

exception Agar's 'liberal eugenics', this fundamental critique of the self-perception of today's transhumanism coalesces around their defacto disinheriting of Huxley, the 'direct link' between eugenics and contemporary transhumanism, who not only coined the term itself but also set out an agenda that is very much akin to that advanced by Bostrum's Future of Humanity Institute at Huxley's alma mater, Oxford University.

There is, of course, an irony in this considering that almost every one of the chapters of this book ultimately traces and links past attempts to craft humans to the present transhumanist imaginings of human enhancement. That said, this edited volume will also appeal to all scholars in and students of theories of social and biological improvement, of the ideologies and political regimes that ultimately sought to craft and create the human condition in the past and at present, from generation to procreation.

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Monica Black, *Death in Berlin: From Weimar to Divided Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 326, hardback, \$72.90, ISBN: 978-0521118514.

Although modern historians have long acknowledged the centrality of violence and death in Europe's twentieth century and Germany's leading role in it, only recently have they turned to death itself as subject of inquiry. With *Death in Berlin*, Monica Black presents us with a captivating, ambitious and well-written cultural history of the practices and mentalities around death in Berlin, spanning the late Weimar years to 1961. Based on a wealth of sources, with actors ranging from individual mourners to clergy, morgue and crematorium operators, municipal administrators, propagandists, folklorists, doctors and architects, her work connects a number of distinct subfields. Yet there are two central questions which give cohesion and great relevance to this work: what became of death in the aftermath of mass death, and what became of individual and community in the light of it?

Black acknowledges the inherent difficulties in writing such a history, for 'much of what happens when we deal with the dead is never recorded in written word' and is thus 'a story that somehow resists being told'. (13). Thanks to her impressive methodology, informed by the earlier work of ethnographers, anthropologists and historians like Philippe Ariès, Carlo Ginzburg, Richard Bessel, or Peter Fritzsche, she tells a fascinating story, focusing mostly on texts rather than artefacts which reflect the practices, fears, hopes and taboos associated with death and the dead.

The book is organised chronologically. The first two chapters highlight the politicisation of death in late Weimar and Nazi years and the emerging cult of the soldier hero, the central chapters focus on the everyday experience with mass death in the city itself between 1943 and 1949, makeshift graves and missing dead featuring prominently, while the last two chapters examine different approaches to death in East and West Germany until 1961 in the light of the Cold War and increased knowledge of the Holocaust.

Historians will find much value in Black's skilful connecting of the momentous, national and international stage of history with the local, deeply personal, sometimes mythical. She argues that the Nazi cult of the war hero, with its idea of the purifying blood sacrifice for Germany, cannot be separated from the racial ideology and colonisation aims which

excluded and ultimately allowed for the murder of those deemed Un-German. Black critiques historians who view death rituals of the Third Reich as ethnographic side notes or mere National Socialist propaganda. As in the case of the gradual banning of 'Jewish corpses' from 'Aryan' cemeteries in Berlin, begun even before the Nuremberg Race laws of 1935, her work points to a process in which the reconfigured ideas about death, race, contamination and community had significant local bases. Even with mass death arriving in the city itself in the last years of the war, many Berliners, traumatised by a veritable crisis of corpses, insisted on upholding the racial distinctions erected around death. The story of racism and notions of privilege permeating much of Berlin society in its treatment of the dead, and of great proximity between the living and the dead is told through many lenses. They include POW corpse recovery troops and Berliner children banned from 'Aryan' playgrounds who resorted to Weissensee Jewish cemetery as a place to play, and when deportations began, as a place to hide. Death, in this story, does not equalise all. Nor does death in this story guarantee eternal rest.

In the last two chapters, Black complicates the post-war histories which focus too much, she suggests, on the bustle of economic miracle activities in the West, or on regime-building efforts in the East by the SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany). Not purged from modern-scientific, secular or post-holocaust mentalities (as Ariès and Arendt would have it), death continued to play a significant role in everyday life as well as in the rebuilding of post-war societies. The author provides convincing evidence, not least in carefully researched sections about exhumations and reburials such as at Eichkamp cemetery in West Berlin, where burial space competed with building space for an international trade fair, or in the case of East Berlin designs for removing old inner-city cemeteries from the envisioned modern, socialist city. The latter were withdrawn due to popular resistance and are represented as typical for the SED-regime's almost hesitant early efforts to create a distinct socialist funeral culture. Black also points to changes in mentality within this decade. Some Berliners now used Nazism and knowledge of holocaust, gas chambers and mass death, as convenient reference to frame their own story of victimisation. Practices and perceptions around death still linked individual and community. But in the course of the 1950s, Black argues, the imagined community became increasingly international while the ritual focused more and more on the private person.

Medical historians looking for a public health history modelled on Richard Evan's *Death in Hamburg* will not find it here. That history remains to be written. *Death in Berlin* is also not primarily an urban history. Perhaps this is the reason we find no mention of the episode of an estimated 12 000 Berlin graves being transferred in the 1930s to Stahnsdorf cemetery to make place for Albert Speer's megalomaniac designs. This is a minor point in the light of the abundance of hitherto unexamined sources from state and municipal archives, newspapers, ethnographic studies, and church records on which Black builds her case.

What the reader will find in *Death in Berlin* is a brilliant history in which perceptions and practices around death tell us much about twentieth-century German society and its values. It has earned its place in modern German historiography, not least as it raises questions of continuities across the East–West and dictatorship–democracy divide. It is also a masterpiece of history of mentalities in its own right. And it is a much needed complement to the monographs on death in the Soviet Union which have shown us that mass death and the excesses, grief, fantasies and hopes associated with it are central to Europe's modern history. Future scholars working on generational experiences, on

oral, religious or medical history will find in Black's work an invaluable foundation for contemplating death and ritual in a modern society. And finally, this book is a welcome reminder to historians of modern Europe that we do well to connect with our peers studying earlier and non-Western histories. The book deserves a wide readership.

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Roger Rolls, *Diseased, Douched and Doctored: Thermal Springs, Spa Doctors and Rheumatic Diseases* (London: London Publishing Partnership, 2012), pp. 244, £19.99, paperback, ISBN 978-1-907994-04-3.

It's easy to lampoon the spas and their claims that drinking the waters or following the bathing ritual improved health. They were frequently the butt of literary and visual satire in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century when many were at their height. Doctor, patient and novelist Tobias Smollett (1721–71) has a field day in the *Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771), which author Roger Rolls quotes to good effect in *Diseased, Douched and Doctored*. This nicely produced book is a reworking and updating of his earlier and out-of-print *The Hospital of the Nation* (1988).

Like its predecessor *Diseased, Douched and Doctored* is particularly concerned with the greatest of the English spas, Bath and the hospital opened in 1742 to provide residential care for the worthy poor prescribed a water cure. Rolls covers the earlier history of the Bath waters, but concentrates on the period from the eighteenth century onwards and the hospital set up to make use of the thermal spring. He also explores the other treatments on offer. Since those living in Bath could take the waters while living at home they were excluded from admission. The hospital thus had a wide remit from its inception and this throws up some interesting problems. Funds had to be found to get the patient to Bath (usually paid for by the home parish) and provide the 'caution money' demanded by the hospital to ensure the patient could afford to get home after discharge. Neither vagrancy nor unexpected costs to the ratepayers would be popular with the hospital's potential supporters.

Rolls makes no extravagant claims for the efficacy of the Bath waters, but takes a gentle non-judgmental look at the kinds of conditions thought to be benefited by using the excellent records of the Bath General Hospital and its subsequent incarnations. It is currently the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases, NHS Foundation Trust, and specialises in rehabilitation medicine. The reworking of the rationale for hydrotherapy with an increasing emphasis on water-based physical therapy is an interesting story, concisely told.

Historically the waters do seem to have come into their own, in the treatment of those suffering from chronic lead poisoning or the 'lead palsy'. This is backed up with some relatively recent research on the effects of immersion in and drinking of the calcium and iron-rich waters. Aware of the pernicious effects of lead and its frequent use in many trades in the eighteenth century, various of the Bath physicians were perhaps right to champion a therapeutic stay in the Bath General Hospital they had helped to establish. As Rolls points out, it was their business to publish good cure rates in the local press as an inducement to would-be subscribers.