

a visible German presence in the city, what she calls the “Great Disappearing Act.” Instead of a disappearance, though, she seems to be describing the acceleration of what had been, up until the war, a gradual assimilation process. The German language was rarely heard on the postwar streets of New York, but Germans themselves did not disappear and, in fact, attempted to maintain some outward displays of their culture.

Feminist Friendships and Greenwich Village’s Heterodoxy Club

Scutts, Joanna. *Hotbed: Bohemian Greenwich Village and the Secret Club that Sparked Modern Feminism*. New York: Seal Press, 2022. 416 pp. \$30.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1541647176.

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When the Heterodoxy Club began meeting in 1912, the term “feminism” was relatively new. The word, as the club’s founder Marie Jenney Howe believed, identified a “changed psychology” stemming from the “creation of a new consciousness in women.”¹ A shared belief in this new attitude of mind called feminism brought together some of the era’s most recognizable women in the heart of Greenwich Village. In her new history of the club, *Hotbed: Bohemian Greenwich Village and the Secret Club that Sparked Modern Feminism*, literary critic and cultural historian Joanna Scutts writes that when the women of Heterodoxy came together, they were not trying to do anything—they just wanted to talk about “the world and their place in it” (1).

The Heterodoxy Club allowed members, all of whom were women, to engage in the free and frank discussion of ideas. Meetings took place on a biweekly basis, except during the summer months when most members left the city. They met first in public, in restaurants such as Polly’s or the meeting spaces of the Liberal Club, and then in private, meeting in members’ apartments for much of the 1920s. Following a group luncheon, members engaged in hours of informal discussion on a topic agreed upon at the last meeting. Topics ranged from philosophical considerations of the abstract mysteries of the universe to the immediate practical politics of women’s suffrage, birth control, workers’ rights, and economic independence. Regardless, the discussions always concerned women.

By the 1920s, the Heterodoxy Club’s membership roll read as a veritable “who’s who” of Progressive Era women’s history, a self-described gathering of “the most unruly and

¹Marie Jenney Howe, “Feminism,” *New Review*, August 1914.

individualistic females you ever fell among.”² Heterodoxy’s chairwoman, Marie, was the District Chair of the New York City Woman Suffrage Party—nicknamed the Fighting 25th—and cofounder of the New York State Suffrage League. Members included Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Crystal Eastman, Inez Milholland, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Grace Nail Johnson, the club’s only Black member. Meetings were kept a “secret” from outsiders, but sometimes included notable women from out of town who were invited to address the club’s regular meetings. This secrecy allowed the women to create a “little world for us; a little world in which we could laugh and play; talk and make friends.”³

In *Hotbed*, Joanna Scutts lays out a story of feminism and friendship. She shows how Heterodites could be found working to promote a myriad of progressive causes—including suffrage, birth control, and international peace politics—within notable women’s organizations like the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Women’s Party. She examines the plays of members such as Susan Glaspell, as well as Heterodite’s novels and stage careers, to provide a refreshing look at how fictional worlds were used to disseminate feminist ideals to like-minded audiences and attract public attention. In fifteen chapters, *Hotbed* effectively demonstrates the inclusivity and reach of feminist thinking, but often obscures the ways Heterodites explicitly connected one cause to another.

Scutts draws from the writings, lectures, and newspaper coverage of Heterodites to provide evidence of their feminism. This is especially well-done in her coverage of the 1914 feminist mass meetings organized by Marie Jenney Howe. Scutts also adeptly acknowledges some of the racial and class biases that shaped the thinking of this predominantly white, middle-class, college-educated group of women. However, she does not explicitly address the ways Heterodites thought about and articulated feminism as a concept until the seventh chapter, in which she discusses the women as “ambassadors of feminism” (147). It is only in *Hotbed*’s final chapter that she begins to engage with Heterodoxy’s articulation of feminism as a form of consciousness. This is what makes Scutts’s final chapter, “The Future of Feminism,” the most interesting. She finishes her story right where it seems it ought to have begun.

Focusing on the work of Crystal Eastman, the National League of Women Voters, debates surrounding women’s citizenship, and an expanded cohort of Heterodites, this chapter looks at efforts to promote a broader, post-suffrage vision of feminism. However, having situated her story firmly within the “heyday” of the “countercultural epicenter” of Greenwich Village, Scutts asserts that the dissolution of the Village in the 1920s prevented the women of Heterodoxy from influencing larger conversations as they once did. Yet many of the women remained active public figures. Katharine Anthony reached the peak of her notoriety in 1945, following her psychoanalytic biography of the siblings and literary collaborators Charles and Mary Lamb. Mary Ware Dennett was arrested for her pamphlet, *The Sex Side of Life*, in 1929, and the subsequent legal battle eventually established a new legal precedent in the 1936 ruling *United States vs. One Package of Japanese Pessaries*, which exempted birth control information and physicians’ materials from obscenity laws. In the late 1930s, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was a leading advocate in

²Greeting written by Inez Haynes Irwin in the “Heterodoxy to Marie” (1920) scrapbook with photographs and appreciations from members, 1920, A-25, 73vo, Inez Haynes Irwin Papers, Radcliffe Institute, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University.

³Group message in “Heterodoxy to Marie” (1920) scrapbook with photographs and appreciations from members, 1920, A-25, 73vo, Inez Haynes Irwin Papers, Radcliffe Institute, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University.

the campaign for equal pay for women and the establishment of day-care centers for working mothers.⁴ It is only with death that many of the women cease their public-facing work.

Overall, Joanna Scutts's *Hotbed* is more about the network of friendships that extended beyond the club's biweekly meetings than about Heterodoxy itself. It will prove a valuable resource for those wishing to learn about the causes and concerns that coalesced and formed the foundation of contemporary American feminism.

Shifting the Narrative of American Medical History

Swenson, Peter A. *Disorder: A History of Reform, Reaction, and Money in American Medicine*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021. 584 pp. \$35.00 (hardcover), ISBN: 978-0300257403.

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It has been nearly forty years since sociologist Paul Starr's *Social Transformation of American Medicine* (1983) won the Bancroft Prize and became the dominant narrative for the history of American medicine.¹ In it, Starr portrayed American medicine, largely defined by the American Medical Association (AMA), as driven by a steady agenda of self-serving professional goals such as building a veneer of infallibility around codes of silence and, by the twentieth century, leveraging medical professionals' prestige, political influence, and claims to scientific medicine to dominate the health-care marketplace. Peter A. Swenson's *Disorder* seeks to rescue professional medicine's historical reputation. Suitable for an educated lay audience and upper-division undergraduates, *Disorder* may prove to be a necessity for graduates in the field. It rejects the idea that the nature of professional medicine has been entirely self-serving and highlights a progressive, reformist tradition that sought to prioritize public good over the accumulation of professional power. The history of American medicine, *Disorder* seems to suggest, may be more of a pendulum swinging between political poles rather than a steady, conservative march toward monopolistic professionalism.

Rooting its evidence in primary sources, especially the proceedings and journals of professional medical societies—the AMA is at the center of Swenson's analysis, as it was in

⁴Lara Vapnek, *Elizabeth Gurley Flynn: Modern American Revolutionary* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2018), 127.

¹Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine: The Rise of a Sovereign Profession and the Making of a Vast Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).