

The Stratford Devil
Claude Clayton Smith
Shanti Arts
<https://shantiarts.co>
9781962082068, \$19.95, PB, 182pp

<https://www.amazon.com/Stratford-Devil-Claude-Clayton-Smith/dp/1962082067>

Synopsis: In the spring of 1651, nearly half a century before the infamous witch trials of Salem, Massachusetts, a woman known as Goody Bassett was hanged for witchcraft in Stratford, Connecticut. In the spring of 2023, nearly four centuries later, the State of Connecticut absolved all those accused of witchcraft, removing the stigma that their families have needlessly borne.

Few facts are known about Goody Bassett and the events surrounding her persecution. "The Stratford Devil" by Claude Clayton Smith is a haunting and moving historical novel, deftly crafted from those few facts (as well as detailed accounts of Stratford's early history), is the story of young Ruth Paine (later known as Goodwife Bassett) and how her singular experience beyond the confines of her Puritan world ultimately leads to her demise.

Rich in historical insight, "The Stratford Devil" gives a touching look into the isolated world of an independent woman as she struggles to survive in circumstances beyond her control. With its focus on religion and terror, "The Stratford Devil" is a parable for our time.

Critique: An inherently fascinating, riveting, and compelling work of fiction that is essentially inspired by historical fact, "The Stratford Devil" will prove to be of immense attraction to readers with an interest in the 17th Century American history with respect to witches, witchcraft, the gender based role of women, and the cultural/religious beliefs of the Puritans. While an especially and unreservedly pick for community and college/university library Historical Fiction collections, it should be noted for personal reading lists that "The Stratford Devil" is also readily available in a digital book format (Kindle, \$6.99).

Editorial Note: Claude Clayton Smith, (www.claudeclaytonsmith.wordpress.com) is Professor Emeritus of English, Ohio Northern University, and the author of eight books and co-editor/translator of four. His own work has been translated into five languages, including Russian and Chinese. This is his fourth book with Shanti Arts. He holds a DA from Carnegie-Mellon, an MFA in fiction from the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa, an MAT from Yale, and a BA from Wesleyan. He was a finalist for the 2022 First Pages Prize and winner of the 2021 Great Midwest Fiction Contest.