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C. Elizabeth Koester

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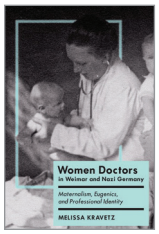

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Melissa Kravetz has written a focused and original analysis of the role of female physicians in Germany during the Weimar Republic of the 1920s and after the election of the Nazi party in 1933. By using the stories of individual women as examples and relying on deeply researched archival sources, she examines the ways in which these doctors "opened up new discursive spaces to achieve political and social results for their patients and for themselves." (229) They did so in the face of significant prejudice, both against female physicians generally, but also sanctioned by the "double-earner" law against married working women. While its primary emphasis is on these physicians, in its discussions of the education, health care and advice provided to girls and women by female doctors, this book also provides a compelling side-glance into those lives just before and during the Nazi period.

The book is organized around five central aspects of this story, with a chapter devoted to each: the roles female physicians played in promoting marriage; preparing girls for motherhood; fighting vices like alcoholism and venereal disease which threatened women and children in particular; supporting the Nazi program of racial hygiene, and collecting breast milk. Woven through the specific narratives is Kravetz's assessment of how these physicians responded to contemporary Weimar and then Nazi ideology in the course of their efforts to carve out their own professional (albeit gendered) space. She contends that not all were true believers in eugenics or Nazism, but as a group, they saw opportunities for their own advancement presented by the rise of those movements with their emphasis on strong, healthy women and children as key to a strong, healthy nation.

Kravetz argues that women physicians grabbed these opportunities in order to secure a professional foothold, even though it meant resigning themselves to work in less prestigious areas of practice than what was available to their male counterparts. However, since these opportunities often meant working part-time in clinics or schools, for example, they also meant that the women had time to carry out their domestic as well as professional responsibilities. By recognizing a professional (and personal) lifeline, one which depended on their support for these ideologies, these women made the most of it, playing up their feminine empathy and arguing that their ability, as women, to bond with and thus advise women and girls about sensitive matters like marriage counselling, birth control, pregnancy and childbirth, was better than that of their male colleagues. Kravetz shows how their approach to practising

medicine reflected their class biases, as they imposed their own middle-class values on their working-class patients, thus effectively promoting political goals connected to the belief in the need to restore the "quality" of the population.

Chapter 5 is the most interesting. It is the story of the breast milk banks set up to support Germany's mothers and infants, part of the goal to secure infant nutrition in the interests of political goals. Systematic collection of breast milk had begun in Vienna in 1909, and, thanks in large part to the efforts of the entrepreneurial Dr. Marie-Elise Kayser, three decades later, having become a Nazi priority, there were almost fifty breast milk collection facilities in German territory. Rich detail includes information about who the donors were, how much they were paid, how the milk was transported (often great distances and even at times by plane), and conflicts about whether milk from Jewish donors should be accepted.

Apart from bringing to light the history of women doctors in Germany in this period through the vivid portrayal of a number of key individuals, the book's main strength is Kravetz's exhaustive use of archival sources, making German-language material accessible for English-speaking readers. This book will be of interest to those working at the university level in the history of medicine, and especially in connection with women physicians and their role in the field of public health, as well as in the history of gender, women, the family and education in early twentieth century Germany. Those studying the history of eugenics will also find much of interest in these pages, particularly since the triangle which connected public health, eugenics and female physicians existed in many other countries as well. The detailed notes and bibliography are also a very useful contribution to these fields.

We are left wondering to some degree whether we can fairly extrapolate as Kravetz does from the experiences and records of a relatively small number of individuals. Nevertheless, Kravetz's study deepens and shades our understanding of women physicians in this period generally and of how their times influenced the ways in which they practised medicine.

C. Elizabeth Koester, University of Toronto