Gender in Early Modern German History

Why did parents prosecute their children as witches? Why did a sixteenth-century midwife entice a burgher woman to pretend that she was giving birth to puppies?

This volume presents a range of startling case-studies from German society between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment which make us think anew about the meanings of gender and identity in the past and which relate, above all, to the lived experiences of men and women, whose lives and choices mattered. The book argues for approaches to early modern history that point to the complexity of people’s attitudes, in terms of contemporary experiences of the physical, both emotional and imaginary; of shifting symbolisations of evil; sexual symbolisms; of perceived boundaries between the ‘real’ and the ‘fantastical’, family structures and spiritual worlds. The volume also points to the records and readings which allow us to recover multiple perspectives of female and male experiences in early modern German society, and to use material with which to re-envisage meanings of gender in the past and present.

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Gender in Early Modern German History

Edited by Ulinka Rublack
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Preface

This volume arose out of the wish to make accessible to English-speaking audiences some highly original German scholarship on gender history in the early modern period on mainline teaching topics, such as gender and revolt, community, confessionalism or the Counter-Reformation, on which little research is available so far. Its ambition, moreover, is to map out a new approach to gender history, which fully takes account of the distinctiveness of past subjectivities.

The making of this book has benefited much from the excellent co-operation of its contributors, from superb translations by Pamela Selwyn, from Joanna Innes’ early encouragement as former series editor and Lyndal Roper’s discipline and care in producing the volume, and from Bill Davies’ prompt and reliable support from the Press. I wish to thank them all.

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Map 1. Germany around 1547.