

Florian Mildenberger. *Medizinische Belehrung für das Bürgertum: Medikale Kulturen in der Zeitschrift "Die Gartenlaube" (1853-1944).* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012. 230 pp. EUR 43.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-515-10232-2.



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The Medicinal *Bürgertum*

The second half of the nineteenth century has rightfully been described by historians of Europe as a period of growing citizenship, burgeoning democracy, and as having increased attention on the health of the social body. Less familiar to historians—though no less important—was the period’s significance for medicine, medical practice, and bodily health. Florian Mildenberger’s new book treats both areas in tandem; that is, he demonstrates the reciprocity of middle-class identity and the turbulent changes in the medicinal practices of doctors, physicians, and ordinary Germans. A major vehicle for this mutual development was the popular home journal *Die Gartenlaube*. Founded by the 1848er Ernst Keil in 1853, the fashionable journal would have its ownership, content, and political allegiances transformed multiple times over the next century, though its significance would hardly wane (in fact the journal remained profitable, without exception, between 1857 and 1944).

Die Gartenlaube’s importance in the history of German-speaking lands has long been recognized by scholars on both sides of the Atlantic.[1] While Milden-

berger’s engagement with *Die Gartenlaube* is focused exclusively on its role in disseminating, popularizing, and discrediting certain medicinal discourses, the home journal is actually just one among many sources at the author’s disposal. Drawing on ten archival locations and libraries, published medicinal treatises, as well as competing popular journals, *Medizinische Belehrung* provides a fairly robust overview of medicinal practice, particularly for the nineteenth century. The twentieth century, represented by one very short chapter on the Weimar period (four pages) and a slightly longer chapter on the Nazi period (eleven pages), is an afterthought in the context of the work’s analytical and detailed look at the period 1853-1918.

Mildenberger’s study is anchored by a deep knowledge of the past and present of the medical field. One of the book’s great strengths is its historical and historiographic tour through medicinal practices in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Evoking Thomas S. Kuhn’s theory of the “paradigm shift,” Mildenberger argues that the profound changes in medicinal practices

of the 1840s-60s do *not* actually fit that model.[2] Instead, Mildenerger suggests that the long dissolution of idealist-natural philosophical thought in favor of natural-scientific methods actually resulted from the stringing together and partial continuation of competing and co-existing theories, without which the remarkable breakthroughs in physiology, pathology, anatomy, and therapy could not be achieved. For Mildenerger, this was “not at all a ‘paradigm shift,’ but rather the continuation of already engrained concepts that were supplemented by developments within existing thought systems, including those still not free from theoretical and practical errors” (p. 21). Seen in this modifying light, the historical trajectory of medicinal change loses its heroic appeal, though the squabbles and infighting of various medicinal “schools” become no less dramatic in Mildenerger’s hands.

If Mildenerger’s historical overview might reintroduce specialists to some of the seminal names in medicinal history (e.g., John Brown, Andreas R schlaub, Rudolf Virchow), the focus of his research turns to the lesser known but certainly not unfamiliar Carl Ernst Bock (1809-74), medicinal advisor to *Die Gartenlaube* in its formative years. Son of the lead prosecutor at the Leipzig anatomical theater, Carl Ernst planned to follow his father into anatomical medicine and surgery. To finance his *Habilitation*, Ernst treated Polish insurgents during the 1830-31 uprising against the Russian empire, and even extracted and sold the teeth of dead soldiers. This was both a medical and a political education.

Failing to gain a firm foothold in academic medicine, Bock’s interests turned toward the popularization of medicinal practice. The revolutionary activity in Saxony in 1848-49 (in which Bock was loosely involved), as well as the region’s concomitant cholera outbreak, further hampered Bock’s academic plans, though these circumstances simultaneously gave occasion to his day-to-day medicinal practice. Bock’s dire financial position in the years after 1850 necessitated sundry income sources, including authorship of various medicinal and medical pieces. Writing under a pseudonym because of his tarnished reputation (owing more to alleged political rather than medical beliefs), Bock’s first piece, on toothaches and their treatment, appeared in the pages of *Die Gartenlaube* in 1853.

Under the direction of Ferdinand Stolle and Ernst Keil, *Die Gartenlaube* appeared as a short quarterly available to the readers of *Dorfbarbiere*. Bock’s contributions remained steady, with a series of articles on dental hy-

giene, artificial scents, and a theme that would become something of a hobbyhorse, the consequences of tight-fitting clothing. Bock railed against the “*Einschn rung*” of female corsets and male bodices, claiming that the garments constricted the human liver, leading to, among other symptoms, the cantankerousness of women. However spurious Bock’s claims about tight clothing may have been, he appeared to be deeply concerned about the emancipation of women’s bodies from medical guesswork. In a series of contributions directed at women titled “Dear Reader” (*Liebe Leserin*), Bock encouraged the removal of shame from the doctor-patient relationship and sought to inculcate the latest academic knowledge into the journal’s lay readership.

Much of Bock’s writings zealously attacked opposing medicinal theories as provocateurs of quackery, especially homeopathy. Though Mildenerger does a clear enough job of sifting through and explaining this material, the nonspecialist interested exclusively in middle-class or popular culture may justifiably lose sight of their more general concerns. Paired with Bock’s attacks against critics was his continual interest in fostering an everyday understanding and application of medicinal knowledge among nonprofessionals. Instead of speculating on junk theories, the emancipated citizen (*emanzipierte B rger*) according to Bock should learn “the economy of one’s own body” (p. 41). Bock’s earliest contributions to *Die Gartenlaube* were published in book form in 1854, suggesting both the broad reception of Bock’s writings as well as his newfound success as a medicinal counselor. The journal also basked in success, evident in its rising price and wider circulation.

Mildenerger shows that Bock’s role as a *Volk-saufkl rer* was never as cut and dry as would seem. While a certain revenge against the academic medical community which spurned him appeared to be a mainstay of Bock’s arsenal, there was a growing uncertainty in Bock’s mind about the capacity for ordinary *B rger* to manage their own bodies. Whether because of his own doing or perhaps due to the effects of the Prussian clamping down of the press, Bock’s role as the “people’s enlightener” came to a gradual halt in the early 1860s. The journal’s short-lived decline in circulation (due to Prussian censorship) was offset by greater advancements in printing technology, allowing for faster production and thus more timely pieces. In spite of Bock’s reduced role in *Die Gartenlaube*, the 1860s appeared to be a golden decade for him. Invitations to lecture publicly increased, financial woes had dissipated, and he began to find readers beyond those of the popular home

journal. On the shelves of workers' libraries, Bock sat side by side with Karl Marx and Ferdinand Lassalle. At the same time, however, Bock's pathological-anatomical worldview had come into question in the broader medical community, including by the more renowned Rudolf Virchow. Mildenerger takes the reader on a whirlwind tour through the 1860s, articulating (if sometimes too briefly and without enough analytical payoff) the wide range of the period's medicinal discourse, including in the areas of artificial goods, tuberculosis, dietary health, sexual health, as well as the unsure place of *Die Gartenlaube* under growing Prussian hegemony.

The making of Bock into a "*quantitativfügige*" at *Die Gartenlaube* coincided with the sensational rise to stardom of the novelist Eugenie Marlitt through her serial inserts. At the same time—as already noted by Thomas Nipperdey—*Die Gartenlaube* moved away from its scandalizing liberal politics toward its newfound role as a well-behaved family journal. Just as editor Ernst Keil supported Bismarckian politics (like many other Liberals), the journal's emancipatory and democratizing message began to fall off key. For Bock, the last decade of his life was witness to marvelous new developments in the medical sciences, including new inventions and new ideas. For *Die Gartenlaube*, the death of Bock in 1874 signaled the need for a new direction in their medicinal profile.

The age of the feuilleton had in part been ushered in by *Die Gartenlaube*. Friedrich Spielhagen, Gustav Freytag, and Theodor Fontane had all played a part in this critical transition. In order to win the hearts of their female readership, the journal continued to feature women authors and women's themes (for example, the above-mentioned Eugenie Marlitt, who appealed to female readers across the class spectrum). Medicinal themes in the feuilleton often played only a supporting role, however. Mildenerger's treatment of this so-called *Trivialliteratur* diverges methodologically from the preceding and succeeding pages of the book. While the author's transition from historian to literary critic makes for an engaging digression, the reader is left to wonder where this material fits into the book's larger framework.

Mildenerger quickly turns back to "reality" in an extended chapter on medicinal progress and *Die Gartenlaube* 1874-1900. The founding of the North German Confederation and the subsequent unification of Germany in 1871 had changed the medical landscape. Occupational freedoms, national rules and regulations, and technical developments had placed the role of doctors

and other practitioners on shifting ground. Contributors to *Die Gartenlaube* were left to grapple with the paradoxical place of Bock in the journal's history. Here readers will find a recap of the period's most significant social-medicinal challenges, including the influenza epidemic, poor nutrition, cholera, alcoholism, *Nervosität*, and occultism, as well as an attempt by Mildenerger to integrate these questions into larger historiographical topics, including *Der Obrigkeitsstaat*, mass politics, and Darwinism.

The new century brought new challenges and opportunities to the journal, including the simplified mass production of illustrated journals and the influx of daily and even hourly news reports (*Die Gartenlaube* was a weekly at this point). Mildenerger identifies several new areas of concern after 1900 in the pages of the journal, including child development, presentations of new successes in experimental research, colonial medicine and health, and warnings against nutritional scammers (*Pfuschern*). In 1904, the journal's new publisher, the newspaper magnate August Scherl, began accepting advertisements to generate income (until then, only products of the publisher had been advertised). The outbreak of war in 1914 brought about a number of chauvinistic articles praising the German military while debasing external and perceived internal enemies.

Mildenerger's rushed treatment of WWI reflects the hurried nature of much of the book, particularly the second half. The thinness of the Weimar and the Third Reich chapters hardly make them worth mention in this review. However—and notwithstanding some unfortunate typographical errors ("*Medikale*" is misspelled "*Mediale*" at the top of each page in a seventeen-page chapter)—brevity and the occasional misuse of space is the largest detraction of an otherwise insightful and enjoyable effort. Mildenerger's *Medizinische Belehrung für das Bäuerger* is a valuable contribution to the literature on *Die Gartenlaube*, medicinal culture in the nineteenth century, and the convergence of medical discourse and the health of the *Bäuerger*.

Notes

[1]. For recent examples, see Kirsten Belgium, *Popularizing the Nation: Audience, Representation, and the Production of Identity in 'Die Gartenlaube,' 1853-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); and Jae-Baek Ko, *Wissenschaftspopularisierung und Frauenberuf: Diskurs um Gesundheit, hygienische Familie und Frauenrolle im Spiegel der Familienzeitschrift 'Die Gartenlaube' in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am

Main: Peter Lang, 2008).

[2]. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

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