Hearts* and Rieti's own article-length studies.

In tone, organization, methodology and theoretical perspective this text is the offspring of her earlier work on witches but, perhaps, its affinity is closest to her study of Newfoundland fairy-lore. As in her earlier studies, Rieti situates narratives and practices of witchcraft in the particular historically situated, socio-economic relations of outport and rural Newfoundland. The section on social relations is especially important and acts as a tonic against exoticizing and marginalizing witch studies. Rather, Rieti argues that social reproduction under the truck system was characterized by customary norms of reciprocity and managed through a complex kinship system. Therefore, like many authors on the subject such as Keith Thomas and Norbert Schindler, Rieti argues that "reciprocity in all its permutations is the lynchpin of witch lore...." If this were the extent of her exercise that may be enough but, like her work on fairy-lore, the author attempts to foreground, not only the logic of witchcraft but the contextually variant expression and narration of the phenomenon.

Rieti exploits two data sources, contemporary interviews and the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA). Of the latter she mines the material collected since the 1960s by both specialists and students. Keenly aware of both the strengths and weaknesses of archival material, Rieti notes that the lack of full recording of witch practices has distorted our impression of the tradition, relying, as it does, on summaries of the most easily

noted features; for example, the subtlety of understanding the complex meaning of how witches *look* at people. Despite these limitations, the author judiciously uses the data to trace the geographic distribution, relative prevalence and shape of the tradition itself and, finally, the particular rhetorical and artistic shape of witchcraft narratives. Her second approach produces three persuasive case studies of three witches through archival material and interviews with one purported witch, various family members and individuals who know the women in question.

Those familiar with contemporary witchcraft scholarship will find many common themes documented in the first two-thirds of this study. Here is the link between witching and economic exploitation (either through subsistence begging, placatory gifts or securing employment for male family members); the link between the moral and magical economy; the paradoxical role of the witch as scapegoat and benefactor; and the function of prophesy and cursing. Common also is the anti-witching lore and practices which, unlike the institutionalized pogrom in protestant Europe, remained at the level of folk-culture and operated upon an occult physical bond between enchanter and enchanted: shooting/piecing an effigy and putting up a bottle being the most common. Rieti is quick to note the violent license (often misogynistic) of anti-witching practices and the use of questionable magic that combating a witch allowed the 'innocent.' Befitting her training as a folklorist, Rieti shows a greater sophistication with witching narratives than is common in the literature; for example, on the topic of anti-witching practices she notes: "while the tales take their structures from everyday life ... they mirror some but invert others in fugues of symbol and fantasy" (43).

The later third of the book contains three case studies of female witches. In her study of Francis Long, Rieti corrects some of the literature bias of witchlore, which contains almost no data from witches themselves, by interviewing a woman who self-identifies and has the social role of a witch in the small community of Broom. Tasseography (tea reading), wart cures and cursing are just some of Francis Long's skills, but what makes Rieti's examination unique is her attention to Long's maturation into the role of a witch and the deeply problematic place she occupies in the social world of family and community. Surprisingly refreshing, Rieti also captures Long's ambiguous feelings towards witchcraft belief and practices themselves. With the same care and keen eye for detail, Rieti also studies Mary Bell and Janie Smith. In the case of Smith, the author persuasively demonstrates that the witch may, at its root, be more of a placeholder for a vast catalogue of deviance from social norms than an integrated and logical belief system of the occult.

Possible critiques of this work are modest but telling. There is almost no attempt to situate the book within the broader literature and theories on witch beliefs; and, as such, only those who come to it with a substantial schooling in the field will be able to trace out the genealogy of its discourses. This is a shame since much of what Rieti is doing will be confined to a regional study and merely an exemplar of various witchcraft practices, rather than the more ambitious project of

using the kind of data (extensive recorded interviews with living subjects) that historians laboring away in archives on the European continent, for example, are denied. This is not to say that either the notes section or the bibliography are anemic; both reflect some engagement with larger scholarship. However, my chief concern is that the scholarship is not integrated into the narrative of the work itself. A second critique involves Rieti's tendency to employ what Jon Elster has called "black box" macro-social mechanisms. In this case the concepts (to name a few) of scapegoating, stereotyping and social solidarity are used to explain phenomenon but are not actively seen as operational within the data itself. Despite these limitations one will look long and hard to find a more nuanced treatment of both the subject matter and the data.

As a final note, I have been familiar with Rieti's earlier journal length essays on witches for a decade and had wondered aloud if a book-length treatment would ever appear. For those of us who have waited patiently this text does not disappoint. For those coming to Rieti's work for the first time, whether scholar or general reader, this is an important contribution.

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Michelle Butler Hallett. *Double-Blind*. St. John's: Killick-Creative Press, 2007. ISBN 1897174217

PAEDIATRIC PSYCHIATRIST Dr. Josh Bozeman is already thoroughly haunted by the time he is recruited by a shadowy military offshoot by the ironic name of SHIP: The Society for Human Improvement and Potential. In his South Dakota childhood Bozeman survived the polio that killed his younger brother Bobby, who was sometimes able to link with him telepathically. He also survived the extended depression that his mother experienced after Bobby's death. In his first professional posting the army assigned Bozeman to work with severely traumatized soldiers just returned from Vietnam. In comparison, working with mentally challenged children in Newfoundland looks to this American psychiatrist like a peaceful respite rather than the first firm step down the path of human evil. These children are, after all, society's discards — Hallett's protagonist points out that they have been labelled "*morons, imbeciles, idiots*, and *juvenile lunatics*" (23-24) by the province's Health board. Surely any intervention in their mental health is an effective act of concern and an intervention for the better. Yet each decision Bozeman makes becomes a deliberation among evils and *Double-Blind* becomes an exploration of the proverbial good intentions that pave the path to hell.

The central dramatic conflict plays out against a 1970s backdrop and closes in 2003. Hallett's fictionalized Newfoundland becomes a chilling staging ground for bru-