

21, 2 (2010), Blut, Milch und DNA. Zur Geschichte generativer Substanzen

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188 Seiten, ISBN 978-3-412-20517-1; ISSN 1016-362X
Bestellung unter <http://www.boehlau.de/newbuchliste.aspx>

Abstracts

Beate Fricke, On the Genealogy of Traces of Blood. Blood as a Metaphor of Transformation on the Altar of Feldbach (about 1450)

How do traces of blood on a little known late medieval altar contribute to the interpretation of its meaning? How do they refer to contemporary knowledge of philosophers, scientists and physicians? The unusual use of blood depicted on the Altar of Feldbach shows paradigmatically the different layers of the meaning of blood in late medieval debates. This essay has two parts, the first deals more generally with blood as a metaphor in the Late Middle Ages, while the second concentrates on the traces of blood on this particular altar. In the first part, a brief sketch of the semantic span of the use of *sanguis* and *cruor* in written sources is followed by thoughts on sacrificial blood and its contribution to the constitution of community. Then, the significance of the demonstration of blood and bloodletting is discussed with late medieval thought about the role of blood and semen in the meaning of life. The second part analyses the depicted traces of blood on the altar with regard to their pictorial function, not only to draw attention to the temporality of the shown events. This case study demonstrates how written knowledge and knowledge derived by experience interact and how blood is used as a metaphor for both origins and ends.

Myriam Spörri, Modern Blood Relationships. The “Blood Test” and the Biologisation of Paternity in the Weimar Republic

In the first part, the article examines the medical roots of the idea of “blood relationship” and traces its development since ancient times. With the emergence of cellular pathology in the 19th century, blood lost its status as a “very special fluid” and therefore also as a generative substance. However, as the second part shows, the link between “blood” and “relationship”, though scientifically discredited, was to persist, and manifested itself in a modern way in blood group research during the early 20th century. Blood group tests in paternity trials which quickly became popular in the Weimar Republic, referred to the tradition of blood relationship and led to a new train of thought towards blood being perceived as a generative substance – even if, paradoxically enough, blood groups could strictly speaking only determine non-paternity and not the definitive relationship between father and child. Furthermore these blood tests point to a fundamental change in the history of paternity, since they are considered the first step in the biologisation of paternity which today seems finalized in DNA paternity testing.

Marianne Sommer, “Who Are You Really?” – Identity and History in the DNA-Sequence (Genetics)

The company Gentest.ch invites people on the web to have their identity genetically determined. The basic sequences of certain DNA-regions are promised to carry the secrets of a customer's history and origin (from the Stone Age, in ancient times, and during the Middle Ages). With its product line iGenea, the company addresses the European market that is only just being opened by genetic ancestry suppliers. In the article, I analyse the ways in which iGenea presents itself and is represented, as well as discussion forums and customers' reactions: Are we confronted with a naturalisation of history and identity in the DNA-sequence (comparable to the earlier attempts of physical anthropology to study bones)? Or do we find in the case of these bio-economical applications of new DNA-technologies the shared and open kinds of identity development that are seen as characterising neo-liberal societies? These questions will be addressed in two sections: Firstly, I will engage with genetic history as a form of popular history that goes along with a flexible and playful engagement with the genetic information in the process of autobiographical narrating. Secondly, I will discuss examples that complement the first part to a more balanced picture in that they point to a biologisation of identity and history and a solidification of categories such as nation and ethnicity.

Sabine Strasser, Blood, Milk and Honour: Feminist Debates on Modernisation and Multiculturalism in Turkey and Europe

In this paper, I will first discuss feminist debates on body fluids, in particular blood, milk and sperm, and their meaning with regard to procreation, gender hierarchy and the concept of honour in rural eastern Turkey. These debates are enlightened by anthropological studies about symbolic interpretations of how 'life comes into being' and about concepts of purity, health and social order. Semen in this cosmology represents monogenetic male procreation whereas female blood and milk shape the appearance and health of the child, by nourishment in the womb and by breast-feeding after birth. Symbolic interpretations of blood and semen are related to sexual maturity, marriage, parenthood and kinship, yet may also be involved in practices of social control and violence. In this context, it is the body as a divine creation that is proposed in claims of control over women, men and sexuality. In this paper I will show how body fluids become a marker of im/purity, dis/order, dis/obedience and gender hierarchy in rural contexts in Turkey. At the same time I examine how these symbolic interpretations of the body in feminist discourses are translated into hegemonic discourses on 'violence in the name of honour' in both Turkey and Europe. I argue that in both contexts the focus on violence against women simultaneously aims at protecting women yet nonetheless victimises them. The dichotomy between 'woman as victim' and 'man as perpetrator thus becomes the main pattern of ethnic and cultural discrimination in EU measures against so-called tradition-based violence.

Barbara Orland, Related Substances. Blood and Milk in the Female Body

Drawing analogies between different parts of the body are a very old and widely used style of reasoning, not at least in request to the understanding and managing the hidden workings inside the human body. This article takes the analogy of blood and milk as an issue of historical research. It will be argued that the analogy of blood and milk enables the historian to investigate the interrelation of body perception and knowledge production. The relation of blood and milk was multi-faceted. It was not only embodied in everyday practices for dealing with women's reproductive capacities. The historicising of the analogy also serves as a guide to understanding changing conceptions of physiology within the history of science and medicine.

Gabriele Michalitsch, Gender Government and Political Economy: What Adam Smith Has to Do with Women Nowadays Earning Less Than Men

Embedded in the theoretical framework of Michel Foucault's concepts of government and governmentality, the contribution focuses on gender and gender relations in Adam Smith's works. Herewith, Smith's writings are dealt with as an example of how gender government informs early political economy which, by way of tradition building, informs economic thought even nowadays. Thus the contribution aims at debunking the masculinism inherent to contemporary economic thought. Identifying Smith's strategies of engendering and de-gendering, of gender's nomination and omission, the analysis relies on four levels: Firstly, Smith's masculinist rhetoric in the context of the "brotherhood" of Scottish Enlightenment, secondly, the reinterpretation of – at Smith's time dominant – female connotations of luxury and "doux commerce", thirdly, his hierarchically related constructions of masculinity and femininity, and finally, fourthly, their consequences for contemporary economic thought.

Ilse Reiter-Zatloukal and Christiane Rothländer, Gender Difference in the Deprivation of Citizenship on Political Grounds: Its Legal Basis and Implementation in Vienna 1933–1938

The paper explores the deprivation of citizenship on the grounds of political opinion, which was introduced by the Austrian authoritarian Dollfuß government on August 16th 1933. Affected by the loss of citizenship were members and followers of outlawed opposition parties. The measures were targeted, beginning in 1933, against the Communist and National Socialist parties and, since February 1934, the Social Democratic Party. Of the total of at least 10,250 people losing their citizenship, only a small number were women. The explanation why women were spared, relatively speaking, can be revealed by a historical analysis of the administrative proceedings conducted by the Viennese Federal Police Department (Wiener Bundes-Polizeidirektion). The reason was neither a low rate of female emigration nor women's abstaining from political activism, as a mere quantitative analysis might. Instead, the phenomenon must be explained by the legal setting which positioned women and men in different ways vis-à-vis the procedure as well as by gendered assumptions on political activism that informed administrative action.