

it is revealed through both what was typical and what was unusual in her.

Gisela Argyle, Senior Scholar of Humanities at York University in Toronto, has published Germany as Model and Monster: Allusions in English Fiction, 1830s-1930s (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), another book and articles on Victorian literature and comparative literature, as well as literary translations from German into English and the converse.

GENDER AND MODERNITY IN CENTRAL EUROPE: THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN MONARCHY AND ITS LEGACY

Agatha Schwartz, Ed.
Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010

REVIEWED BY ADRIAN MITTER

Memory of the fin-de-siècle Austro-Hungarian monarchy is usually male-dominated and connected to famous thinkers such as Sigmund Freud, the painter Gustav Klimt or the writer Robert Musil. The reader of the volume *Gender and Modernity in Central Europe: The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and its Legacy* recognizes very quickly that the late Habsburg monarchy was much more than Klimt and Freud. Life in the empire was characterized by an astonishing plurality and innovation of ideas and discourses that were produced in an atmosphere full of contradictions, as the editor of the volume Agatha Schwartz states in her introduction.

Schwartz claims that the contributions in this volume “address the

necessity for a creative discussion between representatives of disciplines, regions and countries” on gender and modernity. The multidisciplinary of this volume is indeed one of its strengths. It contains contributions from the fields of history, art history, sociology, literary studies, and psychology. Furthermore, this volume excels in merging two dissonant discourses into one transatlantic narrative.

This collection proves that research on the Habsburg Empire is particularly rewarding because of its high transnational potential. Helga Thorson's article on Grete Meisel-Hess, an under-researched feminist Austrian writer, takes up the transnational aspect and shows how ethnic and sexual tensions were intertwined in the early twentieth-century and played a significant role in the formation of female identity. In another essay, Susan Ingram highlights an interesting connection between Czech nationalism and feminism which opposed traditional constructions of empire and gender roles within the Habsburgian presence at the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exhibition.

Moreover, research on developments on a local level makes a valuable addition to this volume. Michaela Raggam-Blesch looks at the biographies of three pioneering female Jewish students at the University of Vienna who were facing discrimination in a predominantly male setting. These students, despite their marginalization, managed to integrate into university, but spaces of female agency mostly remained private, as Alison Rose shows in her contribution on the salons of Jewish Women. According to the author, these salons played an important role in the development of modernity and enabled women to “operate as leaders and still maintain their bourgeois femininity.” Salons and universities enabled women, at least in the bigger

cities of the empire, to take up careers in emerging fields of science. One of them was psychoanalysis.

The part on early psychoanalysis unfortunately includes only one chapter on the female aspect of this modernist science by Anna Borgos who describes how femininity was mirrored by Freud and his followers. Borgos claims that most psychoanalysts “had an interest in maintaining the equations male = active and female = passive in an age that [...] was facing the threat of a major transformation of these ideas.” The ambivalent position of female psychoanalysts in this debate, especially Freud's daughter Anna, is very interesting and could have been elaborated on. The two other chapters in this part, however, are devoted to Sandor Ferenczi, Freud's most prominent Hungarian follower. In general, some contributions, although framing the thesis around modernity, lack a strong emphasis on gender issues and dynamic.

A major disadvantage of this volume is the fact that the proclaimed dialogue of regions is almost exclusively limited to the Western parts of the Habsburg Empire and developments in Vienna, Budapest, and Prague. However, discourse on gender relations and modernism significantly affected life in many other cities of the empire such as Cracow, Lemberg, and Sarajevo. Tina Bahovec's contribution on the post-1918 Austro-Yugoslav border conflict shows that a change of perspective to the imperial periphery can be very rewarding. Her study exposes how both Austrian and Yugoslav propaganda used “pre-modern, conservative concepts of masculinity and femininity” in order to win votes in a plebiscite for national belonging in this mixed German-Slavic region. The author also demonstrates how women organized themselves in the region in an attempt to influence the

plebiscite, which proves that traces of modernity could also be found outside of the major centres.

This volume gives the English speaking reader a glimpse into significant developments in prominent places and societies, but it does not offer a deeper insight into less-known areas of the empire. Its multiethnic and contradictory character can be best understood by looking at both centres and peripheries. This approach surely would have even more widened the horizon of this remarkable project, which can be read as a stimulating introduction into the gender history of the late Habsburg Empire.

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REVOLUTIONARY WOMANHOOD: FEMINISM, MODERNITY AND THE STATE IN NASSER'S EGYPT

Laura Bier
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REVIEWED BY GENEVIEVE RITCHIE

“The woman question” in its various articulations and cultural expressions has historically been bound up with notions of national identity and nationalism. Through developing and unpacking the concept of state feminism Laura Bier grappled with the complex and contradictory discourses that shaped hegemonic notions of womanhood in the Nasser era. Drawing upon policy studies, political speeches, women’s press,

film, and literature the study was grounded in a cultural history, and fleshed out the connections between the construction of national womanhood and the conceptual framing of revolution. In short, the primary focus of the study was the relation between the construction of feminine identity and the modern nation-state.

State feminism is the central point of analysis, which was then explored through a descriptive problematizing of four themes: the ideological framing of working women, secularism and law, family planning and reproduction, and international feminism. As a category for inquiry state feminism was located in the Nasser regime’s modernizing project, but had its historical roots in the earlier period of colonial control. As such, state feminism was framed by the interlocking discourses of modernity, inclusion, and political participation, which were then set against traditional modes of social organization. State feminism, then, must be understood as a constellation of practices and ideologies that aimed to transform women into modern political subjects. Thus, for Bier state feminism was at its core a didactic project.

Noting that the Nasser regime did not significantly transform the number of women in the workforce, Bier put forth the argument that the discursively constructed figure of the working woman played an important role in the articulation of the public sphere as modern and secular. The reconfiguring of the public sphere also shaped images of the home around a bourgeois model of domesticity. As such, the image of working women as a sign of modernity did little to destabilize the patriarchal organization of domestic labour. In fact, Bier gave extensive examples of state policies and incentives that were designed to create the conditions for women to access the tools of modern

living, thereby creating a prescriptive model of femininity that drew upon imagery of both domesticity and professionalism.

Policies that dealt specifically with the family drew multiple conflicting perspectives into the public debate, which then had adverse outcomes for women generally and working class women in particular. Through her discussion of the personal status laws, Bier delineated the manner in which contrasting perspectives (the Nasser regime and religious tradition) coalesced and ultimately undermined the work of feminist reformers. In this respect, her analysis provided a clear and detailed description of the processes by which patriarchal power was reproduced and newly created during periods of national re-definition. Similarly, her analysis of family planning highlighted the manner in which women’s reproductive capacities have put our bodies at the centre of the national and international discursive. Here again her analysis emphasized the complex and contradictory consequences of state initiated family planning programs, which increased women’s access to contraception, while concomitantly denigrating their traditional knowledge.

The final point explored by Bier was the relationship between Egyptian subjectivity and women’s liberation trans-nationally. She put forth the argument that middle class and elite Egyptian women articulated their own womanhood and liberation through the imagery of post-colonial progress. Her analysis here was framed by fluid models of identity and subjectivity, which fragment social context by emphasizing the disciplinary power of de-historicized universalist discourses. Conversely, framing her analysis in terms of consciousness and feminist consciousness-raising could have opened the conceptual space to engage more complexly with