

Ellinor Schweighöfer. *Vom Neandertal nach Afrika: Der Streit um den Ursprung der Menschheit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. 424 pp., figs., index. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2018. €37 (cloth). ISBN 9783835332096.

This book resulted from the author's *Doktorarbeit* at the Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen. It mainly addresses the history of three famous finds of hominid fossils—the Neandertal (1856), *Pithecanthropus erectus* (1890–1892), and the Taung Child (1924)—plus the “discovery” of Piltdown Man (1912), which later turned out to be a forgery. The story of these putative “missing links” and their role in the history of paleoanthropology has been told many times, and the basic facts are well known. Rather than shedding essential new light on these stories, Ellinor Schweighöfer's study adds detail. Zooming in on the extensive coverage of the discoveries in the public press, she shows that no sharp line can be drawn between academic contributions to the debates over the fossils and articles and books intended for a broader audience, as the principal academic actors also participated in public discussions to express and defend their views. This may be said to be a characteristic of the field: despite increasing specialization, many of its leading practitioners continue to engage the public in their work to this day. Yet precisely because the professional actors, whose views are well known, played such a large role in the press coverage of the finds, the insights Schweighöfer provides into the public reactions do not, in my view, uncover an entirely new layer of the debates.

The finds of *Pithecanthropus* and the Piltdown remains had convinced scientists that humans had originated in either Asia or Europe. Since it is one of Schweighöfer's aims to show how the cradle of humanity ultimately came to be located in Africa, it is strange that her detailed treatment of the successive discoveries ends with the debates over the South African Taung Child, because this find did not settle the issue of which continent witnessed the dawn of the hominids. It merely added a third option to the discussions. It was only after the Piltdown remains had been shown in the 1950s to be falsifications, and after more early hominid fossils had been found in different parts of Africa, that a consensus on humanity's African origins began to be reached. Schweighöfer mentions these postwar finds and events only in a short overview of later developments.

Schweighöfer's exposition of the discovery and discussion of a Neandertal skull in 1856 and of the *Pithecanthropus* remains almost four decades later leads her to claim that the former find was the key event that opened the discussion on human fossils and human evolution. Yet the literature and even her own analysis do not support this conclusion. The Neandertal find was *not* considered to provide evidence for human evolution, and many deemed the skull to be pathological or of recent origin. The consensus was that, at best, an early human race was involved, one whose “primitivity” did not in any way bridge the gap between humans and the other primates. The paucity of reactions to the well-documented discovery (in Spy, Belgium) of additional Neandertal remains in the late 1880s (which Schweighöfer also gives scant attention to) illustrates this. It was only after Eugène Dubois had presented his *Pithecanthropus* from Java as the missing link between humans and apes that the Neandertal fossils came to be seen as evidence for human evolution. Remarkably again, Schweighöfer mentions the German anatomist Gustav Schwalbe only in passing, though he contributed essentially to the reinterpretation of the Neandertal as a human forebear.

There are lapses in scholarship as well. Schweighöfer's exposition of nineteenth-century views on human antiquity might have profited from Martin Rudwick's works on the history of paleontology—Georges Cuvier, for instance, did *not* contend that the fossil faunas from earlier epochs had been separately created—and on the discovery of “deep” geological time. Also missing from the bibliography is Michael Hammond's penetrating analysis of Marcellin Boule's depiction of the Neandertals, which adds essential context to the relegation of the Neandertals, and other fossil hominids as well, to dead branches on the phylogenetic tree of *Homo sapiens*. Finally, while the author purports to pay special attention to the circumstances under which the various fossils were found, as such data figured prominently in the discoverers' “verification strategies” to get their interpretations of the bones accepted, she has overlooked Dubois's assertions about how and where the *Pithecanthropus* remains were found.

It is hard to say what audience *Vom Neandertal nach Afrika* might be intended for. As a historian of science with a long-standing interest in the history of paleoanthropology, I found little that was new in the book. The story in itself is a fascinating one, yet the general reader may find the author's rather wordy academic style less attractive.

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Diane B. Paul; John Stenhouse; Hamish G. Spencer (Editors). *Eugenics at the Edges of Empire: New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and South Africa*. xvii + 320 pp., figs., index. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. €90 (cloth). ISBN 9783319646855.

Eugenics at the Edges of Empire exemplifies the importance of postcolonial historiography and its role in shaping our understanding of the eugenics movement. The field of eugenics studies has advanced in recent years and taken on a greater sophistication, and this work moves the discussion forward admirably. Investigating debates over eugenics starting with the Victorian era in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and South Africa, this study by multiple authors illustrates how multidisciplinary explorations of eugenics can flourish via international scholarship.

The authors investigate the wording of policy prescriptions for marriage restriction and sterilization campaigns in legal documents and the localized public receptions of such efforts. Drawing on parliamentary debates, books and articles by major stakeholders, and editorial treatments of eugenics activism in the local press and at key moments, this work offers a deep and multilayered understanding of the factors in regional successes or failures of eugenic policies. Elements of apparent scientific racism played out in complicated ways. For example, while Maori and European residents of New Zealand could long intermarry, New Zealand politicians and elites sought to restrict intermarriage with “Asiatics,” especially Chinese immigrants. In Canada, the Inuit people were targeted for sterilization and birth restriction; however, some accepted sterilization voluntarily as a means of birth control otherwise forbidden. The weakness of eugenics organizations and influence in South Africa was shaped by apartheid—specifically, elite whites rejected hereditarian eugenic arguments because they needed poor whites to be “redeemable,” as a hedge against “swamping” by black procreation. In forging a common white identity, British and Afrikaners “needed poor whites to be white,” and thus “every white person was useful in the struggle to maintain white supremacy” (p. 299).

The regional awareness displayed in this volume reflects recent moves in the history of science to pay more attention to localized factors in scientific debates. Comparing the Canadian provinces Alberta and Saskatchewan illustrates the importance of local culture. Agrarian activists such as Alberta's Irene Parlby argued for eugenic sterilization policies to avoid “unwholesome stock,” on the analogy of animal breeding. Alberta passed the only provincial-level act for sterilization. Saskatchewan rejected such a policy, largely owing to the influence of Liberal Minister of Health J. H. Ulrich. Many New Zealand elites fostered a narrative of New Zealand exceptionalism, as an oasis insulated from dysgenic factors in Europe. This led to some pronatalist activities and policies, popularly expressed in New Zealand's 1864 Baby Show, modeled on a similar spectacle carried out earlier by P. T. Barnum in New York and avidly detailed in the New Zealand press. Educational reform in Australia was strongly influenced by eugenic ideology, and a chapter is devoted to the efforts of Frank Tate, first Director of Education for the State of Victoria. One of the book's finer moments is Diane B. Paul's revisionist examination of the New Zealand child and