

Book Reviews

historiography of the history of medicine. Reading Bates on Knox, we do not know how scholars have characterised: medical culture in nineteenth-century Edinburgh, Paris and London; the market driven exigencies of city-based medical careers; the position of anatomy in the medical curriculum; the role of Royal Colleges in professionalising medicine; the relationship between medicine and science, etc. We know something about the background to transcendental anatomy and the arrangements for bodies following the Anatomy Act, but probably not enough. These are important omissions for a book that professes to deal primarily with Knox's professional life and to 'set his work as a scientist and teacher in context' (p. 10). Without such historiographic engagement, all we are really left with are judgements about anatomists by anatomists, past and present. This phenomenon may well interest future historians of modern medicine but the absence of a historiographic perspective, combined with the well-known insufficiency of primary sources to shed new light upon Knox's life, career and writings, make it unlikely that this book will ever replace Lonsdale's.

The last chapter, 'Science Run Mad', discusses fictional representations of Knox in novels and on film from the 1830s to the early 1960s. This contains interesting material, but the author's treatment falls well short of the book's promising sub-title. We are told that representations of 'Knox the villain' continue to characterise public perceptions of anatomy (p. 161) and that there is still a 'chasm' today between professional and lay people in this respect (p. 173). The so-called chasm is actually far greater than the author imagines. As presented by him, it is an unbridgeable one between fact and myth, science and society, nature and culture. However, it is also entirely of his own making; and nowhere more so when Bates states that he has 'particularly avoided any speculation on whether Knox knew or believed the

bodies he purchased were those of murder victims' (p. 10).

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Heather Wolfram, *The Stepchildren of Science: Psychical Research and Parapsychology in Germany, c.1870–1939*, Wellcome Series in the History of Medicine/*Clio Medica* 88, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. v + 342, €70.00/\$109.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-90-420-2728-2.

Whereas in France, the UK and the US a number of influential studies have been published over the past thirty years which analyse the emergence and impact of occult movements, spiritualism and parapsychology in western societies, these topics have received less scholarly attention in Germany. Until recently, the history of psychical research – although widely conducted in Germany during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – had remained largely neglected. Heather Wolfram's groundbreaking study, in which she investigates the emergence and decline of psychical studies from the *Kaiserreich* to the beginning of the Second World War, attempts to fill this research gap. Her analysis incorporates a wide range of sources, including theoretical writings, experimental protocols, correspondence, court records and photographs that had long remained untouched and shelved away in German archives.

The Stepchildren of Science embarks on an exploration into the history of psychical research that became known as parapsychology from the 1920s onwards in six illuminating chapters. The author's objective is to examine the development of parapsychological endeavours embedded within a larger socio-cultural, political and scientific context. In contrast to earlier works by the historians of science Matthew Brower, Sofie Lachapelle and Alison Winter, in which

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