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Ylva Söderfeldt. *From Pathology to Public Sphere: The German Deaf Movement 1848–1914.* Disability Studies: Body-Power-Difference Series. Bielefeld: Transcript - Verlag für Kommunikation, Kultur und soziale Praxis, 2013. 315 pp. \$50.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-8376-2119-8.

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Ylva Söderfeldt's *From Pathology to Public Sphere: The German Deaf Movement, 1848-1914* examines the emergence and expression of [a] new way of being deaf in Germany between the Revolution of 1848 and the outbreak of the First World War (p. 13). During this period, deaf people began to appear less as objects of pity or pathological illness, Söderfeldt argues, and more as sociable peer groups, as lobbyists, organizers, writers, and thinkers, in turn displaying a new way of being deaf that was visible in deaf clubs, deaf newspapers, and public events organized by deaf people (p. 13). The study focuses on people known in the nineteenth century as *Taubstummen* (deaf-mutes): individuals with congenital or early hearing loss. According to Söderfeldt, little is known about nineteenth-century German sign language (*Gebärdensprache*, gesture language, or *Zeichensprache*, sign language), including whether there were multiple regional sign languages or a single German Sign Language. She consequently refrains from capitalizing 'Deaf,' an ahistorical gesture she believes would impose a unified self-image and cultural identity on a diverse deaf population that included both signers and non-signers.

Building on the theories of Michel Foucault (1926-84) and Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929), the book seeks to uncover how deaf people appeared in the public sphere by examining the system according to which statements concerning deaf people were dispersed, and which objects appeared in the statements, who was able to make the statements and be listened to, and what types of statements it was possible to make. Söderfeldt's discourse

analysis is less concerned with the views expressed by ... hearing professionals and deaf activists than the rules according to which they took shape and appeared (p. 19). To this end, the book analyzes a wide range of print sources ranging from census and court records to police files, several regional state archives, and newspapers produced by deaf associations in the late nineteenth century.

In the lengthy and somewhat unwieldy first chapter, Söderfeldt examines the production of statistics about the German deaf-mute population. During the 1830s and 1840s, civil servants in the provinces of Bavaria and Saxony began collecting statistics on deaf-mutes with the goal of creating deaf educational institutions to serve them. The state relied on families, physicians, and the clergy to identify deaf people in their regions, but progressively developed more sophisticated methods of collecting data about deafness. The national census of 1900 and the mandatory registration of deaf children implemented in 1901 exposed a growing medical preoccupation with identifying and preventing congenital deafness. Statistical data also masked the diversity of the deaf population by producing a portrait of the average German deaf-mute an individual hailing from the lower orders of society who tended to be employed in manual trades ignoring the existence of socially prominent deaf individuals and intellectuals.

The second half of the chapter surveys the institutions responsible for policing, educating, and distributing welfare to deaf people, which together contributed to the formation of a more homogenous deaf population.

Religious, municipal, and state-funded deaf schools coexisted in the nineteenth century, creating uneven levels of deaf education across the German states. Although some students received instruction through both manual and oral methods, oralism (widely hailed across Europe as the "German method") predominated in deaf schools, producing students who were less equipped for intellectual professions or artistic work than for vocational trades, and thus more like the average "deaf-mute" constructed through statistics.

Chapter 2, set against the backdrop of mid-century industrialization and urbanization, examines how deaf people fit into an emerging class society defined by the values system of the urban *Bürger*. Although state officials and social elites typically envisioned the deaf as dependent on traditional social structures for support, Schäferfeldt demonstrates how deaf people formed social networks in deaf schools that helped them escape rural life for cities, where many found work as craftsmen in skilled trades. Urban deaf people created new forms of sociability in deaf clubs, coffeehouses, and restaurants, and embraced the aspirational *bürgerlich* values of individual achievement, respectability, and independence. However, this emerging deaf sociability transcended the strict boundaries of social class to unite working-class and lower-middle-class deaf people in a common community, provided they adhered to certain social expectations. Deaf leaders, for example, sought to distance themselves from unemployed deaf people or those engaged in "disreputable" professions, such as peddling. Yet despite the autonomy deaf people displayed in establishing families and becoming property owners, Schäferfeldt argues that they could never become private persons in a strictly Habermasian sense, in part because they were already objects of state intervention preventing them from positioning themselves as "rational subjects" in the public sphere.

This paradoxical position, of being simultaneously included and excluded from the public sphere, shaped the activities of German deaf activists during the second half of the nineteenth century. Germany's first deaf club appeared in Berlin during the Revolution of 1848, yet its members showed little interest in creating the more liberal society championed by so many of their contemporaries, instead positioning themselves as loyal subjects committed to monarchy and social order. The spread of cultural and political nationalism, however, did inspire deaf leaders to imagine forging a national community of German deaf people through newspapers, periodic congresses, and religious festivals. An analysis of these ac-

tivities and the discourse produced by the deaf movement after 1850 comprises the second half of the book. Here Schäferfeldt provides detailed accounts of deaf social gatherings and reconstructs the biographies of key deaf leaders, such as Eduard Färstenberg (1827-85), the founder of the deaf association Taubstummenverein in Berlin, drawing on biographies, obituaries, and advertisements from the deaf press to reconstruct a social world in which sign language predominated. Educated deaf people, in her view, became a "subaltern counterpublic" in imperial Germany as they sought to construct independent mutual aid societies and educational institutions (p. 276).

However, this deaf counterpublic was not created solely by the deaf, for the ability of deaf leaders to speak for the deaf in the public sphere relied to a certain extent on their prior classification as "deaf" by others and on their willingness to participate in the norms of hearing society. Deaf spokesmen rarely challenged the predominance of oralism in state-run deaf schools, instead positioning themselves as grateful recipients of charitable benevolence, even as they demanded the expansion of obligatory schooling for deaf children. Even after the Congress of Milan solidified European deaf educators' commitment to oralism, German deaf leaders refrained from criticizing these methods until a hearing teacher at the Breslau deaf asylum launched a debate in 1889 about the superiority of sign language as a mode of communication and education for the deaf. When deaf leaders began to demand the use of sign language in schools, they faced ridicule and condemnation from many deaf educators. The "radical content" of the deaf movement, Schäferfeldt argues, resided less in deaf leaders' demands for education reform or defense of a "deaf perspective" than in the "convivial nature" of deaf associations, which created spaces where individuals could develop personalities and share their views free from state intervention (p. 277).

From Pathology to Public Sphere is grounded in an impressive research agenda and will find a welcome audience among readers interested in European deaf social history. Schäferfeldt's work provides a useful point of comparison to other recent work on nineteenth-century deaf movements, including Anne Quartararo's *Deaf Identity and Social Images in Nineteenth-Century France* (2008). Yet the book also raises a number of important questions that remain unanswered. While Schäferfeldt alludes to the progressive medicalization of deafness over the course of the nineteenth century, we learn very little about how hearing people perceived deaf people and deaf culture, whether those perceptions

changed over the course of the nineteenth century, and how they affected the strategies of deaf activists. Although Söderfeldt states that she intends to analyze the structure, rather than the content, of discourses about deafness, there is very little analysis of the actual language used by historical actors. However, representation does matter to our understanding of how and when deaf leaders chose to air their views. The sparse quotes from deaf leaders included in the text are tantalizing,

at times suggesting a deeply nuanced politics not always acknowledged by the author. Söderfeldt's publisher has also done her a major disservice by failing to properly edit the text, which is riddled with grammatical mistakes, misspelled words, and word omissions, sometimes occluding her key arguments. Still, the strength of Söderfeldt's archival research will make this work invaluable to future scholars of German and European deaf history.

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