

doi:10.1017/mdh.2016.79

Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil's Chain: Prostitution and Social Control in Partitioned Poland* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), pp. 380, \$39.95, cloth, ISBN: 10987654321.

There are a number of reasons why this book is important. Firstly, it offers what is largely missing from the current literature on eugenics, public health and social medicine in East-Central Europe: the social and medical management and, ultimately, the control of the female body and female sexuality. Certainly, Nancy M. Wingfield, Maria Bucur, Zsuzsa Bokor and Magda Gawin, among others, have dealt with this topic before, and in other national contexts. However, what Keely Stauter-Halsted offers in *The Devil's Chain* is a synthesis, not only of debates on prostitution in the Polish lands, but of broader debates on gender, identity and nationalism in East-Central Europe, before and during World War I.

The book is predicated on the argument that, from the mid-nineteenth century until the end of World War I, the social phenomenon of prostitution in partitioned Poland underwent a convoluted process of explanation and analysis, from its depiction as repugnant and outside the body of the nation to a more inclusive interpretation, allowing for moral redemption, social integration and ethnic appropriation. Indeed, for most Polish experts in law, medicine, education and social care, the birth of the Second Polish Republic in 1918 was forged as much in the Catholic faith and the nationalist struggle against dominating empires as by health campaigns, reform movements and social activism – all aiming to improve and protect the biological strength of the nation.

Based on a wide range of sources and archives in Warsaw, Cracow, Poznań and Vienna, and covering three imperial settings (Austrian, Russian and German), *The Devil's Chain* describes how prostitution affected and shaped the life of many women and men, across social divisions and ethnic differences. Through government regulation, medical inspections, hospitalisation, criminalisation, stigmatisation and, last but not least, nationalist appropriation of their gender, profligate women and prostitutes came to epitomise less unredeemable human beings, ostracised and marginalised, and more individuals whose importance for the emergent national community was not to be neglected. As Stauter-Halsted convincingly argues, for the new Polish scientific elite, populating universities, public offices, hospitals and other health institutions in the main urban centres in partitioned Poland, prostitution was a Janus-like problem, the consequences of which were not only medical and hygienic, but also social, economic and ethnic. Indeed, it was the combined impact of these interrelated aspects on all walks of life, in cities and villages alike, home and abroad, that determined the debate on and the regulation of prostitution in partitioned Poland. By hoping to create a national community that could include all Poles, irrespective of their social origin, economic status, academic profession and, indeed, contentious morality, concerned members of the public assisted scientific experts, physicians, politicians and lawyers in their attempts to protect the health and the morality of society.

Secondly, the book brings to light those individual stories of women who, across regions and empires, and for one reason or another, engaged in prostitution, habitually or ephemerally. Often ostracised and stigmatised, these women led a life beleaguered by financial insecurity, social opprobrium, moral condemnation and, quite commonly, the loss of family and children. These 'narratives of entrapment' are both touching and illuminating. The story that emerges tells us of the personal experiences of prostitutes in Lwów or Warsaw, or of those who travelled abroad, in search of a better life, but instead ended up in the brothels of Constantinople or Buenos Aires. By emphasising

the regional, national and international aspects of prostitution, Stauter-Halsted shows how the international trade in women, then as now, intersected concerns with health, family and personal safety, alongside poverty, unemployment as well as a hostile social environment and deplorable economic conditions at home. In this context, Stauter-Halsted also provides a much needed correction to the popular imagination that identified those who procured women for paid sex as exclusively Jewish. While many of those involved in human trafficking and prostitution were indeed Jews, as were many of the victims, the magnitude of prostitution in partitioned Poland could not be blamed entirely on this group; it was, as convincingly discussed here, the outcome of a multitude of factors, both internal and external. This is a useful approach to take considering the resilience of popular anti-Semitism in East-Central Europe.

Finally, the book is exemplary in terms of its clear structure and use of historical sources. It deepens not only our knowledge of a number of topics connected to prostitution, but also our appreciation of the many ways of understanding its meaning, from moral and religious judgement to social and medical reform. Historians of Poland, and of East-Central Europe more generally, will certainly welcome it, as will historians of medicine and students interested in social protection, gender, welfare and nationalism.

Marius Turda

Oxford Brookes University, UK

doi:10.1017/mdh.2016.80

Erin Sullivan, *Beyond Melancholy: Sadness and Selfhood in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. ix-227, \$100, hardback, ISBN: 9780198739654.

Beyond Melancholy is an elegant study of sadness in Renaissance England. As its title suggests, the book looks beyond melancholy to show how sorrow was a more complex, malleable and affirmative concept than scholars have realised. Grief was thought to cause illness and, in extreme circumstances, it could even lead to death. Yet, within the frame of Protestant theology, the emotion took on very different meanings. It was considered helpful rather than harmful, a way of perceiving divine grace and seeking salvation. Taken too far, however, such spiritual feelings could sink into the dangerous realm of despair. These categories of sadness – grief over worldly cares, melancholy, godly sorrow and despair – were thought to intersect with one another, which could make differentiating between them difficult. The book's central argument is that interpreting sorrow amongst such ambiguity was an active, wilful process. Sullivan calls it 'emotive improvisation', and she suggests that it was key to the cultivation of selfhood. It is by knowing the nature and implications of sadness that one comes to know oneself.

The four categories of sadness structure the book. Grief afflicted the soul and mind whereas melancholy was a disorder of the body. Both were thought to wreak physical alterations, and so the capacity to control emotion was deemed integral to health. Yet this holistic view of body and mind, Sullivan argues, existed alongside a dualistic one. Using literature from the period, she shows how grief could become an act of defiance that required thought and reason. Involuntary, corporeal grief worked together with this more wilful, immaterial grief. Melancholy was linked to intellectual pursuits and often diagnosed in wealthy men, yet Sullivan finds that medical writers associated the disease with disorders of the gut rather than the imagination. She elaborates on this observation using scatological humour in comedies.