



# DEATH IN THE TIERGARTEN

*Benjamin Carter Hett*

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## DEATH IN THE TIERGARTEN Benjamin Carter Hett

From Alexanderplatz, the bustling Berlin square ringed by bleak slums, to Moabit, site of the city's most feared prison, *Death in the Tiergarten* illuminates the culture of criminal justice in late imperial Germany. In vivid prose, Benjamin Hett examines daily movement through the Berlin criminal courts and the lawyers, judges, jurors, thieves, pimps, and murderers who inhabited this world.

Drawing on previously untapped sources, including court records, pamphlet literature, and pulp novels, Hett examines how the law reflected the broader urban culture and politics of a rapidly changing city. In this book, German criminal law looks very different from conventional narratives of a rigid, static system with authoritarian continuities traceable from Bismarck to Hitler. From the murder trial of Anna and Hermann Heinze in 1891 to the surprising treatment of the notorious Captain of Koepenick in 1906, Hett illuminates a transformation in the criminal justice system that unleashed a culture war fought over issues of permissiveness versus discipline, the boundaries of public discussion of crime and sexuality, and the role of gender in the courts.

Trained in both the law and history, Hett offers a uniquely valuable perspective on the dynamic intersections of law and society, and presents an impressive new view of early twentieth-century German history.

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*Death in the Tiergarten* is an impressive book. Written in a light and entertaining style, with elegance and

wit, it is a rich source of thought-provoking insights. Hett offers his own distinct spin on some of the common themes of Berlin literature--crime, sex, sensation, mass media, and the dramatic character of life in the modern metropolis. This unusually successful and effective work of scholarship has the potential to reach a broad audience.

--Jonathan Sperber, University of Missouri at Columbia

An extremely rich and well-argued analysis of the culture of the criminal courtroom in Wilhelmine Germany. Using stories about love, lust, betrayal, and honor--crime stories and city stories--Benjamin Hett pries open Berlin's public life in brilliant, unexpected ways.

--Peter Fritzsche, author of *Reading Berlin 1900*

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