

H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Sixteenth Century Studies Conference 2003 Section 61: Sexuality and the Construction of Power: Three Case Studies. Sixteenth Century Studies Society.

Reviewed by Kathryn Edwards

Published on H-German (December, 2003)

The three papers in this session all focused on the social and cultural significance sexuality in violence in early modern Europe, particularly Switzerland and the Holy Roman Empire. Although all three argued that an understanding of sexuality and violence is essential to understanding early modern constructions of power, each presenter agreed with the conclusion of Dr. Puff, who argued for the need to study sexuality in and of itself, not merely as product, tool, or symptom of another subject, such as idolatry, heresy, or political betrayal. The discussion after the presentations was lively and continued well into the break. <p> Paper One, "Controlling Female Sexuality in Early Modern Geneva," was presented by William G. Naphy, Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Aberdeen. Dr. Naphy began his presentation by distributing three very useful and detailed charts based on his extensive research in the Genevan archives. The information in these charts greatly clarified the complex material in his paper. There he posed three questions: "How exactly did these [early modern] societies control individual, private [sexual] acts? How did this 'social control' function in communities without police? Was social control primarily reactive or proactive?" Naphy suggests answers to these questions based on an analysis of seventeen trials, most of which were summarized in the course of his paper. He concludes that it is false to see sexual policing as a conspiracy against women to repress women. Some of the trials occur precisely to protect women from sexual predators. Moreover, "Women monitored one another. Women admonished one another. When this failed, it is women who involved men. Finally, it was women who served as the leading witnesses for the prosecution in the trials of other women." While other scholars have come to similar conclusions, Naphy carries his argument fur-

ther by noting that the same women who "policed" sexuality individually challenge these same sexual norms when they argue for their ability to have and to entertain male friends. Based on this paradox, "female sexuality and sexual conduct could not be controlled. It could only be punished." <p> Paper Two, "Violence, Sexuality, and Emotional Discipline in Harsdoerffer's Murder Tales," was presented by Joy Wiltenburg, Professor of History at Rowan University. Dr. Wiltenburg used Georg Philipp Harsdoerffer's <cite>Grosse Schauplatz jaemmerliche Mordegeschichte</cite> (1650) as the basis for her analysis of the relationship between gender, violence, and self-conceptions in early modern Europe. In particular, she argued that Harsdoerffer's work has a didactic purpose: to promote the development of rational, disciplined, and regulated men and women through vivid illustrations of the calamities suffered by the irrational, undisciplined, and unregulated. Choosing selections that focus on violent sexual crime—a selective method of reading that, according to Wiltenburg, would have been practiced in early modern Europe with Harsdoerffer's book—Wiltenburg depicts the wide latitude given to husbands in punishing adulterous wives, the horrific infanticides to which adulterous women were driven, and the few cases where violence could be used legitimately (in "defense of sexual honor"). Violence is only legitimate when punishing sexual transgressors or as the "natural" product of sorrow for their transgression. "In the reconceptualization of violence, the promotion of a gender-inclusive though gender-stratified public discourse, and the demand for self-policing based on the subjection of emotion to reason, Harsdoerffer marks a shift in the cultural uses of crime." <p> Paper Three, "Sodomy and Rule: Pappenheim vs. Pappenheim (1649-1651)," was presented by Helmut Puff, Associate Professor of History and Ger-

man at the University of Michigan. Dr. Puff continued with the themes of sexuality, power, and violence in his study of the internecine struggle between two branches of the Pappenheim family. Drawing on reports of Caspar Gottfried's sodomitical activities, Philip count of Pappenheim argued before the Imperial Aulic Council in 1651 that Caspar Gottfried should be removed from the earldom of Pappenheim. The first half of Puff's paper focused on what constituted sodomy in this case and the standards of proof for the accusations against Caspar Gottfried. In the second half of the paper Puff argued for the importance of also seeing these accusations as statements about the belief in proper rule. In Caspar Gottfried's case, by acting "against nature" he was putting himself above natural law, an untenable position (to put it mildly) and

one condemned for creating an image of Pappenheim as a territory "in which immoderation, extravagance, and amorality ruled." As the subject of a formal trial, Caspar Gottfried also became subject to the death penalty, but he died before the trial could reach this stage. (Puff suggests the conditions of Caspar Gottfried's imprisonment exacerbated the "natural causes" that led to Caspar Gottfried's death.) Puff concluded his sordid and convoluted tale of family intrigues by arguing for the need to contextualize such cases fully, including detailed analysis of the specifics of the sexual acts themselves: "Sex was wielded as a weapon by certain persons in certain circumstances. We cannot understand the weapon without knowing the specificity of the contexts in which this weapon was used to great effect." <p>

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Citation: Kathryn Edwards. Review of , *Sixteenth Century Studies Conference 2003 Section 61: Sexuality and the Construction of Power: Three Case Studies*. H-German, H-Net Reviews. December, 2003.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=15211>

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