

they deliberately avoided demarcating the territory between science and non-science terminologically, Wolfram discusses psychical research as a 'border science'. The latter concept goes back to the American sociologist Thomas Gieryn, who argues that in academic discourse science operates as a cultural space, whose boundaries were combated and defined by various groups of intellectuals. As Wolfram illustrates convincingly throughout her study, psychologists and parapsychologists, indeed, used spatial metaphors to map out the contested territory between the two nascent disciplines and their scientific status.

In the first chapter, the reader finds an ambitious introduction to the formative years of psychical research in Germany. The author describes its pioneers, such as Carl du Prel and Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, in addition to societies and major publications that promoted paranormal studies. According to Wolfram, in this early period the boundaries of psychical research were continuously redrawn by a number of opposing groups of scholars and scientists. The representatives of the new psychology aimed at distinguishing sharply between the academic discipline of psychology and what they perceived as the inferior and illegitimate discipline of psychical research. Explorers into the world of paranormal phenomena, however, eagerly tried to cut the ties with spiritualists and occultists in order to promote their discipline as scientific.

In the second chapter, Wolfram assesses the ambiguous perception of hypnosis and suggestion among medical practitioners and psychical researchers. Whereas the latter often believed hypnosis and suggestion would promise insight into the dark corners of the human mind, new psychologists, most prominently Wilhelm Wundt, openly attacked both practices as unscientific. As a result, a number of early parapsychologists retreated from their scholarly endeavour, in fear of losing their scientific credibility. A notable exception was Schrenck-Notzing, whose work is featured in Chapter three. By establishing a laboratory in his palatial residence in Munich,

he continued to conduct psychical experiments and thus dominated the field of parapsychology until his death in 1929.

After Schrenck-Notzing's death parapsychology spread out in many directions as explored in the fourth chapter. While concentrating on the noted international philosopher Hans Driesch, Wolfram demonstrates that parapsychological studies could, indeed, be linked to a holistic and pacifistic *Weltanschauung*. This belief contributes to an understanding of why psychical research was finally outlawed by the National Socialists in 1937, bringing this scholarly endeavour to an end in Germany.

This fifth chapter studies the role of courtrooms during the time of the Weimar Republic, where adherents and enemies of psychical research disputed publically the existence of paranormal phenomena. This fascinating journey in time concludes with a chapter that analyses the manner in which psychologists and parapsychologists of the same period tried to discredit each other, intending to claim scientific authority of paranormal phenomena.

With *The Stepchildren of Science*, Wolfram has produced a very knowledgeable and highly accessible study on parapsychology in Germany. Despite its occasional lapses with regard to German terminology it remains a landmark text that will hopefully inspire historians in Germany and elsewhere to explore this exciting research territory further.

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**Cornelie Osborne,** *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany*, Monographs in German History, Vol. 17 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), pp. xi + 284, £45.00/\$90.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-1-8454-389-3.

In 1924, in what the press quickly called a 'monster case', ninety-three people were tried for criminal abortion in Limburg in the province of Hesse-Nassau. The chief

defendant, Frau Kastner, a mother of four, received three years' penal servitude with five years loss of civil rights for 'performing abortions for monetary gain'. Her husband, as her accomplice, received three years' prison with three years' loss of civil rights. The aborting women, who came from seventeen surrounding villages, were tried for 'attempted abortion', given that pregnancy could not be established for certain. Most of them were found guilty, as were the husbands or lovers who had arranged abortions, although some of the sentences were commuted upon appeal.

A close analysis of this case is one of the many jewels of Cornelia Osborne's *Cultures of Abortion*. According to Osborne, the history of Germany in the twentieth century can be read against the background of clause 218 of the penal code of 1871, which criminalised abortion. Changes to the abortion law constituted a 'fine barometer of the social status of women, official family policy and views on sexual mores' (p. 4). In the Weimar Republic, which Osborne focuses on, a decree of the Supreme Court, passed in 1927, which permitted therapeutic abortion, made the German law on abortion the most liberal in the world (the decree was quickly reversed during the Nazi regime). While Osborne examined the public discourses on birth control in her earlier *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany* (1992), in her most recent book she aims to 'explore the history [of abortion] from below, to make visible the more hidden practices and private encounters between predominantly lower-class women and their helpers' (p. 3).

Using a mixture of *Alltagsgeschichte*, micro-history, and discourse analysis, Osborne approaches her topic by increasingly narrowing her focus. After an introductory chapter, the first chapter thus explores representations of abortion in a number of popular culture sources, such as silent feature films, novels, plays and poetry. The next chapter examines two court cases from Bavaria to investigate the medical abortion practice of two doctors, the reactions of other doctors and law enforcement agencies, and the experiences of women patients. In Chapter

four, 'Abortion in the marketplace: lay practitioner and doctors compete', Osborne reflects on the nature of medical and lay abortion in the Weimar Republic and argues that the perception of the dangers of lay abortion was to some extent a construction of medical discourse, and that women often preferred to use the services of lay abortionists, or 'wise women'. Chapter five looks at women's perception of abortion. Carefully unearthing the meanings of the women's testimony in court records and police interviews, Osborne reconstructs lower-class women's voices and experiences of abortion. While women were familiar with the medical discourse of the times, they often thought about early pregnancy and abortion in pre-modern ways that eschewed the scientific medical language. The sixth chapter explores the Limburg trial and builds up a picture in which in the seventeen villages that were involved in the trial, abortion was not considered a crime but a run-of-the-mill experience and a useful way to deal with an unwanted pregnancy. The final chapter goes on to reflect on the continuities and changes in abortion policy from Imperial Germany until the early years of the Nazi regime.

It all adds up to a richly textured analysis of medical and lay abortion discourses and practices, artistic representations of the procedure, and of women's, particularly lower-class women's, own perceptions and experiences of abortion. Skilfully using an impressive variety of sources, Osborne provides a meticulous, insightful, and lively study that questions some of the continuing assumptions about the Weimar Republic, such as the supposed divide between the countryside and towns when it comes to fertility control and the extent of the medicalisation of German society, and provides an exciting example of how to approach the history of the body.

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