

## Book Reviews

German translations of the *Origin*. It was the press that made Darwin into a public figure and celebrity. The fact that, unlike Darwin, Wallace was never caricatured in print, meant that the Victorians came to equate evolution solely with Darwin.

Darwin's post-1859 writings receive specific treatments, though their critical reception is largely ignored. We learn how Darwin's work on plants turned the Down grounds into an external workshop of Kew Gardens and Darwin into an experimentalist. His experiments on insectivorous plants, climbing plants and orchids, plant movement, and Mendel-type experiments on plant inheritance patterns, soothed his mind and relaxed him. Meanwhile, Darwinism developed as a Victorian body of thought as Spencer, Lyell, Wallace, Bates and Huxley produced their own seminal writings on evolution. Darwin capped his own views with *Descent of man* (1871) and its still-fascinating sequel *Expression of emotions* (1872), where once again he was much obliged to an army of correspondents, artists, photographers and anthropologists.

The publication of Darwin's letters will not be completed until the 2020s, so there will be plenty of opportunity for fresh appraisals of Darwin's life in the years to come. But Janet Browne's biography will remain a classic among existing and future critical volumes for providing such an intimate domestic portrait of Darwin at work surrounded by his wife, children and garden. Who will forget the arresting image of an old bearded gardener leaning on a spade and contemplating the humble earthworm and its tremendous role in "resurrection and life"?

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**Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of nature: Krafft-Ebing, psychiatry, and the making of sexual identity*, University of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. x, 321, illus. £19.00, US\$30.00 (hardback 0-226-63059-5).**

Dare one say of a book on this subject that it is a labour of love? Perhaps not, though almost

obsessively, Harry Oosterhuis has spent many years combing the existing scholarly literature on Richard von Krafft-Ebing and reading all of his voluminous published work. More significantly still, he has uncovered a veritable treasure-trove—an archive held by Krafft-Ebing's descendants that contains his files on his patients, including, in about 200 of these cases, letters and autobiographical accounts produced by those he treated, or by their families and professional advisers. On this basis, he has constructed a wide-ranging account and reassessment of Krafft-Ebing's career, his place in late nineteenth-century German and Austrian psychiatry, and his work as a pioneering sexologist.

Oosterhuis by no means confines his attention to Krafft-Ebing's work on sexual identity and sexual perversion. As his title indicates, he is every bit as much concerned with his subject's overlapping but distinct career in psychiatry, and he presents a nuanced and fascinating discussion of Krafft-Ebing's work in this domain. Though often dismissed as just one more late-nineteenth-century somaticist, Krafft-Ebing's relations with the German mainstream, Theodor Meynert in particular, were quite fraught. Meynert saw him as unreliable and insufficiently scientific, too concerned with his patients and with clinical realities, and too inclined to embrace the foreign notions of the French. And from Meynert's narrow and sclerotic perspective, all these charges were true. Unsurprisingly, when Krafft-Ebing was proposed for a chair at Vienna, Meynert fought the proposal. He lost, but the target of his ire hated the Viennese scene, and before long had retreated to Graz. Krafft-Ebing, as Oosterhuis demonstrates, embraced the degenerationist and hereditarian ideas that were the orthodoxy of the era. But to leave matters at that point is to miss the complexities of his actual practice. Here, Krafft-Ebing made extensive use of case history materials, and relied heavily on the psychological dimensions of his patients' presentation of self in understanding their disorders, and indeed in treating them. He experimented with the hypnotic techniques advocated by the French, at both Paris and Nancy, and used them extensively in his

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therapeutics. He even hypnotized guests as a party trick, drawing criticism from his more orthodox colleagues.

Of course, Krafft-Ebing continues to be known, not for his asylum and clinic practice, but for his work with sexual “perverts” and the multiple editions of his *Psychopathia sexualis*, new editions of which have continued to appear with some regularity in a multitude of languages even in the decades since his death. One enterprising American publisher produced an edition, appropriately enough in 1969, that was explicitly advertised as pornography, a recital, it would appear, “of unnatural sex practices, weird auto-erotic methods, sex-lust-torture—much, much more”. But as Oosterhuis dryly comments, “Today, fully three decades after the sexual revolution of the 1960s, it is difficult to imagine that *Psychopathia Sexualis* is still read because of its titillating qualities” (p. 278).

Once seen as a daring explorer of the sexual underworld of late-nineteenth-century society, in our time a chorus of Foucaultians and Szaszians (echoed in a more minor key, oddly enough, by their fierce critic, Edward Shorter) has more recently condemned Krafft-Ebing as anything but a progressive in the struggle against sexual repression. For such scholars, on the contrary, Krafft-Ebing has been the purveyor of a new medical disciplinary power, a “biopower” devoted to repressing and “controlling the free and easy pleasures of the body” (p. 7). It is a set of views against which Oosterhuis issues a sharp and closely reasoned dissent, which he buttresses with a careful analysis of Krafft-Ebing’s relationships with his patients and correspondents. Just as it will not do to reduce Krafft-Ebing to a simple stick figure who embodies the stock materialist impulses of late-nineteenth-century psychiatry, so, Oosterhuis asserts, it will not do to see him as just a closet manipulator, the propagator of new and more subtle schemes of social control.

Oosterhuis has produced a fine piece of scholarship. His book deserves a wide readership.

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**Henry L. Minton,** *Departing from deviance: a history of homosexual rights and emancipatory science in America*, University of Chicago Press, 2002, pp. xi, 344, US\$65.00 (hardback 0-226-53043-4), US\$20.00 (paperback 0-226-53044-2).

For some time now, the academic world has been waiting for a book that looks at sexual science without suggesting that all the participants were evil men out to spurn homosexuals. This moment has arrived with Henry Minton’s *Departing from deviancy*. Of course other texts, such as Harry Oosterhuis’s *Stepchildren of nature* (Chicago University Press, 2000), have argued that not all sexologists were anti-homosexual, but a vast number of books on American sexology have certainly assumed that scientists who dared to speak about “sexual perversions” were necessarily trying to protect white patriarchy from such pathological individuals. What this unsophisticated view neglects is that homosexuals and other so-called “perverts” actually engaged with sexologists in order to construct medical knowledge about “perversions”, that many sexologists (such as Havelock Ellis, Magnus Hirschfeld, Iwan Bloch, etc.)—unlike psychoanalysts—actually had a reform agenda and wanted to change the laws which incarcerated people for acting upon their sexual desires for people of the same sex (and other sex crimes), and that many sexologists held that the “perversions” were natural, that they existed in other cultures and in other epochs, so should not be illegal. It is too much to assume that these same “homosexual-friendly” sexologists would not also hold some ideas about women, race, and sexuality which do not meet today’s politically-correct criteria—but that should come as no surprise to any historian. Nevertheless, it is only recently that such a revision of the story of sexology as some kind of evil conspiracy out to “get” homosexuals has been proposed. Minton’s *Departing from deviancy* is an important part of this account.

Minton’s book offers us the clearest indication that homosexuals took an active role in the construction of scientific knowledge about homosexuality. Initially, as Oosterhuis showed