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Robert Jütte. *Lust ohne Last: Geschichte der Empfängnisverhütung.* München: C.H. Beck Verlag, 2003. 367 S. EUR 14.90 (broschiert), ISBN 978-3-406-49430-7.

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The *Longue DurÃ©e* of the History of Contraception

As an adolescent, Robert JÃ¼tte serendipitously discovered a brochure (most likely an advertisement for condoms) hidden in a pile of folded laundry in his parents' bedroom closet. As a university student, JÃ¼tte's study of historical demography led him to realize that his own family, like many others during the course of the twentieth century, had begun adopting methods of birth control decades before his discovery of that brochure. Both of these events, according to the foreword of this book, constituted early catalysts for JÃ¼tte's decision to write the first general history of contraception originally published in the German language. Given that his book aims at both academic and general audiences, and covers a time span from classical antiquity to a prognosis for the prospects of a "pill" for men in the immediate future, it provides not so much a treasure trove of archival discoveries regarding contraceptive practices in different historical contexts (although it does reference some archival sources) as it constitutes a useful reference work for those seeking a compelling overview of a broad swath of the history of contraception. It also will serve as a framework for more specialized research projects.

This monograph follows on the heels of JÃ¼tte's similarly comprehensive histories of abortion, alternative medicine and feelings. Readers familiar with the scholarship of Norman Himes, Angus McLaren, John T. Noonan, Jr. and Christiane Dienel will find many of their insights here, as JÃ¼tte relies upon them rather extensively in order to craft his own narrative; the works of scholars like Gisela Bock, Cornelie Usborne, Atina Grossmann and Kristine von Soden appear in the comprehensive bibliography, but only rarely in the endnotes. JÃ¼tte's account as a whole is characterized by an exploration of the following recurring themes: the perceived efficacy or rationality of contraceptive methods and the impact of such perceptions on these methods' popularity among experts and lay persons alike; contraception as a primarily male or female responsibility or area of expertise; and the ways in which moral taboos and conceptions of the relationship between love, sex and procreation have hampered or facilitated unfettered public discussion of contraception.

This thematic rubric is complemented by the considerable effort JÃ¼tte exerts in sketching his methodolog-

ical blueprint for the historical study of attitudes toward birth control as well as the use of contraceptive methods. He explicitly seeks to avoid, for instance, the pitfalls of studies that have provided positivist narratives of inexorable progress in the development and implementation of contraceptive techniques; in this, he follows the move by historians of scientific endeavor away from the celebratory chronicling of the accomplishments of particular scientists to a mode of inquiry that seeks to situate those scientists and their innovations within broader historical contexts. This disclaimer seems intended to cement JÃ¼tte's intellectual bona fides while providing an explanation for his popular readership as to why his book does not offer a teleological account of inevitably improving knowledge about and use of contraceptive methods.

JÃ¼tte also rejects the notion that the lack of contraceptive terminology implies the absence of contraceptive methods for earlier historical epochs, thereby implicitly providing his take on the relationship between discourse and practice and the ways in which access to this relationship might be mediated by and for historians. In other words, his is not merely a history of discussions about contraception, since he avers that acts could and did precede their discursive incarnation (p. 11). He seeks to overcome "false dichotomies" of traditional vs. modern and irrational vs. rational forms of contraception, but within the very same paragraph (p. 16) points to the persistence of "traditional" and "irrational" contraceptive practices until the present. This minor lapse notwithstanding, he follows McLaren's lead in tracking both breaks and continuities in his account. He is skeptical of employing conventional forms of periodization, instead favoring a Foucault-inspired schema, which manifests itself in the designation of the early part of his book as *ars erotica* and the latter portion as *scientia sexualis*. This stems from JÃ¼tte's admirable goal of avoiding simplistic modern/pre-modern dualisms, and yet a number of the chapters within these sections nonetheless tend to abide by the markers of conventional periodization.

The goal of unsettling the modern/pre-modern divide is quite evident in his chapters dealing with antiquity, which begin with an exploration of the extent to which the equivalent of neo-Malthusian thought patterns can be discerned in the works of writers of the time. These chapters are often characterized by abrupt shifts from one temporal context to another, which results in a greater emphasis on broad continuities rather than discontinuities in the premodern era. And in admitting (on p. 60) that many thinkers in antiquity did not clearly distinguish between abortion and contraception (an assertion corroborated by existing literature on the topic), JÃ¼tte raises the question as to whether one can write such a wide-ranging history of "contraception" as such prior to the crystallization of the term, despite his belief that acts could precede terminology.

JÃ¼tte's account of the early modern period revolves around the new interest in population statistics and their relationship to attitudes about preventing procreation. While confirming the notion that Protestants in this period were more likely to employ forms of birth control than were Catholics, he challenges the findings of historians like Ulrich Pfister who have maintained that family planning was largely the domain of urban elites who feared that having too many offspring would pose a danger to their status. Prior to the nineteenth century, however, the absence of a lay constituency or professional medical lobby advocating greater use of contraception combined with the lack of new contraceptive technologies prevented the hegemonic Catholic opposition to birth control from facing significant challenges. In the meantime, however, *coitus interruptus* seemed to enjoy a fair degree of popularity, and debates also took place about the viability of castration and sterilization as forms of birth control. Indeed, JÃ¼tte aptly points to the fact that extant scholarship has paid scant attention to the admittedly infrequent sterilization of women prior to the nineteenth century.

Despite the sparse source base, JÃ¼tte devotes a chapter to the types of knowledge that women possessed or created about ways of preventing pregnancy in the early modern period. This era was colored by the perception that conception was only possible if the woman experienced orgasm, a view that declined in salience only with the end of the eighteenth century. JÃ¼tte maintains, quite plausibly, that women turned to contraception of their own volition, and not merely due to pressure exerted by their male partners. Indeed, access to knowledge about contraception was mediated not only by Latin texts, but also subject to oral transmission and to be found in tracts on the uses of herbs since the mid-sixteenth century, as demonstrated by Larissa Leibrock-Plehn's findings for German-speaking Europe.

The narrative then returns to neo-Malthusianism in its nineteenth-century guise, which is posited as an impetus for increased attention to the subject of controlling human fertility, although this manifests itself in varying levels of intensity and duration in Britain, France and Germany. The increasing use of birth control was the result not only of the social and economic upheavals

that accompanied industrialization, but also the following: lower rates of infant mortality; the desire to prevent a decline in one's social status; an increasing emphasis on individualism and female emancipation (even though JÃ¼tte acknowledges that this thesis as advanced by historian Edward Shorter has not been without its critics); the reduced influence of religious norms; and the proliferation of a genre of marriage and sexual advice literature. This literature became more prevalent despite the fact that most doctors in the nineteenth century (out of fear of causing damage to their professional prestige) opposed the use of birth control. Their opposition stemmed from the overlap of medical and religious morality, whereby doctors provided "scientific" rationales for upholding moral principles that had previously been given the imprimatur of ecclesiastical authority. This generally negative medical opinion did not, however, seem capable of preventing contraceptive methods from growing in popularity, as even some Catholic authorities in the nineteenth century no longer opposed *coitus interruptus* as a form of birth control.

Among some of the other noteworthy moves made by JÃ¼tte in his discussion of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is his refutation of Peter Gay's contention that most of those who relied upon *coitus interruptus* were not aware of its relatively limited efficacy in preventing conception; indeed, he cites evidence that many couples complemented this strategy with other methods. On a different note, JÃ¼tte points out that the sterilization provisions of the National Socialist Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Ill Offspring (*Gesetz zur VerhÃ¼tung erbkranken Nachwuchses*) remained on the books until 1974, even though implementation stopped with the dissolution of the Nazi-era Hereditary Health Courts (*Erbgesundheitsgerichte*).

For the postwar period, JÃ¼tte corroborates recent research that has called into question the idea that hormonal contraception for women was necessarily the driving force behind the sea change in sexual mores and behavior of the 1960s and 1970s; as he puts it, "the pill can be seen at most as a trigger, and not as the cause of the 'sexual revolution' " (p. 317). He also points out that the "pill" came to be viewed more positively in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) than in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), where it was subject to feminist critiques that it constituted a limitation upon rather than a catalyst for women's emancipation. Given JÃ¼tte's attention to both the GDR and FRG, it is surprising that the names of key GDR proponents of birth control and family planning like Karl-Heinz Mehlan and Lykke Aresin are missing from his text.

The book is enlivened by illustrations ranging from a drawing of Casanova and another man blowing up condoms in front of a small audience of intrigued women to a 1970s-era educational pamphlet (from the West German periodical *Bravo*, aimed at a youthful readership) about the virtues of "the pill." JÃ¼tte's account tends to focus rather little on developments in non-Western contexts, and his blueprint for further research is sometimes marred by sparse footnoting–as, for example, when he provides demographic information on women and men in antiquity without citing its source (p. 28). There is also an ongoing tension in his account between reliance upon quantitative as opposed to qualitative sources. While JÃ¼tte certainly acknowledges that demographic evidence is not available for much of the time period covered in his book, he does make the rather bold statement that historical demography is superior to a patchwork of "scattered sources" (p. 97). Yet his account is made much richer by the frequent inclusion of plausible, if sometimes speculative, conclusions drawn from precisely such "scattered sources."

JÃ¼tte ultimately provides a somewhat conflicting message about the status of sexuality as the subject of historical inquiry. In writing a history of contraception, he is implicitly arguing against the notion of sexuality and related matters as timeless entities not amenable to historical study. But by the very broad swath of his narrative, in which continuities tend to prevail over discontinuities (with the exception of the proliferation of sexual discourse since the eighteenth century), he seeks to argue that the history of contraception (and, by implication, of the sexual practices and moral attitudes that shaped it) constitutes an exemplary manifestation of the history of the *longue durÃ©e* of the Annales school (p. 329). It is a testimony to JÃ¼tte's scholarly accomplishment in writing this book that other scholars now have a valuable resource with which to come to their own verdict on this question.

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