

departure point that “the Swedish experience of neurosis differed from that of most western nations” (p. 9), and therefore, since this experience is different, also the “history of neurosis in Sweden” is different from that of “other Western countries”. These initial statements are hardly substantiated in the book, and this reader was therefore left unsatisfied with the comparative aspects of the book. It may be unfair to demand an even broader analysis, but the introduction invites a reading that is bound to disappoint. An investigation of the possible specificities of Swedish neurosis, which would also have to confront the mobility of medical discourses, would probably demand a more systematic comparative approach. This book might, however, be a fruitful starting point for an analysis of national variations in the interpretation of neurosis.

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Chad Ross, *Naked Germany: health, race and the nation*, Oxford and New York, Berg, 2005, pp. xi, 239, illus., £50, \$95 (hardback 978-1-85973-861-3), £16.99, \$28.95 (paperback 978-1-85973-866-5).

Given the strong scholarly interest in the history of the body it is not surprising that the history of German nudism or *Freikörperkultur* has been the subject of several books. Most recently the German-language monographs by Maren Möhring and Heiko Stoff (both published in 2004) have explored different aspects of the phenomenon in innovative ways. *Naked Germany* is the first book-length study on the subject in English. Covering the period from 1890 to 1950, the author for the most part prefers a thematic approach in his presentation. After a short historical survey, he looks at the relationship between nudism, the churches, the state, and the Nazis in a single chapter. This is followed by chapters that focus on the relationship between nudism and medicine, and on nudist discourses on health,

beauty, women, sex and race. Such a thematic approach has advantages. It can emphasize historical continuities that might otherwise have been overlooked. But there is the danger that such an approach obscures shifting emphases and developments in German body culture over time.

Ross has not been entirely successful in avoiding this danger. The period from 1900 to 1945 was not only characterized by radically different political regimes, it also witnessed fundamental cultural and social changes. Some of them—such as changes in gender relations—have significant implications for the author’s study but he does not explore them in a systematic fashion. While Ross concedes that the symbolic meanings of the body were subject to constant change because “it has been the site of restless struggle between individuals and various political, religious, and scientific authorities” (p. 6), he also claims that there was a clearly identifiable ideological core to the nudist movement that remained mostly unchanged for the first half of the twentieth century. In his view, nudists aimed at the transformation of the German nation “into a harmonious, strong, racially pure *Volk* by first transforming Germans into healthy and beautiful bearers of the racial seed” (p. 1). This characterization might be true for some nudists but others had rather different political agendas. During the Weimar years, communists like Friedrich Wolf and Social Democrats like Adolf Koch advocated nudism because they thought it fortified workers for the class struggle or helped them overcome the debilitating effects of their social situation. In any case, given his emphasis on the racial goals of nudism, Ross’s claim that nudism itself was apolitical (p. 58) seems strange.

There are a few problems from the medical history view-point. Since the author neglects the specific historical context of the Weimar period, he conflates the issues of eugenics or racial hygiene with Nordic racism advocating racial purification. Not all advocates of eugenics subscribed to Nordic racism even though quite a few leading Weimar eugenicists

were Nordic racists. The chapter on nudism and medicine confuses homeopathy with naturopathy (*Naturheilkunde*). Such a mistake could easily have been avoided by consulting the historiography on alternative medicine in Germany. *Naturheilkunde* was based on various systems of water cures and dietetic life style prescriptions that included nude exercises in the open air and sun bathing. It provided nudists with aetiological models and justifications for their own practices that aimed at stimulating metabolic exchange in order to prevent auto-intoxication.

These criticisms should not detract from the strengths of the book. Ross's visits to over a dozen federal, state, and local archives in Germany, have not only uncovered a wealth of new material on the history of German nudism. In the sections dealing with the Nazi period, he has developed a fairly nuanced account of the ambiguous and contradictory attitudes that informed Nazi policies on nudism. But since the study pays insufficient attention to changing cultural, social and political circumstances it does not fully capture the diverging motivations and complex attitudes of people who practised *Freikörperkultur*.

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Rhodri Hayward, *Resisting history: religious transcendence and the invention of the unconscious*, Manchester University Press, 2007, pp. xi, 147, £40.00 (hardback 978-0-7190-7414-1).

Over the last three decades, a number of studies have appeared (for example, Janet Oppenheim's *The other world* (1985), Alex Owen's *The darkened room* (1989) and *The place of enchantment* (2004)) that investigate the links between nineteenth-century British spiritualism, occultism and psychology. With his new book Rhodri Hayward makes a significant contribution to this field. The author traces how modern notions of history

and selfhood emerged out of nineteenth-century religious and scientific debates about the boundaries of human personality. Hayward opposes Freud and an eminent line of historiography, which depicts the discovery of the unconscious as a revolutionary event that threatened nineteenth-century assumptions of personal and historical identity as well as bourgeois morality. In contrast, Hayward sets out to reveal that "the new rhetoric of the unconscious served a conservative purpose, being used to police the subversive mystical experiences of spiritualism and revivalism" (p. 6).

The book is divided into four chapters which tackle the subject from different but interconnected angles. In the first chapter, Hayward concentrates on developments of nineteenth-century history and theology which led to fundamental changes in the concept of selfhood. Historicists, such as the German David Strauss, declared supernatural and mystical accounts of the Bible as unhistorical since they did not fit into the newly established laws of historical and psychological unity. Hayward provides further evidence that in the wake of historicism transcendental aspects of the human self were more and more replaced by social concerns.

The second chapter is not only the longest but perhaps also the most illuminating part of the book. Here, Hayward gives a detailed account of how spiritualists and their opponents argued about the boundaries of personality and death, and how these conflicts gave rise to a new model of selfhood, namely the subliminal self, which anticipated the Freudian unconscious. As Hayward shows, the idea of the subliminal self was first developed within the works of Frederic W H Myers, a leading member of the Society for Psychical Research, who strove to provide intrapersonal explanation for mediumistic phenomena. Apparent supernatural phenomena, such as clairvoyance, second sight, automatic writing, trance speech and spirit possession, were thus made subject to the rhetoric of psychology. Although the definition of the subliminal self