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Benjamin Carter Hett. *Death in the Tiergarten: Murder and Criminal Justice in the Kaiser's Berlin.* Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004. 291 S. $35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-674-01317-9.

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This new book is a terrific read. It leads its readers into the lost world of Berlin's courts in the last two and a half decades before World War One. Hett has done a remarkable job bringing to life the social and cultural history of criminal law, courtroom culture, and its popular reception in Wilhelmine Berlin. Throughout, he weaves accounts of specific trials into an analysis of the transformation of the criminal justice system. Contrary to received wisdom or what he calls "Tory" history, he argues that Berlin's criminal justice system in the decades before World War One reflected larger social, cultural, and political trends and was becoming more flexible, lenient, and responsive to popular opinion which meant that "the result was a situation in which professional culture, the impact of public opinion, the state of scientific and other scholarly advances, and (from time to time) high politics could mold the clay of the formal legal structures into a myriad of possible shapes" (p. 221).

This book stands at an exciting crossroads of legal, cultural and social history as Hett has examined a large amount of judicial records and legal opinions, as well as the contemporary press (pamphlets, newspapers, pulp fiction etc.) and on this broad basis, his readers get to know the law and the justice system through individuals who have agency, can follow their fates, and are privy to behind-the-scenes maneuverings that influenced their trials. Hett's examples include spectacular and widely known cases such as the Heinze trial or the fate of the "Captain of Köpenick," but he also includes evidence for lesser known cases to pursue and deepen his analysis.

The book is organized thematically as well a chronologically, which allows Hett not only to delve deeply into important aspects of the judicial system (such as the transformation of the role and self-perception of the defense lawyer), but also to strengthen his overall argument about the development of the judicial system away from a predictable, static, and authoritarian model during Bismarckian times to one that took contemporary politics, scientific advances, and public opinion into consideration which made it both more unpredictable and more lenient.

In fact, the real strengths of the book lie in its narrative form. Hett writes beautifully and creates compelling narratives bringing to life long-gone criminal cases and their protagonists. He recreates the culture of the justice system from the ground up, including descriptions of the physical structures which shaped Berlin's judicial scene (such as the courthouses and prisons), the differing milieux of Berlin's neighborhoods, detailed character studies of the main protagonists (be they judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, or even the accused themselves) all of which culminates finally in thick descriptions of the legal cases.

The analysis and interpretation of the cases and anecdotes, however, sometimes get lost, remain underemphasized, or appear merely as an afterthought after a long, lively, and detailed description of a case. The narrative sometimes meanders through a variety of side stories, losing track of the main interpretive point at stake. On balance, however, the strengths, both in the narrative itself and in the argument advanced by Hett, far outnumber the weaknesses. ***Death in the Tiergarten*** is a compelling and persuasive book that thrives on the connections between the law, its application in the courts, and the cultural context in which it operated.