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## ***Review of Books.***

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# Pre-Scripts

## Welcome and Editorial

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Tobe Levin

Waltraud Dumont du Voitel

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Welcome to the latest edition of *Feminist Europa. Review of Books*, Vol. 5, No 1, 2005 and Vol. 6, No 1, 2006, a double number that contains the fine features you have come to expect of us. Our reviews, translated from a broad variety of European languages, make available feminist literature otherwise inaccessible to an English-speaking audience. And we offer special thanks to our reviewers and translators whose pro bono contributions to this project have at last been rewarded. Your patience is greatly appreciated!

*Feminist Europa's* aim remains to allow at least a glimpse of the wealth that European writers on gender issue are bringing to the page, to stimulate discussion and to honor the pens of authors whose native tongues are other than English.

To highlight the topic of *Stage and Screen* in this issue, Paola Bono served as *guest editor* and offers selections featuring France, Italy and Spain as these nations consider the world of cinema and theater from a feminist perspective. (See the *Preface to the Special Issue.*) We are also happy to welcome our first male reviewer, Reinhard Schau looking at *Farmers' Daughters beyond Borders*.

As in previous issues, „Female Genital Mutilation” is featured in our **Politics** section. Reviews of work currently not available in English are intended to broaden global discussion and, ideally, stimulate support for “circumcised” women and girls in abolition efforts. In addition to reviews and an interview, we bring you excerpts from two memoirs, Fadumo Korn (with Sabine Eichhorst). *Born in the Big Rains* und Khady Koïta. *Mutilée*. Now is also the ideal time to mention that *Feminist Europa's* aim, to draw this literature to the attention of English-language publishers, has

been crowned with success. Excerpts from Fadumo Korn's German autobiography translated for *Feminist Europa* won the approval of The Feminist Press, and the translation appeared in September 2006. (Order from [www.feministpress.org](http://www.feministpress.org)]

Additional reviews in **Politics** represent a wide variety of gender-related topics from seven countries: France, Germany, Israel, Serbia, Spain (in Catalan), Hungary and Turkey.

The section *Publications on Literature* features books from Poland and Serbia. And in *Profiles* we are trying something new, a call for contributions on publisher, author, tv personality and pioneering feminist Alice Schwarzer, a household name in Germany known on the Continent but undeservedly unknown in English-speaking nations. The forthcoming issue will honor this remarkable author and recipient of Germany's highest Medal of Honor for her four decades of dedication to women's human rights and feminist communication.

Finally, **Shortakes** brings together eleven important if abbreviated notices about books in various European languages.

To conclude, then, with a note about us: due to increasing academic and professional commitments, founding editor Giovanna Covi has stepped down from the core editorial group. Her incisive and thought-provoking editorials have introduced each of our previous issues. We will miss her insights and dedication but are happy that she has agreed to continue as an associate editor. Giovanna, thank you!

## Farewell

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Giovanna Covi

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With this issue I am leaving my position as co-editor with Tobe Levin and Waltraud Dumont du Voitel of *Feminist Europa. Review of Books*. My first thanks go to Tobe for the huge share of work she has always taken on, with devoted passion and professional skill. I also wish to thank Waltraud Dumont du Voitel whose generous support has made it possible for

us to keep *Feminist Europa. Review of Books* alive. Best wishes to the new editorial team and long live FE!

In 1998, we began with the concept of Europe as a site of becoming, an idea that had better remain an idea rather than slipping into the guise of yet another nation with, even worse, another army. But ideas need to be constantly fed in order to produce the actions that bring us closer and closer to the just world we like to see materialized.

Europe needs to be nourished with feminism – desperately, I would add. Feminism is likewise an idea, a very good idea, without which the Europe of our dreams will never be rid of sexism. The violence produced by sexism feeds racism and homophobia as well as nationalism; it generates the various forms of discrimination that constellate societies everywhere in our trans-national planet.

We must continue to do our share to spread feminist words around Europe, to make people understand that feminism is for every person who wants to resist the violence inflicted upon women, children and men in the name of a patriarchally assumed superiority. Spreading feminist words, I believe, contributes to fertilizing the soil on which the struggle for human rights – rights of women, both European and foreign, of their children and of their brothers alike – can grow.

I am happy to remain on the board of *Feminist Europa. Review of Books*, convinced that the journal can absolve the important mission of generating an increasingly wider conversation among people who are willing to share their different languages in order to fuse them into a new one capable of figuring the world of justice we want to inhabit, and making the best of the frictional albeit creative process of creolization of the planet that started with colonial empires and is now accelerated by globalization.

## (In)Particular: Stage and Screen

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Paola Bono

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### Preface to the Special Issue

Partiality is an ambiguously connoted word. On the one hand, it may be seen as a lack resulting from a lack; on the other, it may point to the conscious assumption of limits and assure an internal coherence founded on recognizable criteria. For various interrelated reasons, this section of *Feminist Europa. Review of Books* – focussed on cinema and theatre, and including reviews from France, Italy, and Spain – is partial in both senses.

Something is missing because of the inability – my inability – to provide a (more) complete picture of the research going on in cinema and theatre studies, both in the countries under consideration and in many other European nations. Indeed, such research certainly exists in – say – Germany and Greece, Sweden and Hungary, Denmark and Croatia; but it remains virtually unknown outside the countries of origin, due to the cultural dominance of Anglophone production, in its turn linked to socio-political and economic factors. Isn't this the reason why *Feminist Europa. Review of Books* came into being? Sadly, however, after several attempts to locate additional Northern and Eastern European scholars, I felt it wise to feature work in three romance languages in the hope that readers like yourselves may want to continue this potentially much wider exploration.

Still, an exhaustive approach, had it been possible, would have been impractical, especially since the dramatic production of feminist-oriented research on cinema and theatre in the last fifteen years in France, Italy and Spain alone is much underrepresented here.

Nonetheless, despite this caveat, a few titles and scholars should at least be mentioned, for instance, in Spain the research of Italian-born (and U.S. educated) Giulia Colaizzi. Colaizzi has been exploring women and/in cinema in several articles, such as “Tres Miradas al Cine” (in *La conjura del olvido*, edited by Nieves Ibeas and

Angeles Millán, Barcelona: Icaria, 1997, pp. 39-59) or “Cine/Tecnología: Montaje y Desmontaje del Cuerpo” (in *Aun y más allá: mujeres y discursos*, edited by Sonia Mattalia and Nuria Girona, Caracas: Ed. Ex-cultura, 2001, pp. 191-201). Colaizzi has also edited a special issue of *Lectora. Revista de dones i textualitat* devoted to these questions (*Mujeres y Cine*, no. 7, 2001). In France, Ginette Vincendeau, a French-born scholar who now teaches in Great Britain and has published some significant works in English, edited with Bérénice Reynaud in 1993 an important reader, *20 ans de théories féministes sur le cinéma* (Condé-sur Noireau: Charles Cordet, 1993). In a special issue of *CinémAction* (no. 99, 2001) on *Le machinisme à l'écran*, Vincendeau has collected several female- and male-authored articles retracing cinema's “machismo” roots and developments, while a series of interviews with women directors (and with a scrip-writer, a psychoanalyst and a neurobiologist) offer various points of view on women's innovating contribution to screen.

In Italy, the collection of essays *Il teatro e le donne. Forme drammatiche e tradizione al femminile nel teatro inglese*, edited by Raffaella Baccolini, Vita Fortunati and Romana Zacchi (Urbino: Quattroventi, 1991) introduced certain central issues related to women and theatre. A truly ground breaking work is *La prima regista. Edith Craig, fra rivoluzione della scena e cultura delle donne* [The first woman director. Edith Craig: revolutions in staging and women's culture, Rome: Bulzoni, 2003]. In this study, Roberta Gandolfi questions theatre history by proposing a re-evaluation of Edith Craig's work not as a simple addition to the accepted canon, aiming to enrich and complete it, but proposing a new and different viewpoint.

Regarding the reviews included here, in their partiality (now in the second sense suggested above) they share some underlying concerns and a theoretical perspective widely identifiable with the so-called feminism of sexual difference, that originated in France and Italy (Irigaray, Cixous, Muraro and the philosophical community “Diotima”) and has found a response in the Barcelona-based journal *Duoda*. Thus, the special issue on *Cinema Is Women's Cinema... and Men's, But We Already Knew That*, (*Duoda*, n. 24, 2003), in giving

space to women directors who “set... out from themselves” also contains an article by Angel Quintana Morraja. Openly including a masculine point of view acknowledges gender difference while suggesting a significant direction for further research.

The theme of the gaze, a sexually connoted gaze which avoids rigidity and can take/give form to a variety of experiences, returns as a powerful subtext in *At the Theatre, the Cinema, the Site of Femininity* (Mireille Calle Gruber and Hélène Cixous eds, Paris: L'Harmattan «Trait d'union», 2001), while it informs, right from its title, the issue of the Italian journal *DWF donnawomanfemme* devoted to the screen (no. 1-2 [37-38], 1998), *Lo strabismo di Venere* [Cross-eyed Venus]. Instability as a productive strategy is also at the centre of *Passioni di Scena* [Stage(d) Passions], (*DWF*, n. 1 [41], 1999), variously focussed on the incessant movement of masking and unmasking that is acted on stage, that mimetic performative activity which both signifies sexual difference and questions it in its normalized manifestations. The lives and work of Colette and Sarah Bernhardt, lovingly explored and re-interpreted by Laura Mariani (*Bernhardt, Colette e l'arte del travestimento*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996) are powerful examples of this ongoing process of transformation, an assertion of sexual difference which does not immobilize it; the same impulse is visible in the books of the Società Italiana delle Letterate reviewed here (*Scritture del corpo. Hélène Cixous variazioni su un tema*, edited by Paola Bono and *Cartografie dell'immaginario. Cinema, corpo, memoria*, edited by Patrizia Calefato – both published by Sassella in 2000), where voices interweave producing multifaceted texts.

## “On Puppets, Maternity, Cinema and Theatre”

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**Nadia Setti**

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**Review of Gruber, Mireille Calle and H el ene Cixous, eds. *Au th eatre au cin ema au f eminin*. [At the Theatre, the Cinema, the Site of Femininity]. Paris: L’Harmattan «Trait d’union», 2001, pp. 224, ISBN 2-7475-1714-4.**

As the three-part title indicates, the articles collected by Calle and Cixous explore feminine creation in theatre and filmmaking from a variety of angles and with attention to production and reception. For instance, opening the volume is a series of interviews with writers, stage directors or film-makers (H el ene Cixous, Ariane Mnouchkine, Assia Djebar, Daniel Mesguich). Often they reflect on their experience of creativity years after a performance has taken place, but this happily leads to a lively representation of various creative stages.

First we will consider the creative process from the author’s and stage director’s viewpoint and then regard film-making as research material for those concerned with narrating intimate experience, representing the radical other, or retrieving the feminine subject from the prison of stereotype. We’ll conclude with a closer look at several essays that approach women and sexual difference in theatrical literature generally.

The work of the actor/actress is often discussed, even if unfortunately neither actor nor actress participates in the conversation. In quite an interesting and astonishing way, the creation of *Tambours sur la digue* [Drums on the dam]<sup>1</sup> is detailed by means of a double and parallel tale by the play-writer H el ene Cixous and the stage director Ariane Mnouchkine, witness to a metaphoric travelling that occurred on the writer’s side through her readings of Asian theatre, and on director Ariane Mnouchkine’s side through literal journeys to Asia and then onto the stage.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tambours sur la digue, sous forme de pi ce ancienne pour marionnettes jou e par des acteurs*, by H el ene Cixous, opened on 11 September 1999 at the Cartoucherie, directed by Ariane Mnouchkine, and at the Th eatre du Soleil; in 2002 a film was made by Mnouchkine herself, edited now as a DVD.

And what magical serendipity that both actors and writers eventually resort to marionettes. Of course, Asian theatre has inspired Mnouchkine’s work for a long time, appearing to her as the very origin of theatre, so that we may suppose puppets haunt this place, like familiar divinities. But this time they appear through the actors, embodied. Actors become puppets, and puppets take on actors’ bodies.

Theatre succeeds in taking the subject out of itself, – as Calle Gruber writes in her introduction – in order that it be other than *one* self, female or male. Each role (this notion certainly to be revised) is composed of a puppeteer (*koken* manipulator) and a puppet-actor, but in fact it’s their relationship, their perfect and living co-ordination, that gives life to the personage. As Ariane Mnouchkine observes, from the very beginning puppets command the form of the play; they dictate how it should be written. To prove this, the first author, Cixous, has to become a puppet theatre author by the name of Xhsi-Xhsou: hence, the author herself is no more herself, but becomes in a certain way *koken* author and puppet author and seems to keep the puppet strings although the puppets drive her writing. A series of rules command everyone, from the play-writer to the actor: the puppet author has to know that a puppet’s play should stick to a few pages; the puppet (actor) doesn’t show human body but gives only hints of it. Thus, transfiguration (Cixous) and metaphor (Mnouchkine) are the supreme meanings and true necessities of theatre.

If the author herself is transfigured, re-named after an ancient puppet’s theatre author, what about *her* identity? Cixous considers the author as a sort of half male half female – a **cinema**, in fact, rather like the old mask of *Dame Gigogne* (Dame Stork) who engenders all sorts of beings, creatures, things, through an overflowing creativity. The theatre author can’t be assigned to a bipolar or bipartite sex; instead, (s)he is haunted by a multiplicity of human beings.

As Roger D. Bensky notes, this multi-sexual mask has presided at the heart of theatrical origins since Dionysus was born from Jupiter’s leg where the foetus had been implanted after Semele’s death. The theatre god comes from “a paternal matrix.”

This overflowing of differentiated and undifferentiated humanity finds its metaphors in what haunts the story of *Tambours sur la digue*: the big flood, which stands for a new universal deluge, the event destined to delete humanity. The scene is the ultimate one where everyone faces the final hour. Then some choose to save themselves, some to save others. Some kill; others are killed. Everyone perishes. So this ancient play for puppets drives us in a few brief scenes not only to the very core of theatre but to the very edge of life and death.

Laurent Dubreuil, analysing the theme of deluge as “nothing,” quotes Chinese treatises, the Bible and other ancient manuscripts. His philosophical analysis of Cixous’ text differs from the theatrical treatment of water that Ariane Mnouchkine evokes. From a director’s point of view, the problem is how to give stage reality to the sentence “The river enters”: how to make water come on stage, how to move from metaphorical to real, so that at the end water is there, a present and a presence that no one can avoid. Water is like the mask, the puppet of *just now*.

So the diviner’s vision announced at the very beginning of the tragedy comes true under our eyes, on the stage, where no one survives except the puppeteer, the spirit of theatre. Someone collects puppets in order to begin the tale again. Should we see in this gesture another metaphor of theatre creation, a naked stage where suddenly something begins, out of nothing?

Puppets, like masks, allow us to approach human beings without shading our looks or feelings with preconceptions or ready-made images. In fact, they give considerable freedom to the author as well as to the actor to explore humanity’s transformations.

This is what happens with ancient tragedy and mythic personages such as Elektra and Medea. Subjected to an attentive reading, clichés collapse and other more complicated configurations emerge. Daniel Mesguich’s account of the staging of these Greek tragedies offers a new reading of feminine figures, but one that steers clear of the track of reproduction or re-presentation, modes that distance us from Elektra and Medea, their madness or criminality, their relation to death and murder.

The first difficulty in staging Medea, says Mesguich, emerged from the relation between the actress, a young mother, and the character: the actress couldn’t act the murder of her children. This anecdote is more than an anecdote because it reveals in a very interesting way the relation between the stage director, the woman actress, and the woman personage. One would like to know directly from this actress (Luce Mouchel) what happened. How was she able to allow Medea to do what she, as a woman and mother, couldn’t do? Mesguich doesn’t yield to the trap that consists of putting Medea on trial (Cixous declares that’s the reason why she doesn’t wish to write about Medea). He chooses rather to hear what she says, to let her speak and reveal another knowledge, an ancient one, from elsewhere, one frightening to men. Indeed, we know that in another version of the tragedy, Medea didn’t kill her children, but the Corinthians did. The stage director eventually decided to leave to Medea all her contradictions, letting the various versions appear side by side as ambiguities in the text.

After a considerable interruption in her writing career, Assia Djebar was pushed toward cinema by her research into women’s genealogy and its manner of transmitting secret narratives. At the beginning of the second section, the novelist examines the genesis of her two films made in Algeria, *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (1977)<sup>2</sup> and *La Zerda ou les Chants de l’oubli* (1982).<sup>3</sup> Returning to her birth-land after a long absence, Djebar discovered her country as if for the first time: she found out how to look to the exterior, to landscapes, and how to listen to voices, especially women’s, and above all to their tales. She later wrote in a partly autobiographical novel *L’amour la fantasia*, that being a child she didn’t belong to the society of young Muslim women because she could walk out unveiled. The exterior-interior relationship is a crucial one, especially when it concerns filming: to look at what is out of sight, hidden, secret, protected. Mireille Calle Gruber, in her essay about these films, finds a very good

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<sup>2</sup> The Nouba is an ancient Arab musical composition for voices and instruments executed at a particular moment of the day, for special occasions.

<sup>3</sup> These are the only two films by Djebar who is above all a novelist and a storyteller, among the most important of Franco-Algerian literature.

definition of their narrative strategy: “un récit diffracté,” a diffracted narration. Narrating voices are *voix off*. First we listen to the narration. Then the scene is filmed, and, in some cases, the protagonist’s tales are told, while actors and actresses play the narrated scenes. Narration is a feminine art (Calle Gruber) when something of the inner experience is translated into the exterior, exposed, put into images, without being interrupted, in order to keep the secret. Assia Djebar succeeds in this sort of trans-figuration, because she doesn’t unveil the secret but merely hints at it, making her ears and ours listen to it, even when it is actually imperceptible.

Disruption of sexual identity is the main subject of Pascale Risterucci’s article. Analyzing Tod Browning’s *Freaks* (USA, 1932)<sup>4</sup> Risterucci wonders if one may rightly call sexed bodies these prodigious beings, men without legs, skeleton creatures, hermaphrodite characters, micro-headed, bearded women. Even those who at the beginning seem normal are in fact morally abnormal, and the plot, that comes to reveal their inner perversion, makes them freak creatures like the other ones. Risterucci shows how film construction emphasises the body’s sexual deconstruction. On the other side, however, its moral closure resembles a fairy tale: inner malignity hidden in a beautiful body is revenged, whereas true goodness in an ungraceful body is rewarded with happiness and love.

Two articles take us to contemporary film production. Genevieve Sellier gives an interesting introduction to the so-called *cinéma d’auteur* of the Nouvelle Vague, and Stephanie Dupont examines modern lesbian films. Now, you might think that the gap between Nouvelle Vague cinema and commercial film script, involving a certain treatment of narration, would bring to the surface a new approach to feminine parts and relations between the sexes. Sellier argues that, on the contrary, clichés are not avoided because most of the time the protagonists in these crisis narrations are solitary singular men cut from family institutions but in an ambivalent, romantic and frightful relation to women. The few exceptions are mainly films

written or directed by women, for instance Agnes Varda’s *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962) and Alain Resnais’ (Marguerite Duras) *Hiroshima mon amour* (1958).

Concerning lesbian film production, Dupont criticises clichés of homosexuality or lesbianism. First, let’s remind ourselves that short films (court métrages) often qualified a priori as second class productions. Lily K. Gupka’s *Chaahath* (1995) and Laurence Rebullion’s *Quand la mer débordait* (1996) are chosen by Dupont as examples of films with a different take on the lesbian couple. They don’t try to unveil or transgress forbidden secrets but to translate invisible/visible relations, to show opacities between visible and invisible, and to avoid the camera voyeur position.

The last three essays introduce us to almost unknown figures in the history of theatre. Isabella Andreini (1567-1604), qualified as a diva, was one of the rare women to direct a company *I Gelosi*; moreover, a poet, she published a pastoral, *Mirtilla*. Françoise de Croisette focuses her presentation on the necessary separation between woman and player. Masks allowed women actresses to detach from their feminine identity – Andreini played perfectly women as well as men, prostitutes and young virgins. Although these masks were clichés and therefore limiting forms, she could perform them with high virtuosity. In any case, with these masks veiling identity, female players could appear on the stage that had long been forbidden to women.

In a similar way a few centuries later, Madame de Staël “veiled” her theatre production that was then excluded from her complete works by her son, Auguste. Beatrice Didier reveals the existence of de Staël’s pieces, commenting on one of them in particular, *Sapho*, where, through the mask or the veil of the main character, the poetess or author reveals her thoughts about the woman artist’s life and sufferings.

Laura Mariani investigates how actresses themselves build their travesty parts, what they do with their body and what kind of masculinity they construct. Among various possible examples she chooses to quote Colette and Sarah Bernardt, who wrote about this experience. Regarding her two major travesty creations Hamlet and Rostand’s *Aiglon* (Napoleon’s son),

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<sup>4</sup> This film didn’t have great success on its release and was forbidden for 30 years in the UK, but in the 60s it was rediscovered and became a cult film.

Bernhardt declares we should look for an asexual body (insexué), although, as Mariani comments, they represent no androgynous figures, but true masks, true theatrical metaphor, out-gendering gender's forms.

This is what we read through these quite diversified approaches: how the feminine doesn't conform to any definite view but evades too-rigidly constructed forms, being literally and effectively what bears all other forms, real or invented. We may find feminine figures, in a surprising way, where we don't expect them, for example in the couple of the actor puppet with its *koken* actor, where one bears the other, even physically, and takes (her, him) out of the scene: isn't this also a metaphor for both theatre and motherly care? Yet, this "maternal" doesn't associate immediately with either women or mothers.

In fact, these creations reveal how women artists work with bare and open material, so that roles or narrations can be entirely recreated out of an inner outer listening.

Masks as metaphors detect and mark this continuous work of veiling and unveiling: as in Rebullion film, to veil an image doesn't mean to avoid or to attire the look but to modify our perception of body, of others' relations, of sexuality. Our way of looking is biased, lightly deviated, so that identifications have to work in a diffracted way. We may be the one (woman) who is trying to save her people but also the black *koken* actor shadow, double, help, survivor, or both.

Sexual identity markers no longer function as realistic metaphors to captivate spectators; rather, they recede, without actually disappearing, and other signs come out, replenishing our imagination's repertoire of sexed humanities.

## Women and Visual Culture: Theatre and Cinema

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**Cristina Demaria**

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*DWF Donnawomanfemme*, "Lo strabismo di Venere." [Cross-eyed Venus]. No. 1-2 (37-38), 1998; *DWF Donnawomanfemme*, "Passioni di Scena," [Stage(d) Passions]. No. 1 (41), 1999.

Starting in 1975, *DWF Donnawomanfemme* has provided one of the few and precious feminist journals that aims to conjugate theoretical production with academic, political and cultural research on and by women, be they Italian or from any part of the world. In the words of its editors (see the website [www.dwf.it/](http://www.dwf.it/), where information on the journal is available in English), *DWF* strives to be "a point of reference for whoever follows and for whoever *loves* women's production and research" (italics mine).

The peculiarity of such a political space of writing and of confrontation is visible in the two issues I deal with here, one dedicated to cinema, ("Lo strabismo di Venere" – *Cross-eyed Venus*), the other to theatre ("Passioni di Scena" – *Scene of Stage(d) Passions*). It is the unique approach that turns every number of *DWF* into a place of (mythical) encounter between theory and practice, a theory which is informed by practice, and a practice that, founded on inscriptions of experience, on their refinement and creative *mimesis*, can suggest paths towards performative writing, thought, and agency.

Despite this not always easy contamination, often regarded with suspicion by both the academic world (too little theory) and grass-roots "practical" feminists (too much theory), *DWF* has constituted (and continues to constitute) an exemplary source of energy for Italian feminist thinking and its particular *herstory*, only very recently institutionalized in academe, and for many years ambiguously bounded by/in conflict with the *history* of political parties. It is such that to research and *love* women's practices and thinking has always generated a writing in which theory has never been completely detached from its location (sometimes long before this "movement" had

become a theoretical fixation), and from a sort of engagement with the present, even if that present may be deaf, obtuse, or simply indifferent.

“Lo strabismo di Venere” deals with the oblique, never centered, cinematographic gaze, such as it is read, interpreted, but also produced and written by women critics and directors more than twenty years after the Italian translations of the seminal essay by Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” published by the same journal (*DWF*, “La donna nello schermo” – *The Woman of the Screen*, 1978) in a number which launched the diffusion of Feminist Film Theory in Italy. It is not by chance, then, that this issue on the “cross-eyed Venus,” in the section “Sequences” (Sequenze) dedicated to an original essay by a leading theoretician (or to its translation), hosts the “sequence” of Laura Mulvey’s meditations on the pleasures of the female gaze, “Pandora’s box: Topographies of Curiosity.” It is worth remembering how that article, first published in 1989, was conceived by the author as a deepening of an “aesthetics of curiosity” aimed at overcoming the rigid binarism that opposed a voyeuristic and active codified male gaze to a passive and exhibitionist female image relegated to the screen. Pandora’s myth, the curiosity to open the box she was supposed to guard and, as a consequence, the freeing (liberation?) of all evil into the world, is read by Mulvey not only as an allegory of female curiosity as enigma, but also as something potentially dangerous and monstrous, as a text in which there emerges a female body topography dominated by the opposition inside/outside. Pandora’s curiosity triggers a transgressive desire to see, to gaze beyond the surface and into a body represented as the box of all Horror. In other words, female curiosity could be changed into a feminist curiosity that gazes at the imaginary and enters it with new topographies and figurations that, amongst other things, denounce the limited eroticism of patriarchy and its symptoms.

Pointing to the possibility of an active female gaze, such as Ingrid Bergman’s in *Notorious* (Hitchcock, 1948), and therefore of political and creative ways of seeing/reading, Mulvey’s essay comes at the end of the journal while constituting in reality its starting point. The voices that precede it spatially, but follow it

temporally, are different examples of that active gaze, now concentrated in the production of a new kind of, not only female, not only singular, imaginary. The issue opens by dealing with the old Catholic imaginary of the cinema, with a piece of creative writing, a short tale evoking the magic of the moving picture in a poor village among young female peasants, where movies were marked as sin, as evil, as perdition (“Cinepeccato” – *Cinemasin*, by Laura Pariani) by the local priest and the nuns educating the girls, for whom film nonetheless represents a dream of escape and of desired and fearful transgression.

The formation of the imaginary, together with the pleasure of identification and projection that governs visual consumption, are thus not limited to the mere presence on screen of a femininity that will never coincide with the identity quest of the female spectator. In reading the visual, new landscapes, new places, new narrative structures that mirror a female gaze on the world have been introduced. The potential of this new thinking is discussed by Federica Giardini (in the essay “Sull’immaginario, ancora” – *On the imaginary, still*). Starting from the Lacanian perspective and re-visiting Irigaray’s reading of the imaginary as an affective and corporeal relation in which the original subjective instance is constituted, Giardini discusses the steps through which Feminist Film Theory came to think of the imaginary as the “affective corporeal in its constitutive relation.” The imaginary, “no longer the dimension of the alienating gaze, can be rethought starting from reflections of a sexual difference which breaks the reifications, the mirroring of a woman who is a mother” (14-15). The subjectivity at play in the imaginary is a threshold between affectivity and relation, a space in which the singularity of a “profound logic,” that from which our relation with meaning emerges (Kristeva), intertwines with its shared and collective circulation.

But the collective circulation of singular meanings also needs a memory, an archive in which it might be stored. Paola Masi’s paper deals first with the important question of existing archives of women’s film, and their criteria of classification, and then, also, with the “archive of desire,” an archive that becomes such if those

who go there feel a pleasure similar to that of going to the cinema, which must therefore be able to show the techniques and the content of “that production of the imaginary useful to think of/over oneself” (23).

A relationship between the spectator, the film and the archive as a site of memory may exist, whereby memory is not just a collection of memories but production of knowledge, not limited to the storage of what can be saved and what risks disappearing, but in itself a way to think cinema and its borders.

In the archive of desire which has changed and is changing the imaginary, we can find many of the works evaluated by Milena Crotti who, spending her life organizing women’s film festivals, has witnessed the passage from important but “acute and sometimes untuned” voices of the first female directors of the seventies to the masterpieces of Agnes Varda and Jane Campion. But despite “extreme difficulties and many contradictions” that nevertheless “distinguish the relation of every female spectator facing the representation of women’s as well as men’s bodies” (28), we shouldn’t forget the peculiar space so far occupied by Lesbian cinema, which had to deal with the representation of an even more contradictory subject, always at the margin and always dissonant with herself and the cultural reality around her. In an article on her experience of the annual Lesbian Film Festival in Bologna, Simonetta Spinelli underlines the importance of dealing visually with an identity often trapped in the same stereotypes it tries to deconstruct, pointing in contrast to the many examples in which the Bolognese audience was confronted with perturbing and even disturbing phantasies that, through the tool of irony, had been displaced, shared, and recomposed. (The article contains a full filmography of a festival that in 1999 was in its fifth edition.) Film festivals, together with archives, thus represent not only a way to show and to store this growing and often hidden “imaginary,” but also a way to build it, contrasting the “sick habit of considering theory the only space of the possible and of the sayable” (35).

The varied but apparently heterogeneous path of the journal leads us then into Margarete von Trotta’s contradictory subjects through Ester

Carla de Miro’s reading focused on the “split I” of the director, on the capital fracture of a subject who must exercise an external and controlling gaze, together with an emotional participation. Subverting the practice of visual control, very often advocated by the male director, von Trotta’s movies are the tangible example of a radical woman’s transgression, which implies, de Miro suggests, “the not easy task of entering fully, through cinematographic discourse, into the realm of the symbolic” (49), without forgetting the inscription of the semiotic, in the Kristevan acceptance, that is the relation with the maternal, the unsayable, the pulsional. Von Trotta’s is thus an imaginary built and thriving on a paradox condensing two opposite characteristics of narrative cinema: “the prevailing of abstraction and of the ‘interior adventure’... that demands dramatic constructions and is obliged to fiction,” together with a “relation with the immediacy of the real and the evolution of female identity, which leads to a cinema of specific ‘characters’ and contingent situations” (51). A different example of changing subjects born not from the *cinéma d’auteur*, but from a popular genre, is that of violent Indian movies dedicated to the character of vengeful women, examined by Lalita Gopalan. Here the real melts into the exaggerated, noisy and colorful phantasies of Bollywood; nevertheless, these movies are somehow a very particular interpretation of the conflicting phantasies underlying public and private formations of national, communitarian and gender identities. The imaginary that this number is trying to retrace is thus enriched by an “exotic” dimension. It aims to remind us that there can be many ways to deal with the symbolic and the semiotic. These very violent films, where usually a woman starts to pursue her revenge personally, generally after a rape, propose a tentative reformulation of the complex relationship between women and violence. Gopalan thus examines the conscious and unconscious codes of Indian cinema, in particular that of a popular genre which gives access to the phantasies and anguish attached to sexuality and the law and that, in the end, bonds female access to strength and revenge to the previous humiliation of a rape. This in turn becomes “a violent test of gender identity.”

Revenge allows the female to be the main forceful and strong character, but the genre and the culture extract the high price of a previous (always) male violent assertion of power.

The series of analyses concludes with Diana Celeste on Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1992), the piece concentrating on the way male and female bodies are written by different technical and cinematographic tools (editing, light, points of view, costumes, etc.). Celeste mobilizes the semiotic category of "dressed up body," indicating "that which interprets the body in the world, the relation between bodies, the body locating itself on the bases of lived experiences such as those of gender, age, race... the way in which a human subject is in the world thanks to its aesthetic appearance" (74). The dressed up body shows the many layers of social convention, thus becoming a closed body like Ada's husband Stewart's. He has a finite, delimited body, attached to its colonial belonging, to a supposed superior civilization, in deep contrast with the bodies of the Maori, which are open, hybrid, bodies that like to mask themselves becoming potential sites of playful subversion. Ada's is also a dressed up body, but only from the outside, and only partially, as becomes evident in the scene dedicated to the "wedding picture," where she is forced to wear a wedding gown literally *de façade*, made up only by the front part and held tight to the body by tie-up laces. This superficial "dressing up," neither wanted nor sought, has nothing to do with the bride's body which, thanks to the camera turning around it, loses its flatness and is revealed in reverse, as that which is absent, left un-covered and free, thus liberating the potential irony of the grotesque, of an other dressing up which cannot be trapped in any closure, the very possibility of metamorphosis and ambiguity.

At the end of our reading, we are left with the feeling not so much of being granted a "new" theory of the gaze but, following Mulvey's suggestion, with a dispersed and creative curiosity at work, corroborated by the seemingly dense issue of DWF dedicated to theatre, "Passioni di Scena," where we move from the passionate gaze of the critic/spectator directed at the changing women on the screen, to the passionate bodies (and minds) who act on a stage. Dedicating a number of DWF to theatre

meant, at the time (more than seven years ago) trying to stimulate some reflection on a practice that, in Italy, has rarely been the object of feminist theoretical and critical research. With the exception of a few examples, born in the very specific political and politicized context of the seventies, the culture of the stage and of the *mise en scène* was, and still is, in Italy, not deeply rooted. The aim of the journal is therefore not so much to "fill a void" but to *show* this absence, inviting again onto the scene/the stage of writing a plethora of different voices, from that of Hélène Cixous, whose autobiographical "Algérie," the poetic tale of her youth in Algeria translated in the section "Sequenze," to those of many actresses and directors meditating on their practices, on what is theatre, and on what it can be. The necessity to "think the theatre" constitutes a bet which is strongly related to that of feminist thinking, in so far as in the theatrical space the possible communication built on the fusion of body and world, of the maximum of "naturalness" – that is relations acted in presence –, and of the maximum of codification, in that those relations exist only within scenic and linguistic systems, is every time enacted and played out. As stated in the editorial, in the theatrical space the genre game is intertwined with that of the roles, and "the distance between the Woman created by the character, and Women, plural but nevertheless Capital, which of that female should be the gen(d)eric correlative – is mediated by a body which acts. A body which interprets that distance, which governs for itself and for us the adhesion to or the reservation towards either the myth (Woman) or towards the gender (Women): an individuation that in its turn demands to be interpreted by the singularity of the viewer" (Introduction, 3-4). In this long quote is perhaps encapsulated much of the meaning (and sense) of this issue which, in respect of the theatre, wants to underline the double movement of adherence to, and reservation towards, belonging both to who does it, interpreting most of the time plays and scripts (dramaturgy) written by men, and to who sees it. Therefore, if in the issue dedicated to cinema, at stake was the production of a (new) imaginary, and of consequent different relationships of identification, here what is set in motion, and put on stage, is the

very relation on which the imaginary is built: that of the body with a word, that of the presence of that body and its transformations, that between the stage and the audience; that among those who write theatre, those who write about it, and those who bring the writing to the stage.

As Paola Bono remembers in her essay which starts the collection, “the possible changes, the mutabilities, of human identity promised by theatre, of which travestimento/cross-dressing is a figure, and which is also the mechanism that unveils the constructed nature of that identity within the net of socially regulated relations and conventions, are what turns the theatre into a potentially subversive art, very frequently attacked by whoever has an interest in maintaining the ‘natural’ order” (8-9). The writing of the theatre, as Cixous says, demands a dis-possession of oneself, a path of the I out of itself, in order to get to the “place of wonder” (*le merveilleux*), because it is the “immediate place of the desire of/for the other, of the desire of/for all the others” (Cixous in Bono). Theatrical mimesis is thus an “imitation” that reveals imitation, by questioning truth, and by the very exposition of its artificiality. The nature of this theatre, and also of the most realist theatre, allows it – in this differentiating from cinema – to escape from the fate of being “marked by the impossibility, postulated by the Lacanian tradition, of representing women, cancelled in the representation of ‘woman’ as a construct of male desire. The play of artificiality has always rendered this gap possible” (12-13).

As Cixous repeats in the interview edited by Edda Melon and Nadia Setti, “the work of difference is everywhere... it is incessant,” and therefore one must concentrate less on the ‘sexual’, and more on the difference (14). In this sense theatre cannot be real or realistic, Cixous reminds us once again: what is working on the stage is a sublime puppet producing imitations of human beings that trans-figure them, as does theatrical writing as well.

Paola Bono's meditations and the words of Cixous are then followed by numerous voices of critics, but mainly of actresses-authors-directors who, starting from their own personal experience, from their everyday work, convey contemporary declinations of that “mental nomadism” which characterized the 19th and

20th century imaginary of the female actress: woman of a hundred masks, loaded with the burden of the many fake lives she brought on stage, as Laura Mariani claims in an essay on the “special intelligence” of the actress. For women, to play is therefore also a meditation and a refinement of that practice of multiplicity long elaborated by theory, the self-constitution of a new woman, and, most of all, a re-opening of the frontier between public and private, a frontier that the theatrical experience brings onto stage every time.

The details and meditations produced by many actresses of the past retraced by Laura Mariani are then accompanied by those that belong to contemporary stories of (intelligent) women, who very often play, direct and teach theatre in today's many laboratories and Academies of the Italian peninsula. We move from the interview with Marisa Fabbri, who worked with Strehler and Ronconi, and with Dodi Conti, an Argentinian migrant playing for theatre and for cinema, to the reflections of Laura Curino, author and actress who founded the Teatro Settimo in Turin; to Rosa Masciopinto, actress, author, director and clown of the company *Opéra Comique*; to Giulia Clarkson, poet and actress; Daniela Rossi, producer of cultural events; Lucia Bertell and Roberta del Bene, young students who have started their own theatrical laboratory trying to become actresses and teach theatre.

It would be impossible, and also reductive, to summarize in a few lines these short but dense meditations that sometimes encapsulate the experience of many years and of hard research, often written in creative and poetic styles which differentiate each of the interventions. What bonds all of these voices is therefore, again, not a vision or a theoretical stance, but the idea of theatre as the space of the body and, as such, as the possible space of the contemporary (Marisa Fabbri). All these stories tell of a particular, and every time different, writing of the body, of the incessant translation that this process implies, in the passage between text and stage, stage and audience. This translation can sometimes find its cipher in the “phonic mask” of a character, that is in the place of the body where the sound of its word is rooted (Curino), or in the clown's mask, or in that of the performer on stilts (Clarkson), in

her improvising technique, where geometry serves emotions (Masciopinto). Or it can emerge from the continuous working of the body offered, in the visceral search for the essence of a character (Conti). Or, from the unveiling of the body and its interiority may also spring an ironic and subversive distance, as in the case of the many comic actresses and poets whose sexed bodies Daniela Rossi has contributed to “organize,” as she tells us in her piece.

The power of this work, of these displacements, of these incessant movements of unveiling through the mask, of distancing coming from proximity to oneself and the other, finds its last and magisterial evocation in Algériance, where Cixous recounts the story of that “other” space which is Algeria. But the story is also, possibly, that of a language informed by the impossibility of inhabiting one place. Like the theatre, “Passioni di Scena” seems to remind us of another always already impossible place, thus a condition of thought and existence, neither fixed memory nor a simple nostalgia, nor a completed project: the space of *différance*, of *algériance*, from which, in the end, “we get [from] writing to a writing that is never settled, that doesn’t inhabit its own place, that saves itself, and goes away without turning [back]” (Cixous).

## Bernhardt, Colette, Transgressing, Cross- dressing

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**Roberta Gandolfi**

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**Review of Mariani, Laura. *Bernhardt, Colette e l'arte del travestimento*. [Bernhardt, Colette and the Art of Cross-Dressing]. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996, pp. 276, ISBN: 88-15-05690-4.**

Actresses’ art of cross-dressing and the phenomenon’s affinities to female literary practices form the core of this pioneering study by Italian theatre scholar Laura Mariani. Exploring French culture as a feminist historian, she settles into the Parisian *fin-de-siècle*, the capital of female cross-dressing, with its multiple stages, from prose theatres to

vaudevilles and café-concerts, focusing on the creative worlds *en travesti* of two great artists, Sarah Bernhardt and Colette (whose theatrical experiences are little known).

*Bernhardt, Colette e l'arte del travestimento* is not, or not simply, a biographical or historical enquiry, however, since the author approaches her subjects – Bernhardt and Colette – through elaborate theoretical lenses.

Her opening chapter, “Introduction to the art of cross-dressing,” first identifies cross-dressing on the stage as a cultural practice, central not only to theatre studies but also to gender studies and to the issue of the “feminist subject” (Rosi Braidotti). If, with Braidotti, one understands feminism as a “creative impulse” towards shaping new/different cultural identities, the actress *en travesti* becomes a key-figure: her practices of multiplied lives, her creative processes of metamorphosis, her expertise in mastering the movement in-between the Self and the Other, may enlighten the mystery of “passing” from one sex to the other. In this first chapter, Mariani wanders through the plural regions of the *actress en travesti* (the feminist subject is a nomadic subject, according to Braidotti), interrogating the testimonies of contemporary practitioners who used to play cross-dressed, as well as looking at the figures of cross-dressed characters in literature and dramaturgy, while always taking into account the interplay between sexual and social roles. Mariani opens up a broad horizon (kindred to the thought of Hélène Cixous and other Italian and French theorists of sexual difference), where sexual difference isn’t a rigid, binary opposition but rather a *quid* that “flows and transmutes”; a “third space” which for the actress *en travesti* is also the site of dispossession, the letting go of sexual identity, the space of androgyny and at the same time of desire for otherness.

The second chapter, “Between Ophelia and Hamlet: Sarah Bernhardt,” looks at Bernhardt’s book, *L’Art du théâtre*, concentrating especially on the author’s observations and remarks regarding the female nature of the art of acting. Artifice, dissimulation, the ability to abstract from the Self are core concepts in Bernhardt’s writing, and Mariani reworks these in a parallel philosophical query into female-ness, also drawing upon the memories of male and female

playgoers of Bernhardt's time and taking into account the traces of this actress's method for building her roles, specifically the male ones and first and foremost her famous Hamlet. Thus, Mariani develops very interesting methodological insights, for example in her reading of Bernhardt's roles *en travesti* in relation to the actress's also beloved roles prescribing that she die on stage: passing from the female to the male sex, and from life to death, are both connected to issues of the threshold, of liminality, of the transitive nature of theatrical art.

The third chapter, "Between the stage and the writing: Colette as actress," recounts Colette's appearances in cabarets and variety-halls, which shaped on stage the figures of androgyny and lesbianism, thereby enriching cultural discourse with new configurations of meaning around sexuality and sexual difference at a time when the New Women used cross-dressing off stage in their search for self-creation and in experimentation with different Selves. Mariani thus recovers Colette's scenic practice, "to confer on it full citizenship in French Theatre of the Nineteenth Century and to deepen [appreciation of] the recurrences of scenic experience in her writing" (150). This chapter, more biographical than the previous one, introduces the reader to the "personal theatres" of the New Women, for instance, to the private parties of Natalie Clifford-Barney, where Colette and other artists would "perform" their lesbian loves, "then provokingly re-proposing them on more public stages."

Mariani analyses both the amateur and the professional practices of Colette as a performer, in light of categories in feminist history (public/private, personal/political), while referring constantly to the author's several novels rooted in the world of the stage. She connects the query into Colette the writer with interrogation of Colette the performer at "the unstable borders between the sexes" and links this theme to nomadism and disequilibrium. With elegance, she also employs certain relevant concepts of theatrical aesthetics, such as the centrality of the body in the creative process, the issue of the double and the theme of artificiality to explain how flexibly Colette would recur to the art of cross-dressing:

Colette the actress would experiment with complex ways of revealing and hiding, of identifying and outdistancing, of being true in artificiality. Thus she learnt how to disguise her autobiography, how to hide behind small gaps, tactful lies, so that one could not find her 'alive' in the pages of her novels. The writing welcomes - she has written - "what I know of myself, what I try to keep hidden, what I invent, what I foresee." It is in these interstices that the female would meet the male (213).

Thus through Bernhardt and Colette, and in the name of cross-dressing as an artistic practice, Mariani is able to move in two different fields, playing and writing. Her *fil rouge*, the intrinsic connection of cross-dressing with the female creative impulse, takes her further towards Virginia Woolf. In the fourth and last chapter, "A Valediction: Virginia Woolf and *Orlando*," the scholar subtly outlines the theatrical soul of the novel, with its predominantly visual surface and the theatricality of its creative process, based as it was on the ironic, playful manipulation of autobiographical material, on the creation of characters through a work of visual documentation (photographs of Vita Sackville-West and her houses), and on the transformation of a real Other (Vita) within a fictional one: is not the Orlando of multiplied lives and of doubled sexual identity, now male, then female and so on, similar to the subject of the actress *en-travesti*? Mariani also takes into account other theatrical texts by Virginia Woolf, the comedy *Freshwater* and the novel *Between the Acts*, to suggest that when the issue of exceeding (rigid identity, gender, cultural limitation) is at stake, theatre and its possibilities for disguise, double, and metamorphoses come into the picture.

*Bernhardt, Colette e l'arte del travestimento* is a complex and enriching book that skilfully examines different artistic practices to illuminate one with the other. The author, for whom cross-dressing is the quintessence of the art of acting, justifies introducing theatrical practices and experience into cultural discourse

about sexuality, highlighting their peculiarly powerful relevance for gender studies.

## Body and Image, Scripted and Mapped

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**Roberta Gandolfi**

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**Review of Bono, Paola, ed. *Scritture del corpo. Hélène Cixous variazioni su un tema. [Bodily Writings: Helen Cixous' Variations on a Theme]*. Roma: Sossella, 2000, ISBN: 88-87995-04-4.**

**Review of Calefato, Patrizia, ed. *Cartografie dell'immaginario. Cinema, corpo, memoria. [Maps of the Imaginery. Cinema, Body, Memory]*. Roma: Sossella, 2000, ISBN: 88-87995-03-6.**

*Scritture del corpo. Hélène Cixous variazioni su un tema*, edited and with an Introduction by Paola Bono, adds two essays by Cixous herself to three contributions on her work and more generally on sexual difference by Carla Locatelli, a scholar of English language and literature at the University of Trento, Italy; and by Mireille Calle-Gruber and Nadia Setti, both at the Centre d'Étude Féminines, University of Paris VIII, founded by the same Cixous. The well-tuned volume collects voices that expand our knowledge through plural but kindred approaches to the complex Cixousian themes of corporeality and sexuality in/of literary texts (hence the title, *Scritture del corpo*, i.e. 'Bodily writings'). The essays deal directly or indirectly with Cixous' work on theatre, while never divorcing the playwright from the inventor, theoretician and author of the concept 'écriture féminine'.

After Bono's Introduction, the volume opens with Locatelli's general contribution, "Questo lavoro di analisi e illuminazione," exploring Cixous' "scriptural map" in terms of its two extremes, the practices of "writing with the body" (fictional texts) and "suspending the body" (as a playwright, where the writer creates "bodiless" characters, corporeality belonging to a different incarnation, that of the actors). Interested in the ethical and epistemological

dimensions of such a scriptural map, Locatelli adopts a philosophical approach to enlighten Cixous's practice of "écriture féminine." It is followed by "Corpo/corpi della differenza sessuale" by Mireille Calle-Gruber, a short and most elegant commentary/paraphrase of Cixous' *Le Troisième corps* (1970). The French language, like German and unlike English or Italian, uses the same word for the singular and plural of 'body', thus making the term 'corps' "the strange site of a singular-plural" (47), the space of new possibilities of inhabiting and generating the world. As Paola Bono, translator of this essay, writes in her introduction to the volume, Calle-Gruber highlights how Cixous's writings escape from the logic of the double, of symmetry, of binary opposition, "offering instead an unheard-of grammar of 'being-together-and-being-different-in-the-world'."

The two contributions by Cixous deal directly with theatre; first is the welcome Italian translation by Nadia Setti of "Tancred Continue" (1970), today a classic, where Cixous questions sexual difference from a specific corporeal dimension, the vocal one. Listening to Rossini's opera *Tancredi* (an adaptation from Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*) which prescribes a mezzo soprano singer for the character of Tancredi, thus a womanly voice, Cixous skilfully questions the complex dynamics of love and desire, where male and female are not in opposition but rather in juxtaposition and disguise (Clorinda is a cross-dressed character and Tancred has a female voice), in search of the Other within themselves, generating a Third between the two of them ("TancrediClorinda," a unicum, a continuum).

"Apparizioni," a text written by Cixous specifically for the conference at the origin of this book, is, in my view, a relevant contribution to her sparse essays on theatre (the previous ones having been usefully collected and translated into Italian by Nadia Setti in *Il teatro del cuore*. Parma: Pratiche, 1992). "Apparizioni" echoes the main issues of the playwright's aesthetics, from theatrical writing as the literary space of History and the Other, to the "apparition" of characters in the totally receptive author: "I am the empty stage," writes Cixous (118), re-adapting a topos of 20th century directors (from Copeau's "théâtre nu" to Brook's "empty stage")

as an aesthetics of play writing. She exposes these themes with unusual directness (probably because the essay was conceived for oral delivery), rendering the text apt for an initial approach to her otherwise complex writing. She also adds nuances and intriguing chapters, such as considerations of the tragic, searching for a theatrical writing that may “exceed the tragic” (117: very interesting indeed, since it is to the epic rather than the tragic dimension to which she previously referred), and the intense opening pages about her sense of the tragic rooted in infancy, as a Jew in occupied Algeria during the First World War, and her becoming later, as theatre author, “the guardian of survivals” (hence her texts on the Cambodian people, the Tibetan, the Indians). The essay also includes the description, very useful for the theatre scholar, of Cixous’ creative process at the Theatre du Soleil, how she chose her subject together with director Ariane Mnouchkine, “at the cross of contemporary events (let’s say the *res gestae*) and the theatre, its reflexivity” (112), leading to a poetic theatre with a strong ethical/political stance.

Last but not least, *Scritture del corpo* contains an intriguing, well-written essay by Nadia Setti (who translated “Apparizioni”), “Passaggi di genere. Figure e transfigure della differenza,” which reads literary and performative texts in comparison, dealing with transitions from one to the other sex, namely Cixous’ “Tancred continue,” Woolf’s *Orlando*, Bob Wilson’s stage version (with Isabelle Huppert as protagonist), Sally Potter’s cinematographic version of *Orlando*, and Lispector’s *Aqua Viva*. Problems of intertextuality and sexuality are here taken into account and connected, to argue that “the changeable body of the character equals the changeable body of the text” (89, about *Orlando*, where Woolf writes in different styles and registers, including parody and pastiches). In other words, Setti holds that these fictions enact a correspondence between the making of sexual difference (a process of translations and transfigures, not one of oppositions) and the very production of textual narrative.

*Scritture del corpo* is a welcome and significant publication, since (as the accurate bibliography at the end of the volume shows)

Cixous’ few writings available in Italian have appeared sparsely in periodicals. The only previous books are the already cited *Il teatro del cuore*, and her first dramatic text, *Ritratto di Dora*. [Feltrinelli: Milano, 1977]. More recently Silvana Carotenuto edited Cixous’ *Tre passi sulla scala della scrittura* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2002), with a long, thoughtful Introduction and comment by Nadia Setti.



*Scritture del corpo* has a twin, edited by Patrizia Calefato, *Cartografie dell’immaginario. Cinema, corpo, memoria*. Both it and *Scritture* emerged from the editorial efforts of the Società Italiana delle Letterate, the Italian Association of Literary Women, and both represent their rich 1998 Orvieto conference, “Corpi e immagini: letteratura, cinema, teatro. Scritture comparate al femminile” that focused on the imagery of the body in female literature, movies and theatre, from a comparative perspective. The variety of contributions suggested two different edited volumes, both eclectic in the spirit of a plural cultural enterprise characteristic of Società Italiana delle Letterate.

A heterogeneous little book, *Cartografie dell’immaginario. Cinema, corpo, memoria* contains contributions varied in aim, depth and approach that explore the different realms of cinema, advertising, fashion, and literature, at times through case studies, such as De Ruggeri’s analysis of *The Pillow Book* by Peter Greenway; at others through more comprehensive readings, like the excursus by Curti, Betti and Carotenuto

into the imagery of the feminine sublime in fiction and cinema, and Pallotta's historical reading of feminine stereotypes in Italian advertising. The essays denote a widespread (if unequal) assimilation of cultural and feminist studies in Italy, since they all make abundant references to intertextuality; all envision different media, more or less explicitly, as "technologies of gender" (Teresa De Lauretis); and/or apply socio-semiotic categories to their object of study, such as Patrizia Calefato's study of clothes as a "system of signs" kindred to language in modelling social identities (indeed a classic approach stemming from Roland Barthes). Opening the book is an essay by Italian scholar Giuliana Bruno (who teaches film theory and visual studies at Harvard University), "Viaggio in Italia; vedute da casa," a sophisticated play with the conceptual horizon of cultural and feminist studies. At stake here are the contemporary concepts of located knowledge and cartography of the subject. Bruno questions the way that movies construct their meaning through/with spectator subjectivity, making the case by narrating a return to Naples, her hometown, for a funeral. She shares her mourning and views of the city, her outer and inner cartography, filtered through two great movies shot in Naples with a kindred narrative, Roberto Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia* (*Strangers*, 1953) and Mario Martone's *L'amore molesto* (1995, from a novel by Italian writer Elena Ferrante). Admirably written and peculiar in its subject, this little essay doesn't escape the risk of some contemporary theorizing insisting on situated knowledge, that of a drift towards subjectivity which sometimes renders opaque the (outer/other) *object* of knowledge.

Finally, the book also contains some non-scholarly, unusual voices, such as the short contributions by journalist Benedetta Barzini and by novelist Pina Mandolfo. "Il sud delle donne. Le donne del sud" juxtaposes two complementary readings of feminine imagery in southern Italy, the first of oppression and marginalization, the other shaped by southern intellectual and creative women through their texts and practices, to be read as part of a separate feminine culture that has always survived in the South.

The authors' heterogeneous professional identities reflect the profile of the Società Italiana delle Letterate, the feminist association responsible for both publications, which gathers not only scholars of semiotics and historians of literature, but also cultural reporters, writers, translators, and amateurs fond of feminine writing. Far from cultivating literature as a specialized, academic field, the association promotes an enlightened/extended vision of literature and writing, as a multifaceted cultural practice variously engaged in the troubles and discourses of the world, and it grants a special privilege (to speak in former Association president and curator of the first volume Paola Bono's words) to "the play of language, where knowledge and life are at stake." The Society, which counts around 200 members, was founded in 1996 and has organized topic summer workshops and a yearly conference whose broad themes frame a plurality of contributions (the 2004 gathering being on "Reading and writing to change the world: women, literature, politics"). Since its early days, the Society has practised a contemporary, comparative approach to different kinds of narratives and texts, exploring "feminine literary space" while critically deconstructing the canon. It occupies a space of thought and theoretical discourse otherwise absent in Italy, a country that lacks organized, academic venues for women's studies – in my opinion an unfortunate state of affairs, but this remains a controversial point.

## Women Directors in Contemporary Spanish Cinema

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**Elina Noradi**

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Trans. Caroline Wilson

**Review of V.V.A.A: "Cinema Is Women's Cinema... and Men's, But We Already Knew That," *Journal for Feminist Studies: Duoda. Revista de estudios feministas*. Nº 24, Women's Research Centre at the University of Barcelona, Barcelona, 2003. 73-141.**

Women's cinema in Spain is featured in Number 24 of the journal *Duoda*. The publi-

cation has opened up a space for analysis and commentary to seven contemporary women directors: Josefina Molina, Iciar Bollain, Isabel Coixet, Daniela Fejerman, Inés París, Chus Gutiérrez and Rosa Vergés. In addition, an article by Angel Quintana Morraja (lecturer in Film History and Theory at the University of Gerona) exemplifies the masculine point of view on women's cinema, thus underlining the editors' desire to look at the subject from the position of sexual difference.

Interestingly, all the directors coincide in making their writing personal, relating their experience as women who have opted for a life of creativity and who feel a very strong desire to tell stories and express them in images. They explain their beginnings, experiences, pleasures and difficulties; they discuss specific issues arising from their films; they comment upon diverse aspects of their work and, although the articles are all very different, they concur in their emphasis on certain factors that they consider to be the most relevant.

First, for the women directors, in the same way as in other artistic spheres, models are fundamental, women who have previously found themselves in situations similar to theirs, situations arising from confronting the fact of creation. The pain and disorientation provoked by the lack of women in the history of cinema is common to all these directors, as is their happiness upon discovering that devoted women filmmakers have always existed. In this sense, the work and role of film festivals that take place periodically in different Spanish cities should be emphasized, enabling us to see the pioneering works of women directors who have been unjustly forgotten. Thus, Rosa Vergés explains the impact that the work of Alice Guy had on her, Guy's films shown at the Barcelona Women's Film Festival (organized by the collective Drac Màgic). About this shock Vergés writes: "It had a great effect on me. I discovered that since its beginnings, since cinema was invented, women had been working as managers in the so-called 'factory of dreams'. And I was able to see once again how women are diluted yet generally manage, without much effort, to avoid fading into history, especially in the realm of artistic activities" (120). Along the same lines, Josefina Molina speaks of the Spaniards Isabel

Roy, Elena Cortesina, Rosario Pi and Ana Mariscal, about whom she makes extremely interesting observations. For her: "We Spanish women filmmakers find ourselves without a history, but it is fair to recognize and above all be grateful for the fact that they set a precedent from which those of us who came later can benefit. Precedents, in the female struggle to occupy forbidden spaces, are extraordinarily important" (78).

Another noteworthy contribution is that of Angel Quintana, who proposes that not only should women directors be included in this genealogy but also actresses; and, in what turned out to be a beautiful premonitory homage, he champions Katharine Hepburn's contribution. Because "if we put the politics of actresses alongside the specific politics of the filmmakers, perhaps we can see that the discontinuous and stormy history of women's cinema is not only a residual conflictive history, but rather that it takes up an incredibly important place in the history of the cinema itself" (140). Thus, like women painters, sculptors or poets, women directors claim for themselves a genealogy of women in cinema that can give them sustenance, that can allow them roots in order to, in the words of María Zambrano, be able to suspend themselves creatively over the earth.

The theme of the gaze is another key point in the debate. Iciar Bollain relates her enriching experiences in encounters with feminists, as she and other professional colleagues reject the label "women's cinema." Bollain writes: "They accused us of creating a different cinema, from a different perspective, to then deny it in their interviews. They accused us of denying difference instead of defending it" (85). According to Bollain, only after more than a dozen films as an actress and two feature films as a director (*Hola estás sol?* and *Flores de otro mundo*) did she take on this difference. Now her desire is to "speak with our own voice, not only about women, but about men, about children, about history, about the present and about the future" (87). On the other hand, Chus Gutiérrez – who has already directed five feature films – in an article titled "La Mirada" (The Gaze), reflects that in our society the feminine gaze continues to be illegitimate; it is always suspect because the male gaze "is not questioned as to whether it is

better or worse. ... The male gaze is not questioned. It simply exists” (113).

And as an example of a feminine gaze there is the lovely film by Isabel Coixet, *Mi vida sin mí* (which at the time of writing was still showing in Barcelona). The director tells us how the script was made, an adaptation of Nancy Kincaid’s novel *Pretending the Bed is a Raft*, and what the film aims to accomplish. It features a very young woman, Ann, who, as the mother of two little girls, finds out that she is soon going to die. Ann is strong, intense, rich in subtlety, “an extraordinary and modern heroine (if not a saint) who confronts the challenge of death with uncommon courage and love of life” (95). It is relevant to mention this because the directors discuss feminine characters. To illustrate, Bollaín proposes to look at very intelligent examples such as the protagonists in two great cinematographic classics: *Casablanca* and *The Searchers* where women are nothing more than the fruit of male fantasies. Daniela Fejerman and Inés París, who direct together, explain that one reason why they make films is that they missed “in our cinema, the presence of feminine characters who were complex and real, not stereotyped. And we wanted to create those characters” (101).

The experience of these two directors is unusual and very interesting. They explain, surprised, that what they are most asked by journalists, as well as by spectators and even their own colleagues, is whether they don’t find themselves facing a multitude of conflicts when it comes to taking charge. Clichés such as female rivalry were brought up as well. In their text, also a joint one, they offer various suggestive answers to this question. For them, shared work is a way of breaking with the myth of the individual creator, with creativity enclosed within egotism, as well as with patriarchal power relationships. They believe in “the encounter between two free people, an encounter that allows both of them to grow and that in no way mutilates the possibilities of the other” (104). Various scripts have already come from this empathy and a successful feature film called A

*mi madre le gustan las mujeres* (My Mother Likes Women, 2001). An attractive example of creation in relationship emerges, where a feminine-plus manages to amplify the capacities of both.

Another aspect in which the directors overlap is in explaining the difficulties that they encounter on their artistic journey. These obstacles are those that generally obstruct Spanish cinema: the lack of funding, problems in attracting enough money, having enough budgeted time, achieving a certain continuity of work. But, as most of them say, in the case of women directors these handicaps are amplified. After making their first movies, they continue to film with very low budgets and count upon less promotional and media support than their male colleagues. Also, as Chus Gutiérrez says, referring to the most recent generation of Spanish directors: “Curiously, and linked to the growing *no* of the budgets, our professional (male) colleagues have been promptly identified by the media-industry-audience as relevant and perfectly distinguishable and unique figures in their styles and forms. As women directors we are seen to constitute a uniform and not very clear whole. We tend not to be viewed as individuals” (111-12). As an example and without resorting to the exceedingly famous Pedro Almodóvar, this statement works to perfection if we name Julio Medem, Alejandro Amenábar or Alex de la Iglesia on the one hand, and Maria Ripoll or Gracia Querejeta on the other.

Finally, this monograph finishes with two emotive tributes to women who devoted their lives to the cinema and are no longer with us today. They are Ana Mariscal (1923-1995), actress, director, scriptwriter for cinema and theatre and author; and the director and scriptwriter for cinema and television Pilar Miró (1940-1997). Both are constant points of reference for everybody in the cinema – professionals and spectators. Dear and loved, they now make up a firm part of our genealogy of feminine experience in the Spanish filmmaking world.

## Politics

**International spokesperson against FGM recounts her long and agonizing path to recovery from life-threatening female circumcision**



### **Born in the Big Rains**

A Memoir of Somalia and Survival

Fadumo Korn with Sabine Eichhorst

Translated and Afterword by Tobe Levin

ISBN: 1-55861-531-8

Price: \$23.95

This powerful memoir by international activist Fadumo Korn portrays both her life-altering transformation after she undergoes a brutal female circumcision at the age of seven and her journey to recovery and empowerment. Korn's deftly crafted tale, *Born in the Big Rains*, is a candid history of a life sculpted by the crippling rheumatism caused by the circumcision and the unexpected path to health that took her into the heart of Mogadishu and then abroad, where she became a spokesperson against female genital mutilation (FGM) for FORWARD-Germany.

"A UN declaration demands the elimination of FGM. Yet the practice continues because it enforces men's sexual authority but also because women accept it as a cultural marker, a coming of age rite. Fadumo Korn's story limns the interstices of these social and very human contradictions. It is a courageous, deeply sympathetic, and indispensable text."  
– **Elfriede Jelinek, 2004 Nobel Laureate in Literature**

"FGM is a trauma as much to the psyche as to the body. This riveting memoir lets readers witness every aspect of a complex and triumphantly successful recovery. Fadumo's past resilience carries over to her inspiring career as a champion of the reproductive rights of girls and women today."  
– **Efua Dorkenoo, Order of the British Empire (OBE); Ghanaian women's health advocate; and founder, The Foundation for Women's Health, Research, and Development (FORWARD) International**

"UNIFEM and others have supported women's campaigns in countries round the world to change laws, institutions and practices around FGM--along with the economics, politics and deep-seated gender inequalities that allow it to continue. But at the end of the day, what brings truly sustainable change is the courage of individuals like Fadumo Korn to move from survivors to impassioned advocates for justice. This book helps us all to understand how such a transformation is possible."  
– **Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)**

"From the toughness of nomadic life in the steppes of rural Somalia, to the bewilderment of Mogadishu, to full blown social engagement in Europe, a stubborn African girl tries to make sense of gender and class inequalities, clan conflicts, and cultural impositions. Refreshing as the water from the spring and enthralling in its elegant simplicity, this story of survival flows with the lyricism, grace and rhythm of the book."  
– **Obioma Nnaemeka, Professor of French, Women's Studies and African/African Diaspora Studies, Indiana University, Indianapolis; President, African Women Scholars**



**FADUMO KORN** works for FORWARD- Germany, an organization dedicated to promoting action to stop FGM. She lives with her husband and son in Munich. Writer and radio journalist **SABINE EICHHORST** is the author of *Courage to Defend Yourself: Strategies against Sexual Violence* and *A Long Way Home: Prisoner of Uzbekistan*. **TOBE LEVIN** is a collegiate professor, University of Maryland in Europe and non-resident Fellow at the W.E.B. DuBois Institute, Harvard University.

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**Editorial Note. *Feminist Europa. Review of Books*** was founded to make accessible to English-speaking readers feminist literature published in languages other than English that otherwise would be missed. With the translation of Fadumo Korn by The Feminist Press we have achieved this aim. We hope the following excerpts will whet your appetite and persuade you to order the book.  
[[www.feministpress.org](http://www.feministpress.org)]

**Excerpts from Fadumo Korn with Sabine Eichhorst. *Geboren im Großen Regen. Mein Leben zwischen Afrika und Deutschland. Mit einem Vorwort von Karlheinz Böhm. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 2005, pp. 256, ISBN 3-499 23798 9. [Born in the Big Rains. A Memoir of Somalia and Survival. Trans. and Afterword by Tobe Levin]. New York: The Feminist Press, 2006. ISBN 1-55861-531-8.***

Trans. Tobe Levin

### *From Section Nomadic Life*

The mirror sprang open. I saw a face.  
It was strangely large and distorted.

Laughing, I closed the mirror, shook myself, opened it again, and looked. Khadija pulled my arm, and a hundred hands reached at the same time for the pocket mirror. All the girls pushed and wanted to see what this was all about. I felt like a queen. I hugged my brother and drowned him in kisses. "Thank you, Ahmed."

Ahmed picked me up and tossed me in the air until I got dizzy. He was the best brother in the world. If I had my way, I'd marry him. My mother stood next to us. "Your brother has come for your sake," she said and petted my hair. I didn't understand what she meant but I felt like the most important person in the universe.

"You've really gotten big," he said.

Dusk had fallen as my family gathered in the courtyard. We sat cross-legged in front of four huts. The fried goat smelled and tasted wonderful. I snuggled up to my mother and envied little Muhammad who, courageously, cavorted about under Ahmed's legs. Everyone ate and laughed and described what had happened since Ahmed's last visit.

Later, when I was alone, I took out my presents. Carefully I draped the fabric around my body, veiled my head, twisted and turned, put on the pearls, slipped into the plastic sandals and examined my feet. Everything smelled so new and promising. I closed my eyes and breathed the aroma so as to remember always. Then I opened the buckle on the sandals, undid the pearls, and folded the fabric. The pearls and the shoes I gave to my mother, who locked them in a trunk. The cloth I placed on the mats. At night I'd use it as an aromatic pillow.

"Tomorrow's your big day," my mother said.

Khadija said, "If you die, I'll get your presents."

My skin crawled as if there were ants all over it. I heard mother's breath, my brothers' snores, the goats' and sheep's baying. Before going to bed my mother had bathed me, scrubbing my body with soap, and cut my finger- and toenails. She had braided my hair and rubbed my body with buttermilk so that I smelled like perfume.

I am going to be married, I thought. Then I realized that I couldn't marry. I was still impure.

Is that what my mother had meant?

I was seven years old. Before the last Big Rains almost all the girls my age had had *gudniin*, circumcision. But I had been sick. The child will die, my mother had objected. She had not permitted them to come for me. Aunt Asha hadn't allowed my cousin Iman to be circumcised either. A bird shrieked. I felt mother's breath on my neck. On this night Muhammad had to give up his accustomed spot. For the first time since I was a baby I was privileged to lie in my mother's arms. But I couldn't sleep. My stomach felt hot and hollow. All girls anxiously await their circumcision, but nobody talks about it. I thought of Nadifo and Amal. They had boasted and spread the word that they were beautiful and pure, and the rest of us were dirty. But sometimes I'd see a girl coming back home crying. Some girls became ill. Whatever lay before me, I knew it was going to be painful.

If only the excisor would die, this very night!

I was shocked at my own thoughts. Excisors are believed to have magical powers. There was something mysterious about them. What would happen should she detect my evil wishes? With what spirits was she on intimate terms? Quickly I mumbled a few words of apology, pleaded with the spirits, and wished her a good long life (25, 26).

### *From Section In Germany*

Never had I imagined it could be so easy to empty my bladder. What a powerful stream! What a feeling of relief after only a few seconds! Till now I'd spent ten, twenty, even thirty minutes on the toilet, pressing and squeezing. I used to drink very little, which led to painful kidneys. But how could I have explained to an employer why it took me half an hour to go to the bathroom?

Now it was almost a pleasure to go.

Even greater was my surprise one morning to discover a spot of blood on the sheet. I was a little afraid that the wound had opened, but it was my period. No ripping, no rumbling. My stomach didn't hurt, I had no cramps, I didn't even have to throw up, and after only four days, it was over. I felt light and laughed, felt a tickling behind my belly button and laughed more loudly. I breathed in and breathed out, and felt for the first time since that morning in the clearing that air could stream deep inside my body. I felt cheerful and free.

In the coming months as well, my periods came and went without incident. The panic that had become habitual at their approach gradually diminished. No longer was I compelled to change jobs every couple of months because, during menstruation, I would be absent for several days. I began to use makeup, to change my hair style, and to take care of myself (125).

### *From Section In Germany*

"I can't sleep with a man," I said.

"Yes, you can," Dr. Schmidt replied.

Whenever I visited his office, Walter came with me. Dr. Schmidt took time to talk to us about sex. [...] He often talked in the plural, or about "us three," as if we were a team working

on a common project. "Lust and sensitivity can be learned," he said. But really, I didn't want to feel. My experience had taught me that touching my body meant only torture.

"Discover your body," Dr. Schmidt repeated again and again. "Touch yourself—with your fingers, with a feather. Find out what satisfies you." I stared at him, completely at sea, and sometimes shipwrecked.

"Never!" I swore. Allah would kill me. Lightning would strike. Maybe I'd be sterile! I wanted at least five children.

"Sex takes place in your head, not between your legs," Dr. Schmidt said. "Enjoy your body."

"Leave me alone," I responded harshly more than once. Two years after the wedding we had the honeymoon (126).

## **Lifelong Wounds**

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### **Martina Scherf**

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Trans. Tobe Levin

**Review of Fadumo Korn with Sabine Eichhorst. *Geboren im Großen Regen. Mein Leben zwischen Afrika und Deutschland. Mit einem Vorwort von Karlheinz Böhm.* [Born in the Big Rains. A Memoir of Somalia and Survival. With a Foreword by Karlheinz Böhm]. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2005, pp. 256, ISBN 3-49923798 9. Originally published as „Lebenslange Wunden“ in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*/ No. 245. 22 October 2004.**

*Thanks to the Süddeutsche Zeitung,  
22 October 2004 for this review.*

Her tenacity and temperament came to light early: as a nomadic child, Fadumo wanted to dispel the boredom of a desert afternoon by decorating her goat with flowers. But the animal just wouldn't stand still. So she got mad and bit it in the neck. Even today, Fadumo remains a woman with attitude when, while striving for good, she finds boulders in her path. Yes, the road from spirited nomad to citizen of Munich, wife, mother, translator and public speaker has been a long one. And when the

forty-year-old talks to schoolchildren today about her flight, the speech is so unconventional and convincing that, beyond the brevity of her classroom visit, years later she's still receiving emails from the kids. They will certainly also read her book, coming out now from Rowohlt: *Born in the Big Rains*. The story of growing up in Somalia, pain and death would play a major role were it not for the extraordinary author's astonishing courage and sense of humor. Her style enjoys such liveliness, purity and atmosphere that readers can easily imagine the fate she describes – and be constantly surprised at the pragmatism of a chronically ill and undernourished girl.

Her story is similar to that of her sister-sufferer, Waris Dirie, and in fact, it was Dirie's book *Desert Flower* that gave Fadumo the courage to go on the offensive with her topic, female circumcision, and to become active in the association FORWARD. Cut at age seven, thrown into a coma, suffering osteoarthritis that has deformed the bones in her fingers and toes, altogether ill, Fadumo was sent to live with a wealthy uncle who facilitated treatment in European hospitals. At 18, when she met her husband in Munich, her travels ceased.

Not that her own health is significantly better, but Fadumo intercedes for others suffering a similar fate, in Germany and in war-torn Somalia. It took her years to develop a more positive attitude toward her body; circumcision had led to hatred of it. Her body made her feel ashamed. Only once she had overcome her guilt was she able to write a book to convey not only the pain but also the beauty of her African homeland and the strength of its women.

## Frankly, this is what it is

Excerpt from Koïta, Khady and Marie-Thérèse Cuny. *Mutilée*. [Mutilated]. Paris: Oh! Éditions, 2005, pp. 233, ISBN 9 782 9150 56358.

Trans. Rosa von Gleichen

On our street, only two families practice the *salindé*: the Mandingos from Casamance

and us – the Soninkés. Farther off, there are also the Toucouleur and the Bambara who perpetuate the same tradition. But it is a secret practice. No one talks about it, especially not to the Wolofs. Some things do not need to be said. Later on, our parents intend to arrange a marriage for us with cousins from the same family. These cousins want real women, traditional Soninké women. Nobody imagines that one day there might be mixed marriages, marriages between different tribes.

Soninkés, Sérères, Peuls, Bambara and Toucouleur are the ethnic groups that have come to the city. And as with all immigrant families, parents raise their children to remember their home villages and to transmit traditions to the children they will have. There are some good traditions, but this one is frightful.

On that day, the girls were tense, frozen with fear to the point of peeing in their pants. But not a single one attempted flight – unthinkable, even if we all tried hard to spot somebody to save us. Maybe Grandfather... If he were aware of the gravity of this act, he could intervene. But I doubt that he had been kept on top of things. Women accuse men of being instigators, but fathers are rarely told anything, except if the excision is done as an initiation ritual, in which case the entire village is informed. In the big cities, they do it at home, secretly, in a way to prevent the neighbors from hearing. My father wasn't there, and nobody asked his or my maternal grandfather's opinion. This is a women's affair, and we were to become women like them.

They unrolled two large mats – one in front of the door of the first room, the other at the entrance to the indoor shower consisting of a hole in the cement and a jar of water. The first room resembled all the rooms of the women in the family: a big bed, a little sideboard and an iron trunk containing each woman's things. The new clothes which we were destined for had already been spread out on the bed. I don't remember who was called first, I was so anxious. We were there, wanting to see with big eyes to know how it happens, but the grandmothers firmly forbade us.

Get away from there! Sit down! Sit down on the landing.

You have no right to watch what is happening to your playmates.

At that moment three or four women were inside with one girl. When I heard her dreadful screams, tears rolled down my cheeks. There was no way out, I just had to go through with it. I was the fourth or fifth in line, seated, knees stretched out, trembling at every howl, my entire body strained by the agony of the others.

Two women caught me and dragged me inside. The one behind me took hold of my head, and her knees crushed my shoulders under their weight so as to keep me from moving. The other woman was clasping me firmly by the thighs, my legs spread wide. Immobilization depends on the girl's age and, above all, on her physical development. If she moves a lot, because she is big and strong, it takes more women to control her. If the child is small and skinny, there are fewer of them. The woman in charge of the operation has one razor per girl at her disposal – the razor the mother bought specifically for the occasion. My own screams still resound in my ears today. ...

In Soninké, our grandmother announced that we were going to be salindé in order to “pray,” which in our language means “being purified for prayer.” In French we say “excised.” We also say “cut.”

The shock is brutal. Now I know what had been waiting for me: that thing the mothers talked about from time to time at home like some mysterious dignity. Repressed images suddenly surfaced. Our big sisters had gone through it, taught by the grandmothers privileged to run households and educate children.

When a girl is born, following baptism on the seventh day, the grandmothers see to it that her ears are pierced with a needle threaded with black and red to ensure that the hole doesn't close. The grandmothers are also the ones to manage weddings, births, babies, and ‘purification’.

Once all the mothers had left, a strange sense of abandonment took hold of me, but now I know why no mother with a solid heart could stand the sight, or better, the sound, of what was about to happen to her daughter. She knows what it's all about because she's been through

it, and as soon as they lay hands on her child, her own flesh bleeds again.

Still, she's resigned to it because this is the way things are, so she accepts that the ritual barbarity supposedly to “purify for prayer” will also bring her daughter as a virgin to her wedding day and keep her faithful.

To insist that African women continue the ritual is misleading because it has nothing whatsoever to do with religion. In Black Africa, excision is practiced by animists, Christians, Moslems and even the Jewish Falashas. It started long ago, well before the advent of Islam.

Men have wanted to keep it going for several bad reasons: to guarantee their power and to prevent their wives from getting pregnant with other men. They also think that men of other tribes will be less likely to rape excised women! Explanations, even more absurd, allege that the woman's sex is impure, diabolic. The clitoris, a devil's instrument, will subject the child to all kinds of harm, and possibly death. Some have also thought that the clitoris, a faulty penis, poses a challenge to virility.

But domination alone is the real reason. And men have passed responsibility for execution onto women since it was out of the question that a man should “see” let alone “touch” that intimate part, even on a child.

At seven, like all the girls, I was totally unaware that I even had a clitoris, or what purpose it served. I had never noticed it, and now I never would. The only thing that mattered that morning was the impending unbearable pain whose vague hints I had dismissed before as having nothing to do with me.

For instance, I remembered a mother or grandmother gesturing toward a naughty little boy with fingers moving like scissors, pulling his appendage and threatening, “Be good, or I'll cut!” The boy would run away as quickly as he could from the menace of castration, having already experienced the knife's bite. ... I had seen the boys' bizarre walk like ducks, and how they sat down with great difficulty and whimpered for two or three days, sometimes for a whole week. And I thought myself safe, because I was girl...

I didn't know, in 1967, what my own bloody intimate cutting would mean for my future. But it would take me on the long march through a difficult, even cruel, life until, in 2005, I found myself invited to address the U.N.  
...

## France still has a lot to deliver!

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### Florence Deguen with Claudine Proust/ Interview by Florence Deguen

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Trans. Tobe Levin

*Thanks to the author and Le Parisien, where this article and interview appeared on 16. October 2005.*

**Review of Koïta, Khady and Marie-Thérèse Cuny. *Mutilée*. [Mutilated]. Paris: Oh! Éditions, 2005, pp. 233, ISBN 9-782-9150-56358. Originally published as « *La France doit encore livrer. Mutilations* », in *le Parisien*. 16 October 2005.**

Khady Koïta, activist and author of a shocking memoir, gives us another projectile in the battle for the urban ghettos.

An excruciating word, excision elicits a silent grimace from nearly every woman who hears it, whether she's felt the pain in her own flesh or is simply called on to imagine it. Mutilation of the genitals continues in several dozen countries and threatens 30,000 to 60,000 young girls in France today. Now, when vigilance is especially important, a pioneer of twenty years in the struggle against the practice, Khady Koïta has brought out the story of her "prise de conscience" around the topic. This is important even if trials have happily reduced the number of excisions in France and the issue of forced marriage has to a certain extent supplanted excision debates. The fact is, girls are still being cut in France despite the law and a change in the climate of opinion.

Emmanuelle Piet, a gynecologist at the Protection Maternelle et Infantile (PMI) of Seine-Saint-Denis says, "In the early eighties, nearly every African girl who arrived was

excised. Today we find emerging a generation of uncut girls. A lovely victory. But unfortunately, not all families have come around." For instance, an eight-year-old leaves for vacation in Mali and comes back traumatized. She can no longer pee. A joyful, integrated adolescent disappears at Easter. She returns on Ascension Day married (by force) and excised.

"The trials have most certainly had an educational effect," says Linda Weil-Curiel, pioneering attorney and veteran activist against FGM who has represented numerous clients. "Prevention and repression have combined to prevent many parents from committing the irreparable, but we've got to remain hyper-vigilant and work in collaboration with doctors to ensure that no one falls through the net! Too many physicians still think, 'What good will it do to denounce the parents? What's done is done and can't be undone.'" As for the girls, if they don't 'sound the alarm' after being excised, the tendency is to keep quiet. It's obviously not an easy thing to have your parents arrested, even if they've put you through hell.

#### **Surveillance: a delicate operation.**

"The problem is, if the girls don't speak up, excision is really hard to trace," says sociologist Isabelle Gillette-Faye, head of GAMS (Groupe pour l'Abolition des mutilations sexuelles). "Parents are well aware that the PMI regularly examine girls only up to the age of 6. School doctors' offices are rarely set up for gynecological examinations and nobody's looking to see if the girl has arrived at the airport intact!"

Government is now mainly concerned about African girls who enter and leave France, especially in cases of illegal immigration. "The moment a mother is escorted back to the border, her daughter has a choice of going with her and being excised in her home country, or turning herself over to social services for children," Gillette-Faye continues sadly. At present, GAMS is interceding in a dozen such cases. And sometimes with success. A thirteen year old girl from Mali whose mother was being extradited sued for asylum in Orléans and received refugee status for herself and her mother.



**"It's up to us women to eradicate this practice!"  
Khady Koita, 46, excised at age 7.**

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**Interview by Florence Deguen**

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Trans. Tobe Levin.

*Thanks to the author and Le Parisien,  
where this interview appeared on  
16. October 2005*

She walks ... and walks and walks and walks. Even when she was just a little girl, her mother says, Khady could never sit still. She's indefatigable, whether addressing UNESCO, the University of Paris School of Medicine, or Zenith. Excised at seven, married by force at 13, Khady is now 46. The mother who allowed her own daughters to be excised is now highly motivated to spare future generations. Subject to a number of oppressive traditions, Khady has liberated herself and became a militant. Her book confirms a controversial truth: excision represents a mutilation from which one never really recovers.

**Why did you write the book just now?**

**Khady:** I've thought about it for ten years and I knew the moment had come. The little girls we African immigrants bore and sacrificed in the early eighties have now reached their twenties. All of them were mutilated, and now they're having daughters of their own. They are the ones to carry our

banner, to refuse to excise their girls and thus realize, finally, the slogan 'never again'.

**Are you thinking about your own daughters?**

**Khady:** I just let it happen to my first two daughters, but asked for it myself for the third. I spared only one. I was young, ignorant, lost... But I've never forgiven myself [She weeps.] I hope my daughters accept the apology I've never been able to offer openly. This book, it's a cry of anger and pain ... and a plea for pardon. It's a long, hard road, but I hope many women will take it and encourage others who haven't yet set out.

**How did you become a tireless militant against FGM?**

**Khady:** In the late seventies, I was miserable and lonely as stone in a foreign country, married to a man I hardly knew. One day, I saw a tv film about the first association for African women immigrants in France. The president was shown stretched out on the grass in a park, free as the air... So it was possible! I began to frequent the community centers, the associations, allowing my thoughts to range freely. Excising a girl is also abridging her freedom of thought. The day I became a militant, I learned how to think for myself again.

**"It's hard to explain the void, the emptiness, the submerged pain."**

**When did you realize the full impact of what had been done to you?**

**Khady:** After my third girl was excised. Several babies had recently died as a result of excision and the trials had begun... I began to hate myself, tormented by what I hadn't prevented. But if I hadn't known better than to subject my daughters to a barbaric custom, maybe I could help other young girls emerge from oppression. It's women who transmit life ... and traditions. Men aren't in this chain at all. So it's up to us women to end it. But it's not a struggle that will simply close twenty years down the road. It means constant vigilance to prevent back-sliding, to prevent excision of girls North and South. ... When I see mothers going back to Africa to have their

daughters done, I know there's still a lot of work ahead of us.

**Many women are still doing this?**

**Khady:** There are many. We haven't opened up enough to Western culture which we should do for the sake of our children. Everywhere in Europe I see Africans closed in on themselves. They automatically recreate village life, roping themselves off in these housing developments that don't do our kids a lot of good. The near totality of women who continue excising is hung up on their culture for lack of alternatives. We have to explain, again and again, that excision isn't a religious tradition. It's a mutilation! I hope one day soon to hear the Imams declare loud and clear that the Koran opposes it.

**You are a firm believer...**

**Khady:** And prudish. It's really difficult to tell the world such intimate things, but, after all, I'm already a symbol. It means a sacrifice, but I was determined to write this book in open honesty. It's not easy to explain to a Western woman this void, this absence, this submerged pain that haunts us. I'm often asked if I have a sex life, if I experience desire. But how can you talk about what you've never known? Restorative surgery is a fabulous discovery. But it's not a solution. The only valid one is to ensure that genital mutilation is never performed again.

## **THREE more on FGM, from France, Italy, and Switzerland**

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**Tobe Levin**

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**Review of Prolongeau, Hubert. *Victoire sur l'Excision. Pierre Foldès, le chirurgien qui redonne l'espoir aux femmes mutilées*. Préface de Bernard Kouchner. [Victory over Excision. Pierre Foldès, the Surgeon Who Gives Hope to Mutilated Women. With a Foreword by Bernard Kouchner]. Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2006, pp. 238, ISBN 2-226-16804-4.**

**Review of Busoni, Mila and Elena Laurenzi, eds. *Il corpo dei simboli. Nodi teorici e politici di un dibattito sulle mutilazioni genitali***

***femminili*. [The Body as Symbol. Theoretical and Political Approaches to FGM]. Firenze: Sei Editori, 2004, pp. 234, ISBN 88-89473-00-2.**

**Review of Lange, Benoit and Dominique Voinçon. *Cicatrice. Un village et l'excision*. [Scar. A Village and Excision]. Lausanne Éditions Favre, 2004, ISBN 2-8289-0767-8.**

Despite an unfortunate title, *Victory over Excision. Pierre Foldès, the Surgeon Who Gives Hope to Excised* [literally: mutilated] *Women*, journalist Hubert Prolongeau introduces the reader to a courageous and generous pioneer in reconstructive surgery for those whose clitoris has been amputated. Foldès, a urologist employed by Doctors without Borders, developed a procedure when confronted with fistula while serving in Madagascar and Burkina Faso. To say the physician has generated enthusiasm among potential patients would be an understatement. Arriving late to a meeting of the European Network against FGM in Paris, I walked in on the tail end of Foldès speech. He received not only a standing ovation but joking requests from a number of activists, saying, "Don't go yet. You've got work to do right here..." Foldès, with an office at the Clinique Louis XI in St. Germain-en-Laye, succeeded in convincing the national health to cover the relatively simple operation so that patients could benefit without having to pay. He outlines sensitive counseling and follow-up care.

The procedure involves an overnight hospital stay and consists of trimming the scar from the clitoral surface before rolling back tissue along the root to expose the still-existing organ, for the clitoris extends backward from its tip to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> vertebrae. It cannot, therefore, be excised in its entirety. Foldès excavates and reconstructs, restoring sensitivity in upwards of 75% of patients. Foldès, despite having received death threats, responded to significant demand from excised women in France by training others to perform the operation, too. The book is a must read for anyone interested in FGM.

*The Body as Symbol* is quite different but also takes off, ironically, from activity in an operating room. This radical, edited volume on

FGM, drawing significantly on the work of anthropologists, arose in response to a scandal in Florence. In 2004, to substitute for infibulation demanded by Somali immigrants, Dr. Omar Abdulcadir, an Italian citizen of Somali birth, proposed drawing a drop of blood under anesthesia with the scalpel used for diabetes testing. Abdulcadir claimed that ‘mild sunna’ would preserve the rite but reduce the harm, especially when accompanied by a certificate issued to the family for public display so that the girl would be spared even if taken back to Somalia. Now, “out of ‘respect’ for the multi-cultural agenda, many intellectuals took Abdulcadir’s side” (C. Scoppa, personal communication, 2005), but African women’s organizations rejected the proposal with ferocity: medicalization perpetuates control of female sexuality and, if approved in any form, would undermine struggles of women throughout Africa trying to stop this pernicious but proliferating development. African women activists in Italy see the surgery as symbolizing male control over female sexuality.

When Abdulcadir received the green light from his hospital’s bio-ethics committee, he requested approval from Tuscan regional authorities, thereby triggering a town meeting that led to this book, also inspired by three additional conferences: “Incontro-dibattito: Mutilazioni genitali femminili: un dibattito tra politica e cultura,” that took place on 12 May 2004 in Florence at Il Giardino dei Ciliegi; the “Seminario di studi: Corpo diritti differenze in una società multiculturale,” on 27 May 2004 in Rome’s Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso Issoco; and on 22 June 2004, the AIDoS-sponsored conference “Mutilazioni dei genitali femminili. Una giornata di riflessione.”

The chapters, originally speeches that have been revised, offer a wealth of reflection and references. The book is also attractive. Adorned with stunning color photographs is an imaginative piece by Cristiana Scoppa, “My baby tree.” The “story in words and images” reveals what a Gambian grassroots organization, StopFGM, is doing to eradicate the practice. (StopFGM is assisted by AIDoS.) Scoppa’s pragmatic approach follows theoretical articles by anthropologists, both African and (white) Italian, that proudly stand

by activists in Africa. Diya Ndiaye, for instance, in “Rompere il muro del silenzio!” [Break the Wall of Silence] narrates disputes over terminology, landing squarely on the side of FGM (as opposed to “circumcision” or cutting). Her opening line quotes Gérard Zwang: “Any definitive and irreversible removal of a healthy organ is mutilation” (101). She sees the problem in calling it “circumcision” as a confirmation of the symbolic. Similarly militant are the voices from Women Living under Muslim Laws, whose views appear in the chapter by Elena Laurenzi, “Il multiculturalismo in questione. Donne in rete contro I fondamentalismi.” Although anthropologist Mila Busoni admits the difficulty in cultural translation of emotions associated with sexuality, her opening chapter on “Politiche della cultura e del corpo sessuato. Una prospettiva critica sulle mutilazioni genitali femminili” concludes, “Theory isn’t neutral... It is intimately tied to the political” (36). In light of (English-language, mainly US) anthropologists’ tendency to take sides by refusing to take sides, the perspective this text offers from the ‘other side’ of the Atlantic suggests a more positive and responsible role for academia in efforts to stop FGM.

Sharing an anthropologist’s concern for context, *Cicatrice. Un village et l’excision*. [Scar. A Village and Excision] presents the work of photographer Benoit Lange and copywriter Dominique Voinçon who document in stunning black and white an ethnographic sojourn in Burkina Faso. This unusually formatted volume, 30 centimeters long and 22 high, allows Zaba village to spring to life in all its dailiness and festivity. Opened to the very center with its stitches showing, the coffee-table hardback gestures inexorably toward Ousmane Sembène’s film *Moolaadé* (also 2004) in its dramatic presentation of the gender divide, for here we find on the left, only women together and, on the right, only men, both groups placed in front of the typical architecture of the region, a storage facility for grain to evoke, if subtly, the harsh environment and resulting economic strain under which life goes on. And with rare exceptions, individual shots reproduce gender segregation, important in perpetuating FGM. The narrative of images also remains in good

taste. There are no graphic pictures of the operation, only the shot of a four to six year old whose fingers cover her eyes while fragile wrists are grasped by adult hands so big that they obscure her forearm to the elbow. An excisor, magisterial in front of her flat *banco* brick house, is captured from below by the camera angle reproducing a small child's line of sight. The effect is powerful, and the caption explains, if "the *somono* of Zaba... is to obey the law and give up her practice, she will be forced to find another source of income" (np), implying that she cuts due to economic distress. As for the little girl under the knife, Voinçon notes the "excessive, shooting pain" and the fact that she "is always taken by surprise." What is taboo and what can be revealed play a large part in the choice of illustrations. The book features animal mask ceremonials that accompany circumcision rites. These in turn are embedded in a village's daily life. The result is an interesting muting of genital cutting despite the book's title, a one-time act that recedes in magnitude when seen against the fullness of the day-to-day enhanced from time to time by ceremonial. Still, the author and photographer intone, "may little girls in the Zaba of tomorrow escape mutilation of their bodies and, instead, enjoy a vibrant culture capable of change."

## Foreign Women: Double Violence

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**Raquel Agraz Aquilar**

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Trans. Tobe Levin

**Review of the Comité d'action interassociatif « Droits des femmes, droit au séjour. Contre la double violence ». *Femmes et étrangères : contre la double violence. Témoignages et analyses*. [Foreign Women: Against a Double Violence, Testimony and Analyses]. Eds. Sarah Belaïsch (Cimade Île de France), Anne Nguyen Dago (Fédération Nationale Solidarité Femmes), Soheila de Larminat (Ligue des femmes iraniennes pour la Démocratie), Clara Domingues and Claudine Lesselier (Rajfire). Paris, November 2004. Bulletin de**

**L' ANEF [special thematic issue] – Été-Automne 2005. 45-6.**

*Thanks to the Bulletin de l'ANEF – Été-Automne 2005. 45-6.*

Failure to respect women's rights as well as the rights of foreign residents constitutes a doubling of violence against women. Discrimination takes many forms: we are concerned with asylum-seekers, refugees, domestic slaves, forced marriages, conjugal battering, pimping. The women – Souad, Karina, Rosina, Malika, for example – are Romanian, Senegalese, Algerian, Russian... Theirs are the faces of this double violence against foreign women. And in order to deal with situations migrant females encounter daily, feminist associations for the rights of women and foreigners in France have created an umbrella to unite various NGOs sharing similar aims. The association is called "Rights of women, rights of asylum: against a double violence." The present collection of essays emerged from the group's founding conference to insist on women's rights as an integral part of human rights.

The first part of the publication contains the testimony of women who have experienced exile, persecution, sexual and domestic exploitation, violence due to their sex and national origins. These narratives make visible the sexist violence of the state against female foreign residents in France. The second part provides critical analyses of the law of 26 November 2003 concerning entry and sojourn of foreigners in France. The so-called "Sarkozy's law" limits access to French territory, destabilizes residency, modifies provisions concerning re-uniting families, and regulates awarding of temporary residence. In brief, the law increases the fragility of residency rights, especially where migrant women are concerned. The book opens a window onto the challenges facing migrant women and closes the door to indifference or disrespect. For it also confirms that real equality between men and women implies an end to practices viewed as "traditions" or "customs" which themselves result in discrimination and violence against women.

## Maternal, Parental... or Mothers vs. Parents

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**Michèle Ferrand**

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Trans. Tobe Levin

**Review of *Maternité et parentalité*. Sous la direction d'Yvonne Knibiehler and Gerard Neyrand. [Maternal, Parental]. Rennes: éditions ENSP, 2004.**

*Thanks to Bulletin de l'ANEF – Printemps 2005. 61-64.*

This anthology arose out of a workshop at the third international conference on feminist research – “Ruptures, resistance and utopias” – held at the University of Toulouse in September 2002. Its origin explains the diversity of styles and subjects, because in addition to reflection on the innovative term “parenting” (parentalité), it looks at breast-feeding, IVF decisions, increasing instability of the job market, medically-assisted procreation, and justice for minors in various national contexts: Finland, Brasil, Quebec, and Algeria. Different disciplinary approaches also obtain: history, sociology, political science, psychology, and literature are all represented.

Yvonne Knibiehler opens the work by evoking “Maternity and democracy,” synthesizing positions she has been developing over the years. Gerard Neyrand, more innovative, follows with a chapter on “Reconfigurations of contemporary maternity.” Neyrand disrupts a certain number of debates about the impact of feminism and reproductive technologies, asking whether politics can regulate procreation and intimacy. He distinguishes psychological development as a function of physical sex, asking about the relationship between sexuality and parenting (in so far as parenting mediates and models relations between women and men). Finally, he examines the relationship between parenting and other areas of social life. He concludes by underlining the subversive effects of reproductive technologies on maternity, now made to “appear to vacillate, no longer organic and innate” (36).

Claude Martin’s text, “Parenting: controversy swirls around a public problem,” follows perfectly from the preceding, showing how, given the flood of definitions, it is logical to expect a multiplicity of practices concerning childcare and filiation. The term parenting is useful precisely because imprecise while bracketing both the maternal and the paternal. It permits awareness of ways in which the family has broadened. Take homo-parenting, for instance: oxymoron or adequate term to cover a certain reality? Reviewing the terms Martin puts forth reveals transformation and the anxiety it creates. Some find changes “virtuous” because detrimental to rigid traditions whereas others see new concepts differently: they “signify a society in ruin and a galloping individualism.” Claude Martin insists, however, that much depends on the manner in which the term parenting is used, in an era fearful for its security, as part of “a discourse of public order,” in light of which social science claims to have little influence because too nuanced in its analyses to serve as a counter-balance. In other words, concrete conditions in parenting are too infrequently evoked (economic, material or psychological constraints), yet these would help explain those stigmatized by public discourse (parents who are so-called ‘démissionnaires’.)

Now, it is precisely these concrete conditions of maternity – and the way they are ignored by certain persons invested with social responsibility – that are revealed in the chapter by Coline Cardi, “The image of the ‘bad mother’ in trials of minors,” and in Romaine Malenfant’s “Maternity and the shrinking job market.” The responsibility differential determined by the parent’s sex is thus doubly evident, both as representation, always traditional, of “woman’s place” in the home rather than at work, and in the solitude of women engaged in imposed arbitration undertaken by so-called conciliation councils trying to balance work and maternal obligations. Difference is also the theme in Geneviève Cresson’s chapter, “From the egalitarian ideal to unequal practices: what ‘reorganization?’” where reorganization is understood as elevating paternity over maternity. Cresson shows the distance between the ideal of sharing tasks, both from the point of

view of the law as well as from the perspective of practice in concrete daily life. We can discern in her particularly convincing argument precisely how the discourse about parents (used by mothers, too) and society masks the inequality in responsibility for childcare according to the sex of the parent. Asking with humor about the “symbolic place” of the mother, she shows how “the symbolism” of the father is largely used to avoid “insisting on the (possible) weakness of paternal engagement in concrete situations” (124).

Three texts follow, returning to the question of accessing parenthood, that is, via reproductive technologies or – refusing fatherhood – abortion.

Didier Le Gall, in “Words of women in shared custody,” asks why our societies favor a “logic of substitution to the detriment of an additive logic” which “excludes entirely any possibility of recognizing, even symbolically, shared parenting” (128). At the same time, he underscores ambiguities in obvious multiple parenthood (AI, legal but open adoption) and the difficulties in “assigning shared custody” following divorce.

Still concerned with reproductive technologies, Laurence Tain, in “Assisted maternity,” proposes re-reading the ways in which desire for a child is initiated by the couple but travels to the medical team. According to Tain, “this displacement of maternity onto a technological stage” accentuates inequalities women experience in maternity (165).

Claudine Philippe, who has studied “Couples facing unplanned pregnancies,” shows how this particular emergency highlights the character of the surprised couple’s rapport. Philippe identifies modes of response, such as minimal implication or the demand for support in the relationship.

Finally, three texts focus on practices surrounding maternity in three countries other than France. Heini Martiskainen de Koenigswater proposes a sociological and comparative historical approach to “Politics and discourses of maternity in Finland and France.” Zinteh Ali-Benali, in “And if we listened to them speak for themselves? Algerian women in the mirror of their texts,” offers a literary

analysis of identity formation in women who are also mothers. And Gilza Sandre-Peirera, in “Breast-feeding and maternal identity: Brazil and France,” interrogates differences between the continents, showing how they are linked through representations of maternal behavior and influences of egalitarian or equity feminism.

As you can see, these chapters range broadly and although they don’t directly address one another, often call and respond, underscoring the ebullience of ideas and debates that have sprung up around these complex tensions between maternity and parenthood. From one text to the next, family specialists or sexologists as well as interested laypersons will find a generous amount of material for reflection.

## Mothers and Symbols

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**Annik Houel**

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Trans. Tobe Levin

**Review of Murano, Luisa. *L’Ordre symbolique de la mère*. [Symbolic Order of the Mother]. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2003. Trans. Francesca Solari & Laurent Cornaz. Originally published as *L’Ordine simbolico della madre*. Roma: 1991.**

*Thanks to Bulletin de l’ANEF –  
Été-Automne 2005. 50-51.*

You’ll notice right away that this book took twelve years to be translated into French whereas already in 1993 and 1994 it had appeared in both German and Spanish. This suggests not that the subject was then out-of-fashion in France (how could relations between mothers and daughters be passé?) but somehow, indeed, out of step with French feminist preoccupations. The author has placed herself in filiation (symbolically-speaking) with Irigaray and, if I may be so bold, with the Irigaray of *Le corps-à-corps avec la mère* (1981) rather than the author of *Spéculum* (1974).

Luisa Murano is intensely and personally engaged, (authentically, in her terms) and this makes the charm of the book, a poetic inter-

rogation of difficulties Murano faced with her own mother. But if she blankets it all under an “obscure aversion,” she achieves pretty quickly those lyrical, even mystical accents, leading me down a path sometimes difficult to follow. In the meantime, though, she offers a chapter, “Le savoir-aimer la Mère comme sens de l’être,” which judiciously questions the cultural foundation of daughters’ conditioned distrust vis-à-vis our mothers, unveiled as a feminine misogyny for which Simone de Beauvoir remains, for me, the most paradoxical example.

Philosophers will find substance for reflexion here in an under-debated issue, I’m sure, as Murano tours lacunae in this domain. The outcome, devoted to psychoanalysis, seemed to be above all an effort at reconciliation with the mother. But it’s here that the mystical dimension most irritated me: it’s more like the search for a maternal ideal, on the model of Irigaray (*Sexes et parentés*, 1987 or *Le temps de la différence*, 1989), running the same risk of essentialist capsizing, rather than a theorizing of concrete ups and downs in the mother-daughter dyad, whether the conflicts be of cultural or psychoanalytic origin.

But the book is a must read for all interested in the subject.

## Gendered Kurdish Lives

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**Birgit Blaettel-Mink**

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Trans. Tobe Levin

**Review of Hajo, Siamend, Carsten Bork, Eva Savelsberg & Sukriye Dogan, eds. *Gender in Kurdistan und der Diaspora. Beiträge zur Kurdologie*. [Gender in Kurdistan and the Diaspora. Contributions in Kurdistan Studies]. Vol 6. Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2004, pp. 345, ISBN 3-89771-015-3.**

Modern Kurdish historical and literary studies seem to avoid looking at gender issues. The editors of this collection offer the following explanation: “Whenever nation-building is the task at hand, unity must be forged. It is therefore little wonder that any emphasis on gendered positions, interests and experience is

in the best of cases considered irrelevant if not, more often, as counter-productive” (8). The articles here, contrarily, strongly reveal how relevant an understanding of gender can be for Kurdish studies of daily life – in Kurdistan (especially Iraq and Turkey) but also in the international diaspora.

The book gathers contributions to a workshop on Kurdish gender studies that took place in 2000 in Germany. Additional articles were also solicited. On the whole, the desire for multi-disciplinarity guided choice. Represented are Arab studies, architecture, Catholic theory, education, ethnology, Iranian Studies, Islamic Studies, language studies, political science and social anthropology. The authors, some of whom have a migratory background, are international: from Australia, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Turkey. Not a few are active in support networks for Kurdistan or are actual politicians.

Tijen Uğuriş’s essay is positioned by the editors to serve as a kind of theoretical frame. Uğuriş, an architect, analyses in her chapter on “Landscapes of the Diaspora: Kurdish women in London” the relationship between social and physical spaces, and questions how social positioning of women (and men) determines the scope of their actions. In this regard, she examines citizenship and, drawing attention to the heterogeneity of Kurds in diaspora, highlights the differences between individuals and the collective that derive from class, ethnicity, gender or relationships between the sexes. The author sees women in this system, compared to men, as objects of a much greater complexity of inclusions and exclusions. Only in the margins does the author mention why Great Britain has not succeeded at integrating Kurds – men and women. This promising look at “space” (i.e. venue) is, however, sadly missing from other chapters, nor is the concept of citizenship taken up systematically again.

The following discussion will reveal to what extent contributors apply the analytic concept of “social gender.”

To this end I’ve rearranged, the given order of presentation. To start, the only essay on language, “Gender in the Kurdish language. Structural and sociolinguistic aspects” by Geoffrey Haig, examines the relationship

between grammatical gender of nouns, adjectives and pronouns, and sex/gender as a social category. He shows conclusively that in Kurdish grammar a large number of nouns are not differentiated by gender and, hence, are said to be of “common gender,” while at the same time there’s a significant degree of gendered differentiation in Kurdish speech communities. Germany, for example, reveals the opposite development. Thus there appears to be no direct relationship between grammatical and social gender.

Three more essays examine the lives of Kurdistan women, and in particular their political or military organization or mobilization. Necla Acik in “The myth of women’s mobilization for national struggle: Analysis of contemporary Kurdish women’s magazines in Turkey,” shows that specific media images are apt to attract young women to armed struggle. This is true above all for the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party, disbanded in 2002 but born again as KADEK, Congress for Freedom and Democracy in Kurdistan. See Wolf: 187). The ambivalence evident here seems to be a general characteristic of present Kurdish gender relations. Acik sums it up as follows: “Because women are the most oppressed and humiliated, they need to exhibit the strongest will and perform the greatest deeds to bring about change in their situation. Because they are the most easily targeted by the enemy, they have to fight the hardest to overcome weakness. And because they give life, they put themselves most on the line to maintain it” (178). Kurdish women’s struggle against their own oppression also serves to emancipate the Kurdish people. Yet, at the same time, the author shows that, even in the same journals, gender specific inequalities tend more to be reproduced than transcended. Key terms are here: essentialist understandings and a static concept of culture and identity.

In “Gender relations among the guerillas of the PKK/KADEK: the concept of ‘honor’,” Judith Wolf reveals that the percentage of women members, at about one-third, is comparatively high for this kind of oppositional group. However, discourse on gender, aimed at “reproducing” equal rights for Kurdish communities, targets women almost exclusively

so that the fact of their participation as guerilla fighters doesn’t necessarily imply any lasting change in their roles. Analyzing the concept of ‘honor’, Wolf has found that, emphatically, its traditional application continues unabated. Enemies who harm women’s bodies attack the honor of the men. Women embody the honor of male family members, the guerilla unit becoming the woman’s ersatz family. At the same time, however, women in this situation can exercise leverage, in particular the power of solidarity, in the struggle for increased gender equality. Wolf also helpfully includes a careful (and succinct) history of the struggle for Kurdish liberation.

Similarly in Andrea Fischer-Tahir’s piece, “‘I was one who had no fear’: biographical approaches to women in the organized resistance in Kurdistan, Iraq, in the 80s,” honor is the theme, here in its gender-specific significance. Although for a man it is generally considered honorable to be arrested or even tortured, for women it is shameful and causes the entire family to suffer, but especially the male members. It falls to the woman’s lot to re-establish the honor that was lost. Using “oral history,” the author reconstructs three biographies of Kurdish women in the resistance, about which the editors laconically comment: “Individual passages in which the women tell about their experience of violence, torture, fear and impotence sound uncomfortably authentic” (9).

Most chapters, however, focus on conditions of daily life, self-assessment and identity formation or processes of change among women (and to a certain extent among men) in transnational migration. Marianne Rugkåsa in “The traditional, the modern and the political: politics and gender ideology among Kurdish immigrants in Oslo,” takes up the topic of politicization with special emphasis on the diaspora. Asking how Kurds living in Norway, specifically Oslo, relate to the liberation struggle in their homeland, she discerns three main tendencies. Proponents are clearly differentiated by their socio-economic circumstances both at home and in diaspora. First, there are the Traditionalists for whom Islam and membership in particular families and clans are most important. They distance themselves from

Kurdish culture. Then there are the Moderns who try to integrate into their host country but also identify with the PKK ideologically or by supporting it financially. And finally the Politicals are modern because they distance themselves from Islam but are equally traditional because actively espousing Kurdish values. In addition to reproducing families, women are expected to be politically active because “to have a politically active woman signals that the husband is a revolutionary and lives according to PKK ideology” (229).

In “The limits of diaspora. Gender-specific influences on the construction of binational identity in the Kurdish diaspora,” Minoo Alinia returns to preoccupations found in Uğuriş. She spoke to immigrants in Sweden from various countries, six women and two men, asking about identity and processes of change, testing the hypothesis that foreign experience served to increase the tendency to formulate a national Kurdish identity. In other words, the Kurdish resistance has its roots outside the country! Indeed, Alinia shows that this development plays itself out differently for men and women. The fact that women are doubly excluded in Kurdistan, by virtue of their subordinate position, doesn’t lead to a stronger politicization in comparison to men but rather to the reverse, to more intensive efforts to lay anchor in the host country. Even when women are aware of discrimination in Sweden, they also recognize the opportunity for increased liberty and self-determination – above all via education and employment. These efforts, however, don’t always run smoothly, since social control – not least because of a complex concept of ‘honor’ – generally increases in diaspora.

A slightly different provisional conclusion was drawn by Paul J. White in “The Birth of Kurdish National identity among Kurdish Women in Northwest Melbourne, Australia,” after he questioned women at various ages. He reports an on-going project whose theory, however, doesn’t place it within gender studies. White identifies a process by which Kurdish identity – that of “the Kurdish patriot” – is formulated by women of all ages and social status, mainly in response to the outbreak of armed PKK activity in 1984 in

Turkey. Nonetheless, it is impossible to discern any systematic relationship between politicization in the homeland and “nationalization” in diaspora.

Corina Großer-Kaya in “Looking for security. Daily Lives of Kurdish Women in Leipzig,” starts with the observation that most women in the diaspora had already been politically savvy before emigration. “They are politically-oriented Kurdish women who, because of their ethnicity, had been discriminated against and persecuted in Turkey and who, after leaving the country, have cultivated relations with political organizations in exile” (289). Interested in how Kurdish women in Leipzig cope with the uncertainties of their situation, Großer-Kaya asked residents in transitional housing about their strategies and abstracted three approaches: some, the Adapters, go along with the new rules; others, the Rebels, exploit all possible contact with lawyers or German women to improve their situation, and finally, the Travelers live merely pro forma in the migrants’ residence but otherwise, supported by friends and relations, do everything they can to establish themselves as professionals in the host country. Education and religious affiliation strongly suggest what strategies will be followed.

The importance of education in easing transition to the new country is explored by Regina Steimel in “Autobiographical writing as self-representation: *Henna-Mond* by Fatma B.” The author Fatma B. describes her life in Anatolia and in diaspora, clearly revealing the ambivalence that traps most women in exile. Among many theories, Steimel primarily applies developmental psychology to critical life experiences. Emphatically, Fatma B. shares her conclusion that she can’t simply dismiss her old identity but must instead effect a synthesis between identification as Kurdish and German.

In the last contribution, “Young Kurd’s Ideas about Marriage and Partner Choice,” Eva Savelsberg starts with a question of relevance: what does it mean to a Kurdish youth in Germany to have as a marriage ideal a union between patrilineal cousins, i.e. children of brothers. Results show that, although the young people are theoretically open to marrying outside their ethnic group, a significantly large

number prefer to seek mates within it. They support their parents' prerogative so that girls suffer a heavier weight of social control than boys. "Yet the study also suggests a slow, holistic change working over generations regarding preferences and norms. This is true not only for marriage choice of non-Kurdish partners but also for arranged marriages, gender-segregated labor and rigid sex roles" (283).

Doubtlessly, this collection is worth reading and offers useful insights into Kurdish life from a gender-specific perspective. If the reader wants systematic instruction, however, she may be disappointed. The book lacks focused editorial care regarding theory and the order of essays. A synergistic vision is also lacking. This fosters an impression of arbitrary chapter placement. The various pieces do not succeed in maintaining dialogue among themselves, nor have any of the authors taken up the editors on their ideas for theoretical framing. Still, this critique doesn't diminish the impression of high quality overall, in each individual chapter, especially regarding the "thick description" helping readers to see the lives of women (and men) that are, after all, lived beyond the stringencies of theory.

## Everybody Knows Adelaide! Nobody Knows Adelheid?

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**Waltraud Dumont du Voitel**

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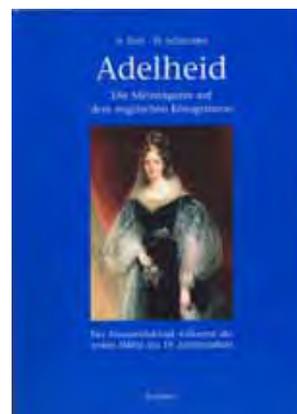
Trans. Arlette Dumont du Voitel

**Review of Erck, Alfred and Hannelore Schneider. *Adelheid. Die Meiningerin auf dem englischen Königsthron. Ein Frauenschicksal während der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts.* [Adelheid, Princess from Meiningen on the English Throne. A Woman's Destiny in the First Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century]. 2. revised edition. Meiningen: Bielstein 2004, pp. 160, ISBN 3-9809504-0-9.**

*Thanks to Querelles-Net, No. 17, 2005  
for this review.*

Based on numerous English-language and other sources, from Meiningen in particu-

lar, this book about the childhood, youth and marriage of Princess Adelheid (1792 – 1849) of the dukedom of Saxony – Meiningen by Alfred Erck and Hannelore Schneider follows the traces of a princess from Thuringia who, through marriage to the future English king William IV, rose to become a representative of the greatest world power. Erck and Schneider reveal for the first time to a larger public the story of this elitist but still little known Princess and later English queen. The study gives insight into regional as well as world history but, above all, it presents "a segment of English history from the viewpoint of Meiningen" (4). It is this Queen, who officially became Queen Adelaide in 1830, to whom the Australian city, amongst others, owes its name.



*Structure and sources:* Apart from the foreword and the epilogue, the book is divided into four major chronological sections in which the life of Adelheid in the dukedom of Meiningen and in England is presented in great detail. The knowledgeable handling of documents, letters, and pictures as well as consultation of private files and letters preserved in the city of Meiningen and in the region created the basis for securing Adelheid and her family the place in history they deserve. At the same time, English biographies were compared with chronologies from Meiningen, a procedure making this book work so authentically. Erck and Schneider rightfully criticise the fact that only English historians and biographers have so far shown any interest in Adelheid and those have limited themselves to the archives of the British royal house (3).

*From 1792 to 1818: Adelheid's 25 years in Meiningen.* Adelheid Amalie Luise Therese

Caroline von Sachsen Meiningen was born on 13 August 1792 in Thuringia's Meiningen as the daughter of Duke Georg I and his wife Luise Eleonore von Hohenlohe – Langenburg. Adelheid was supposedly a child of her time and homeland in a very special way. Erck and Schneider suspect that the good example set by her parents was responsible for her future behaviour. Her father was known as one of the most progressive German sovereigns, “who followed the principles of refined absolutism in his very own way” (5). He was concerned about the education of all, and especially of his own children. Adelheid was therefore educated in many areas and learned languages such as English and French. She benefited from association with important personalities of her time. Her mother and her grandmother, Charlotte Amalie, both highly educated and culturally engaged women, took over the regency in the dukedom of Saxony – Meiningen replacing their underage sons after their husbands died. Above all, these role models had taught Adelaide to put her own interests behind the ones of the state or the family.

At 25, an age at which women were already beyond their prime for marriage and when Adelheid's chances had diminished significantly due to local wars, restricted travelling for visits and continuous money problems, “an offer from London came in by surprise asking if the princess from Meiningen would accept the avid proposal to marry the heir to the British throne, William Henry, duke of Clarence” (24). This meant she was to marry a man as old as her mother and who had already fathered ten children, none of them legitimate, born into a previous morganatic marriage with an actress who died earlier. It was to be the princess' most important task in this marriage to produce children for a sovereign without legitimate heirs. Adelheid was not thrilled at the offer; she was even very unhappy about it but left it to her mother to make the decision: “Mother only can decide whether or not the proposal should be accepted because it is important for Bernhard's sake [...], she wrote repeatedly in her letters” (25). She complied with her mother's decision that she accept William Henry's hand, thus sacrificing herself for the sake of her family and especially for her

brother Bernhard, the future duke, by providing him with “connections” through this alliance. This, she felt, was her “destiny.” She always referred to her nuptials in 1818 as self-sacrifice for the country and her brother. This is Adelheid as obedient daughter and sister who denies her personal feelings for the sake of her homeland. Young, innocent and able to give birth, Adelheid was married off like a precious asset for the benefit of family and dynasty.

*From 1818 to 1830: education of the future Queen.* In July 1818, Adelheid married William Henry (1765 – 1837) Duke of Clarence who ran the United Kingdom as William IV King of Great Britain from as early as 1830. The Royal English Family into which Adelheid married was at odds with each other, and British society was split into two camps. In the chapter on the first years of this marriage, Erck and Schneider describe in meticulous detail the wedding celebrations, the tense relationship between husband and wife and the sociopolitical situation in England based on many references and images of that time. Adelheid's marriage began with a “painful wedding” (36); her most important duty was to give birth to viable and competent children for her rather elderly husband. This had to happen in competition with the other German princesses who were married to her husband's brothers for the same reason (32). She gave birth to two girls, Charlotte Augusta (1819) and Elizabeth (1820–21) who lived for only a short time. A later pregnancy – twins – ended with a stillbirth (1822); the marriage, therefore, remained childless. Regarding social obligations and theatre visits, Adelheid focused on her integration into the English upper class as “Vice Queen” (50). During this time, she travelled to her homeland and appeared very generous by German standards. According to Eck and Schneider, it seemed as though she wanted to compensate for her dowry which had heavily affected the dukedom at the time.

*From 1830 to 1837: Adelheid becomes Queen Adelaide.* William Henry was crowned King William IV after the death of his brother, and Adelheid became Queen of Great Britain and Ireland. Adelheid considered this task a burden rather than a joy. The part of the book dedicated to these years requires a good

knowledge of English history in order to follow events. During this era, changes occurred in which Adelheid became noticeably involved, and her role underwent significant alteration as she became “an official state representative” (58). The newspapers didn’t spare her from allegations; politicians and society observed Adelheid and William distrustfully. Adelheid was said to be avid for prestige and had an “obscure influence” at the court. Due to the lack of children, they were both seen merely as changeover regents. It appeared as though Adelheid’s English Kingdom was mainly relevant for Meiningen (60), said Erck and Schneider. The authors rightfully criticise English historians who continuously tried to highlight Adelheid’s role, e.g. fighting for the bill of reforms (74), but without results. This point might need further research. Interesting is also the information that Adelheid got along decidedly better with women than with men. That she was very fond of children is mentioned by all sources. She always had a strong relationship to Princess Victoria who suffered under the strict education of her mother, the duchess of Kent. After William IV’s death in 1837, Adelheid did not become the successor to the throne because a legitimate heir existed, namely Princess Victoria, the daughter of William VI’s younger brother.

*From 1837 to 1849: Queen Adelaide as widow and benefactor.* Adelheid became a widow at the age of 45 and would live for another twelve years. She achieved her greatest gratification as a charitable widow. During this time she was said to have lived the life she always wanted. Free of royal duties, Adelheid dedicated herself to charity, an activity that suited her nature. She took care of widows and orphans, of poor and sick people in her own country and of starving Irish and Scots; even her homeland would enjoy her charity, especially during a visit in 1844. Her popularity peaked after bereavement, and biographers called Adelheid a “perfect widow” (92). Weakened, however, by recurring illnesses – she most likely suffered from tuberculosis – Adelheid died on 2 December 1849. The obituaries were proof of the loss her people endured.

Erck and Schneider account for her charity, which they praise, as based on her “very own personality,” on her piously Christian education at home and on her adherence to traditions. Her sense of charity was surely part of her personality. But this argument alone should not be sufficient to account for her generosity. While the king was alive, she had only limited authority herself, and, in order to exercise power and influence, she had to manipulate others. This was the only source of power women had at that time, an ability usually taught to them by their mothers and grandmothers or other female relatives. As a rich and independent royal widow, Adelheid did what many others had done before and would do after her: she committed her life to good works. This way she also fulfilled the role expected of a rich and elite woman. Due to her helpful deeds, she received approval, respect and the company of thankful people.

The authors emphasise Adelheid’s role as committed benefactor which makes one wonder why, during her time as Queen, she did not care to fight more e.g. for the abolition of slavery which took place during her regency. It has been suggested that “Adelheid probably only partially understood the kind of change England was undergoing at the time – such as introducing equal treatment of Catholics, abolition of slavery, reform of the parliament, free trade and reception of foreigners – and she certainly did not support it in any way” (134). According to the authors, her “self-sacrifice” was amply compensated by the elite life she pursued at court. “She enjoyed the privileges of the crown as well as the exultations of the crowds. She did this, however, as official representative, not as human being, and she also insisted on the fact that she could see the difference between the two” (134). The book, however, still owes us proof of this.

Erck and Schneider also deal very carefully with the question of whether or not there had been other men in Adelheid’s life apart from her husband. An intelligent, good-looking woman who was married at the age of 25 to a man of 53 whom she didn’t love might have met other men. Prince Ernst von Philippsthal and Lord Howe were said to be these men to whom “she gave her sympathies,

what came close to the idea of love. Nevertheless, she couldn't marry them" (136). Once again, Adelheid took on a sacrifice, this time the one of connubial loyalty. On the whole then, in this book, Adelheid enters the tradition of women who become victims of their sex.

*Adelheid. Princess from Meiningen on the English throne* contributes greatly to studies of historical women and gender. Erck and Schneider have analysed and illustrated in all its diversity the life of a woman who, although brought up by "strong women," followed and adopted female role expectations of her time. Apart from a few stylistic weaknesses and repetitions, the book is an important resource for gender studies of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is essential for illuminating influential people of that time.

## Handbook for (German) Women's Studies

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**Anina Mischau**

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Trans. Tobe Levin

**Review of Becker, Ruth & Beate Kortendiek, eds. *Handbuch Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung. Theorie, Methoden, Empirie*. [Handbook for Women's and Gender Studies. Theories, Method, Empirical Approaches]. Reihe „Geschlecht und Gesellschaft“, Vol. 35, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004, pp. 736, ISBN 3-8100-392-8.**

For more than thirty years now women's and gender studies have been dedicated to transforming the hegemonic discourse of the sciences and its monopoly on interpretation. In Germany and internationally, the movement has led to significant critical reflection, the uncovering of androcentric biases in individual disciplines, the reformulation of basic scientific principles and a new understanding of the academic enterprise as a whole. Women's and gender studies have introduced the idea that relations between men and women are a basic structuring principle of society and its organizations, and its insights have been

increasingly integrated into many individual disciplines, their discourse, research questions and instructional content. Throughout its institutionalization, involving the initial launch followed by professionalization, women's and gender studies have themselves become more theoretical, methodological and differentiated in terms of material covered. In the process the discipline has become increasingly self-critical as well.

Thirty years is long, and it was therefore high time to document in a compendium the development, present situation and open questions in the field.

The *Handbook* at hand, over 700 pages, emerged from work in the Network for Women's Studies of North-Rhine Westfalia and has been edited by Ruth Becker and Beate Kortendiek, coordinators of the network. Becker and Kortendiek offer an "overview of theoretical approaches, methodological processes and empirical results in women's and gender studies because, despite extensive publication in women's and gender studies in German-speaking lands, such a compendium has not yet been produced" (11). Contributing are 91 female and four male academics, most from Germany but a few from Austria, Sweden, Australia, the Netherlands and the USA. Individual contributions of six to eight pages offer an impressive view of the breadth, depth and thickness in development and status of women's and gender studies or, more precisely, of social scientific women's and gender studies.

This, however, already brings me to one criticism of the book. Although interdisciplinarity was announced, beyond the social sciences this promise has hardly been kept. Discussion, research questions and new knowledge drawn from the humanities or cultural studies are clearly underrepresented. Most regrettably, this is the case for philosophy, a field in which women's and gender studies have been significant. Natural science and technology are also almost entirely absent, certainly a major defect. The gaps illustrate for the hundredth time that despite women's and gender studies' influence in these disciplines for going on three decades now and the numerous innovative interdisciplinary bridges built, feminist input continues to be ignored. These

criticisms notwithstanding, if we are content to focus only on women's studies in the social sciences, the Handbook is a treasure chest and is most likely to become a standard textbook for teachers, students and researchers alike.



Three major sections are described below. The first part focuses on important questions and theories in the field. Arranged mainly by date of publication, eighteen essays illuminate various “Concepts of Gender” and allow readers to understand how theories developed. The breadth of various approaches is extensive. Many authors had been, at least for German-speaking countries, key exponents of the theory or movement under discussion, and subjects range from early examinations of patriarchy and matriarchy, French and socialist feminisms, secondary patriarchalism, women's double burden, or the subsistence argument through topics such as women's morality and complicity in their oppression to research on lesbians and queer theory, masculinity studies, the construction of gender and its social performance. Fifteen additional essays in the first part reflect debates about and development away from mainstream or, better, “malestream” theories as well as their reception by women's and gender studies. In this regard, the *Handbook* is also distinguished by its breadth of inclusion: here you will find socialization theory, critical theory, theories of social inequality, or modernization, systems and habitus theory as well as post-structuralism and feminist self-critique in the social sciences.

The second part consisting of ten essays is titled “Methods and Methodologies.” In addition to debate on basic principles, for instance about partisanship and empathy or on the very existence of feminist research methodologies, concrete examples of feminist sociological research are presented, such as research on networks, biography, interviews with experts, participant observation or discourse analysis. Regrettably, however, this section proves to be the weakest, by which I don't mean the content of individual essays but rather the limited range of the concept that has brought these particular contributions together under a single heading. To explain, I see two major problems here. Methods presented are concerned only with the qualitative approach.

Now, it is certainly appropriate to acknowledge the dominant role of qualitative research in women's and gender studies. Nonetheless, we shouldn't overlook the extent to which in recent years quantitative, empirical research has innovated social science and profited from increasing numbers of feminist studies' incursions and innovations. I'm sorry to see no indication of this development at all. In addition, it would have been exciting to encounter at least one essay taking up the provocative question of applying “classical experimental methods in women's and gender studies.” An opportunity to deal with the continuing broad exclusion of women from the ‘hard’ sciences and technology was missed.

The third and most voluminous section, sub-divided into five parts, poses the central question of “topics and results” of research in women's and gender studies. This segment attains a stunning success. It clearly shows how important and fruitful thematic approaches in various disciplines can be and thereby confirms the innovative potential of women's and gender studies as a cutting-edge tool. Eight contributions keyword „Life stages and situations,” including research on boys and girls, young men's and women's plans for their lives, family, aging, residency patterns and poverty. Ten essays in a sub-section called „Work, Politics and Economics” examine central concepts such as work, organizations, welfare, globalization, transformation and democracy. The section on „body and health” includes nine

articles documenting, for instance, health research, disability, genetic and reproductive technologies, violence against women and sport. Thirteen essays concern „education and culture.” They deal with co-education, the gendering of education, and women’s career opportunities in academia and science. Also from a critical gender perspective they treat constitutive cultural institutions such as religion and the church, media, language, rights and space. And finally, the concluding section of seven essays targets „the women’s movement and equality of opportunity.” Feminism as a social movement is analyzed here as well as women’s networks, women’s projects, the lesbian movement and immigrant women’s associations.

The essays are uniformly presented throughout. „They survey the present state of definitions, foundational studies and debates, and contemporary (research) results. The articles also open up new research questions and visions of the future” (12). The index contains 450 terms that make finding individual keywords fast and easy. On the whole, then, beyond minor moments of critique, the editors have succeeded remarkably well in documenting highlights in women’s and gender studies. The book inspires serious thinking about the issues raised and encourages further reading. It is good not only for newcomers to the field but especially for academics already well versed in women’s and gender studies. It is a powerful reference tool.

## Farmers’ Daughters Beyond Borders

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**Reinhard Schau**

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Trans. Christa Bowen

**Review of Siegel, Ulrike, ed. “Wie leicht hätte es anders kommen können.” *Bauerntöchter erzählen ihre Geschichte*. [“How Easily Could It Have Been Different.” Farmers’ Daughters Tell Their Stories]. (part 3). Münster: Landwirtschaftsverlag, 2005, pp. 176, ISBN 3-7843-3348-1.**

*How Easily Could It Have Been Different* by author Ulrike Siegel was recently introduced to the market. The new release is a follow-up to two other editions, *It Always Rains at the Wrong Time* in which farmers’ daughters from the southern part of Germany tell their stories and *Playtime only after Chores Are Done* where farmers’ daughters from northern Germany tell theirs. The latter two books reached a broad number of readers who then began eagerly to await tales from the “eastern” part of Germany and, indeed, the sequel achieves a new dimension. Stories from the “East” signify not only a geographical region but also the former “East Germany” with its social structures unlike the West.

The flow of memories, at times naively direct, at others strongly reflective is not merely continued at another longitude. Rather, the author has selected narratives that tend to emphasise the problems that have marked unification of East and West Germany. She juxtaposes stories of farmers’ daughters from the German Democratic Republic with “West German” biographies, interjects accounts of life trajectories that often lead from East to West but rarely from West to East. All tales are united, however, by an honest understanding of the “other world,” societal change in the German Democratic Republic and the subsequent continuous contradictory process of orientation.

These stories unify and differentiate at the same time. To start, the “East German” vocabulary may be foreign to the reading “sisters from the West”: “LPG,” “Brigadier,” “EOS” or even “Zoo Technician/Mechanic, i.e. one with an associates’ degree who specializes in milk production.” Yet the job titles so unfamiliar in the West had unknown and unthought of powers: “Jugendweihe” [rite of passage to adulthood, like confirmation] meant a declaration. To be “confirmed” in this sense often meant that politically indoctrinated criteria, and not achievement, determined professional careers. More than half of the farmers’ daughters from the former East German workers’-and-farmers’ state describe having faced such negative decisions. They do not narrate with bitterness but rather tell us proudly with how much strength – and wit –

they were finally able to reach their goals. Unburdened, they recount their adventures ranging from enjoyable children's camps to stimulating pioneer afternoons including thick descriptions of work. And just like children from the West, they complain about chores they dislike, such as pulling turnips or clearing manure.

But there are astonishing moments for the politically engaged reader: the "unification" took farmers' daughters from both East and West equally by surprise. During harvesting season, country people had no time to watch the daily news program the "Tagesschau," so that, unlike their urban counterparts, they were left uninformed. Unprepared, they suddenly faced each other, happily and yet estranged. Some openly confess to the clichés they were fed during their education, while others had been confused by decades of political condemnation. The West was both enemy and dream world.

Caravans of "Trabbi" cars, congested inner cities, overstocked supermarkets, standing in line again, this time for "welcome money," empty store shelves – actual pictures of first encounters are portrayed with amicable openness and honesty, not at all pathetically colored by liberation. Without euphoria, both sides describe a feeling of finding one's way in the newly opened world. Conflicts are not hidden, but instead "Wessi-Ossi" – east/west disputes are faced and settled. For example, one of the daughters, suddenly a business manager, had to fire an esteemed co-worker. The employee who was "set free" had already known the person doing the firing as a "Kaderleiter," leader of the cadre, not as the Director of Human Resources she had become. The almighty market replaces the almighty party, and previously planned career ladders now feel like roller coasters. Many become dizzy, but no one crashes.

The selected spectrum of narrators, however, seems a bit narrow, leaving the question open as to whether, despite all difficulties and always exhibiting an optimistic fighting spirit, they truly represent the problematic social situation of the average population, especially in the villages of Brandenburg or Mecklenburg-Vorpommern with its declining population. All story tellers

that we get to know have the support of stable families, creative closeness to nature, and living faith. Woe to the one that does not have this support.

In many stories, like in the two previous editions, odors are given a special power of association. Scents, rather than pictures or sounds, awaken memories of childhood and youth regardless of geographical area or social system. Describing the aromas almost always produces such amazing poetry that you can easily sniff them yourself. This down to earth reflection also prompts you to poke your nose into this third book. It is certainly worthwhile!

## **Hunger for the Magic of Words, or Passionate Reading – a History of Art from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with Bestseller Allure**

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**Heide Seele**

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Trans. Tobe Levin

**Review of Bollmann, Stefan. „Frauen, die lesen, sind gefährlich.“ *Lesende Frauen in Malerei und Fotografie. Mit einem Vorwort von Elke Heidenreich.* [“Women Who Read are Dangerous.” Reading Women in Painting and Photography. With a Foreword by Elke Heidenreich]. München: Elisabeth Sandmann Verlag, 2005, pp. 254, ISBN 3-938045-06-X. Originally published as “*Hungrig nach der Magie der Wörter. Leidenschaft Lesen – eine Kunstgeschichte vom 13. bis ins 21. Jahrhundert, die das Zeug zum Bestseller hat*“ in the *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*/ No. 93. 23/24 April 2005.**

*Thanks to the Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung, 23/24 April 2005 for this review.*

Reading equals learning. Until quite recently, this truism applied only to the male of the species. Even our grandmothers' generation, beyond elementary school basics, was denied higher education. Novels in particular were considered superfluous and a waste of time, not to mention potentially harmful. “You're better

off doing something useful” the passionate (female) reader would be told even into the teens of the twentieth century. The useful included sewing, knitting, embroidery or, perhaps, caring for younger siblings. The smitten girl, enamored of books, had it hard, but then again, if you were hooked, you’d find a way around the obstacles. Later, in marriage, many husbands would prove equally unhappy to see their wives accumulating knowledge through reading, becoming competitive, because “women who read are dangerous.”

Thus emerged the title of a new publication with all the makings of a bestseller. Once you’ve held this truly beautiful book in your hands, you’ll wonder why the idea has waited so long for someone to write a history of art following the motif of reading women. [In fact, on the internet someone has. See <http://www.readingwoman.org/>, the website of artist Freiderun Hardt-Friederichs, Translator’s comment.] Indeed, from the thirteenth century to the present day the image of the reading woman appears quite often, a fact to which Elke Heidenreich, privileged to make her obsession public as tv host of the program “Read!”, attests with programmatic fervour in her foreword.



“Hunger for ... words” – this is what characterizes the enthusiastic reader, and the author draws parallels: “On the pyres of the middle ages what do we find burning? Mainly women and books.” The powerful, among them the Catholic Church, had long been aware of the menace proceeding from the printed word.

Author Stefan Bollmann researched art history to find reading women and presents a dizzying span of pictures documenting 800 years of women’s lust for learning, making visible female self-confidence that ensues as a result of education. You can see it, for instance, in the sovereign posture of the woman turned toward her audience in Vittorio Matteo Corcos’ painting “Dreams” (1896), as in Van Gogh’s “Arlésienne” whose glance brushes the horizon in a thoughtful gesture, suggesting the worlds just encountered in the open book that lies before her.

Each painting appears to tell an entire story for the observer to carry forward. For instance, in Franz Eyblis’ “Girl Reading” (1850), we see the reader’s hand laid disingenuously on her breast, clearly the result of an emotionally moving message. The gesture suggests an attempt to return to peace. Emotion also projects from Theodor Roussel’s picture of 1887 with the same title, though this time it is shocking as the reader is both naked and holding not a real book but a magazine whose content can hardly be considered weighty. In fact, naked female readers are not rare; consider, for instance, the work of Jean-Jacques Henner or Suzanne Valadon (end of the 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries). Nor are all readers sitting up. Lying down also conveys an unmistakable enjoyment. Maybe the reclining posture offers greater encouragement to fantasy. This would seem to be the case of the nude captured on canvas by Felix Valoton, apparently worn out by what she’s just read and stretched out to recover, or in the “Portrait of Katie Lewis” by the pre-Raphaelite Edward Burne-Jones.

Reading is usually a lonely pleasure. As a result, Bollmann’s images are mainly of individuals. Yet our contemporary Harald Metzkes portrays in “Learned women” two bookworms, and Vanessa Bell, who died in 1961, painted her two daughters in comfortable colloquy on the couch. Likewise Henri Matisse: he included three figures in his “reading aloud.” That reading together can be a perilous enterprise has been known since Dante’s *Divine Comedy* where Paolo and Francesca, caught with their noses in a forbidden book, are consigned to the nether regions. Anselm

Feuerbach's "Paolo and Francesca," however, captures the pair before eviction from the idyll.

Sandmann publisher's product is both a pleasure to read and to view. The earliest depiction shows an annunciation scene by the Sienese painter Simone Martin (ca. 1280/85 – 1344), with Maria holding a book in her hand, and the last presents Eve Arnold's photo of Marilyn Monroe in bikini, a volume on her knees. Is the actress deeply into Odysseus' tale, or is she acting as though she were? No matter, as a book is without doubt an ennobling accessory.

## "Right Wing" Hungarian Women

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**Borbála Juhász**

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Trans. Borbála Juhász

**Review of Andrea Pető. *Napasszonyok és Holdkissasszonyok. A mai magyar konzervatív női politizálás alaktana.* [Ladies of the Sun, Young Ladies of the Moon: Conservative Hungarian Women Today]. Budapest: Balassi, 2003. First published in Hungarian by the Journal *Múltunk*, 2005-L.-4, pp. 207-211.**

"Contemporary Hungarian women still live under feudalism. Under oppression. They are supposed to fulfil all commitments to perfection. Both mentally and physically they labor on the borderline. There are no women in politics because of patriarchy. Men make decisions, mainly stupid men do, regarding intelligent women. Education stressing equal opportunity should begin in schools and kindergartens. Men would be fools to let power out of their hands. Life is like that" (140). These are not the words of Hungarian feminist historian Andrea Pető but rather the opinion of a 53 year old journalist, a Catholic, a MIÉP voter (the extreme right wing party in Hungary), a single mother who is active in politics.

In her third book published in Hungary (see also her English monograph: *Hungarian Women in Politics 1945-1951*, Columbia University Press, 2003) Pető investigates contemporary Hungarian society based on oral

history interviews with conservative women politicians and activists, and beyond the categories of oral history and gender, her interdisciplinary approach also includes social history, political studies, psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology.

While in *Hungarian Women in Politics 1945-1951* Pető wrote the history of female NGOs and political organisations, in her *Júlia Rajk* biography (Budapest, 2001) she worked with classical archival sources. *Ladies of the Sun, Young Ladies of the Moon* is the intellectual follow-up to these two in which now the source material is twenty-three narrative life story interviews conducted in 2000 and 2001. The common denominator among interviewees is their gender (all women) and their political affiliation (right wing voters, that is members, activists or supporters of the following Hungarian conservative parties: MDF-Hungarian Democratic Forum, FIDESZ-Alliance of Young Democrats, *Kisgazda Párt*-Smallholders Party, *KDNP*-Christian Democratic People's Party or *MIÉP*-Party of Hungarian Justice and Life). „Who are the conservative women in today's Hungary?" the author asks. "Where do they come from and how do they engage in politics? These questions came to my mind when it occurred to me in the fall of 2000 that while the women's organisations with a conservative program started to multiply, the number of left wing and liberal women's organisations shrank" (9). Pető divides the women in conservative, male-dominated parties or movements into two groups: Lady of the Sun is the "spiritual" (Occult) conservative. Young Lady of the Moon is the emancipated conservative woman. Categories distinguish on the basis of the women's beliefs about the ideal social order, gender roles and political involvement of women.

Methods of feminist oral history are used to find answers to several other questions as well. One paradox covers the incompatibility of two views of women, the politically active in conflict with the conservative based on the normative cult of motherhood with its insistence that fulfilment derives only from the private sphere of the family without questioning male "superiority." (In other words, a woman

should be the home front for a male politician rather than a politician herself.) However, ideologies of motherhood, by recognizing a separate feminine sphere of empowerment for women, can be viewed as a feminist achievement.

The author's methodology also holds a paradox: many elements of oral history's original application fail to work in her case. When oral history was born it focused primarily on socially, politically or economically marginalised groups (like workers, minorities, women) who had been left out of written history. In these situations the interviewer sympathised with the interviewees; her or his main aim was to convey a vibrant description of an otherwise unarticulated life experience in order to help the cause of the interviewee's group. Here, however, the author did not share the political aims of her interviewees, and although woman asked woman, the two arrived from different worlds with different signalling systems. Thus a recursive necessity arose, forcing the author continuously to challenge her own understanding of political women.

*Ladies of the Sun, Young Ladies of the Moon* uses an immense bibliographical apparatus (mainly English, German and Italian), necessary in the case of such broad topics. The raw material of the interviews is examined from various points of view, and a wide array of literature helps the highly theoretical, synthesising analysis. Pető summarises many issues rarely investigated before in Hungary. Conservatism, for instance, is analysed from a gender perspective; the chapter on oral history methodology describes the different narrative strategies. A separate chapter is dedicated to streams of feminism, as conservatism is traditionally antifeminist (although in Hungary practically all movements identify with antifeminism), so in order to understand it, we have to be clear about what feminism is. Pető also writes about the Vatican's women's policy, a religious stream called "new" feminism, which emphasises the woman's role in the family, the dignity of childrearing, and the search for a direct God-woman relationship. All of these issues are un-researched in Hungary.

The two chapters dealing with the history of conservative Hungarian women's politics

(partly its non-governmental side) are also important and provide a useful summary not only of the conservative women's movement, but also of the whole of Hungarian women's politics and movements. Another investigates the memory of the 1956 revolution. The analysis is accompanied by a political scientific approach to the often-asked question: why are there so few women in Hungarian politics? The 1956-memory of conservative women is analysed through the father-daughter relationship, as both played an important role in the formation of the interviewee's political identity.

For me the heart of the book consists of the chapters dedicated to different identities evident in discourse and women's politics and to the cult of Mária (the Virgin Mary, protector saint of old Hungary, with possible pre-Christian connotations). Here Pető pioneers unique analyses based on previously unasked questions, such as: what are the basic issues of the conservative women's movement? What do these conservatives think about quotas for women? What is the weakness or strength of self-definition/marginalisation through a women's movement? Today, do we find a gender difference in voting behaviour? (The 1945 parliamentary elections were the first and last in Hungary that gave women and men different coloured ballot paper making voting behaviour evident). Last but not least: to what degree does power behind women's political mobilization stem from the cult of Mária, the central figure of the spiritually conservative woman? Research into such widespread topics is clearly not without risks and needs a fair amount of courage. The chapter on the Virgin Mary, alias Blessed Virgin Mary (in Hungarian "Fruit grafting Blessed Mother"), Grand dame of the Hungarians, or "Babba Mária" works simultaneously with theosophy, German occultism, theories on Sumerian-Hungarian relatives, while the interviews are held together with analysis strengthened by a bibliographic overview. Pető did not fall, however, into the pitfall of chaotic editing. Rather, she writes her book with unfailing intellectual discipline.

The interview texts are not simple illustrations but real sources of the topics that interest the author. It is important to note, however, that Pető does not think these twenty

three interviewees will “tell” who conservative women are or how they engage in politics. “In analysing life stories we must not look for the ‘truth’, as life story is a form of self-representation the speaker chose at a given moment... Life story is quasi literary genre, from which we can learn what forms of story telling the interviewees prefer based on their education and the given political situation. These stories are personal truths and not ‘the’ truth” (35). The “personal truths,” the interview excerpts published in the Appendix to the book without analysis, grouped according to topics are a soul-stirring source of Hungarian history.

Disclosing her own political identity at the end of the book („We women who fight for equality and equal opportunity for women” [238] - not “new” but classical rights-based feminism), Petõ allows agency to the conservative women described. They have been thought of differently from the way they emerge here, not as agents making independent, rational decisions but as agrarian, economically dependent, undereducated persons who depend on their husbands both materially and emotionally. The interviewees contradict this picture, and although traditional conservative values, such as family, religion, authority, folk, nation, and tradition, are present in all narratives, the personal lives and life styles sometimes turn out to challenge these values.

Andrea Petõ deciphers the mobilising force of women’s political engagement and closes her book with this knowledge: “Perhaps the power that stems from conservatism could be harnessed as an interpretative frame able to birth a new feminine identity that lives up to the challenges of the 21st century. Feminine identity built on the self-consciousness of women’s difference and motherhood, and separate women’s culture, points beyond the view that women can only be dupes, victims or conscious traitors. A new feminine identity can emerge out of it (...) with the ‘weapon of the weak’, which originates in voluntary acceptance and redefinition of patriarchal norms. But this is only possible if we reinterpret sisterhood in terms of women’s political fight for equality (...), and if in the future ‘new’ feminists stop seeing the gender equality movement as a no win game where one group of women pays for

the gains of the other group. Instead, more promising would be the turn towards differently thinking women with the ‘selfless love’ they preach themselves – towards those differently thinking women, without whose fights and achievements we would be living in a different world” (241.) Reading these lines a thought came to me: I wonder when we will see a work on the political engagement of this “other” side, the left wing-liberal movement in Hungary.

## Family Affairs...

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**Tamar El-Or**

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**Review of Kleiberg, Aviad, ed. לעו מא תבהא לע. ההפשמה לע רחא טבמ, בא ארום. *Al Ahavat Em o`Mora Av. [Mothers’ Love, Fathers’ Fear: Rethinking the Israeli Family]*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2004, ISBN 965-07-1259.3**

*Mothers’ Love, Fathers’ Fear: Rethinking the Israeli Family* is an original, thought provoking book. It was chosen by Tel Aviv University Press to open its prestigious series, “The Matter We Are Made Of” and, judging by its academic and popular reception, succeeded in making Israelis “rethink the Israeli family.” The book does not try to be comprehensive or “systematic.” Instead it problematizes the Israeli self-evident position and belief regarding “family” via a critical gaze from three different angles. The result is both illuminating and disturbing. At the core of the book are three essays by women scholars. Yaarah Bar-On, a historian and vice-president of the Bezalel Arts Academy, writes about the rise and fall of the kibbutz child-rearing project. Hannah Naveh, professor of literature at Tel Aviv University and Head of the Women and Gender Studies Program, writes about the troubled representation of the family in Hebrew Literature; and Leora Bilsky, a professor of law at Tel Aviv University, writes about women’s subversive strategies vis-à-vis the Law. The book also includes an original short story, “The Educated Boy,” by the renowned Israeli author Etgar Keret, a series of art works chosen by the Israeli sculptor Philip Rantzer, and transcripts

of dialogues between the writers and the editor, the historian Aviad Kleinberg, who also wrote the introduction to the book.

What then do we learn about the Israeli (or, to be precise, the Jewish Israeli) family? We learn that rumors of the family's death have not reached Israel. In a society that sees itself as an extended family, the family, as a reality and as a "deep metaphor," dominates Israeli culture, producing symbolic capital for its supporters and exacting steep symbolic (as well as material) costs from its critics and opponents. Consider one of the boldest attempts to unsettle the classical family – the "children's house" in the kibbutz discussed by Yaarah Bar On.

Having realized the conservative, even reactionary nature of the patriarchal family, the socialist revolutionaries who founded the kibbutzim tried to release their offspring from the clutches of old ideas and old practices. Children were to be reared by the "collective," by well-trained and ideologically sound caretakers who, unfettered by parental sentimentality, will raise truly liberated children. In a moving essay that uses personal memories (the writer was raised in a kibbutz) Bar On shows how the revolutionary ideology succumbed to the pressures of "unreformed" parents and suffering children. As the gap between the inflated rhetoric of the founding fathers and the discriminatory reality of the founding mothers and care-takers (almost invariably women) widened, mothers played a more and more subversive role in the kibbutz, often expressing their discontent through their mixed messages to the children. The collapse of the kibbutz coincides with the triumphant return of the classical family.

Hannah Naveh examines the seeming contradiction between the image of the family in Hebrew children's literature and in literature written for adults. The former is excessively sweet – all crises are resolved within the loving boundaries of the classical family; gender role models are rarely challenged and the house functions as a sanctuary and benevolent mutual-help society. The latter paints a radically different picture – the family is a dysfunctional institution where oppression, violence and frustration are rife. There are very few happy families in Israeli literature for adults; there are

almost no unhappy families in literature for children. Does adult literature offer a real critique of the family? Are adults finally allowed to know what is hidden from children, the sacred "forbidden knowledge"? Not quite, according to Naveh. In a brilliant and subtle analysis, she shows how the dysfunctional literary family is systematically presented as an aberration, as an exception to the familiar familial rule. In the end, she shows convincingly, the family triumphs "in sickness and in health."

Leora Bilski's essay highlights another aspect of the struggle to redefine the Israeli family. Beginning with the Biblical story of Ruth – which she interprets as a tale of two women (Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi) who subvert patriarchal law to make room for their partnership – Bilski examines the notion of subversion and its price. She shows how Jewish law leaves loopholes for independent Jewish women as long as they are willing to act in support of procreation. Ruth can take all sorts of liberties with the law, providing that she does so in the name of motherhood. Bilski shows how feminism arrived in Israel from the United States as an ideology of liberation: women demanded free choice; they demanded the right to be masters of their own bodies, to break free from their gender roles. Gradually, however, feminists became convinced that they will achieve more by fighting for motherhood than by fighting against it. This shift in strategy was given constant support by the legislator and by the courts. The establishment was willing to tolerate, indeed condone, all forms of parenting arrangements. Was this strategy a success, then? Were women cleverly using the system against itself or was the family triumphant again – sacrificing couplehood on the altar of parenthood? It is hard to say. It certainly deserves a second thought.

The editor, Aviad Kleinberg does a good job asking hard questions and pointing to areas in need of clarification. If there is a criticism that one could have it is that the book is concerned mostly with the Jewish mainstream. One would wish to hear more about Arab, Ultra-Orthodox, Settler and new immigrant families, for example. These issues, however, are dealt with in other books in the

Tel Aviv University Press series (for example, in the book about religion and in the book about food), but not here. Still, this is an excellent addition to the literature on families and well worth translation into English.

## Education, Gender, and the Military

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**Mira Jenik**

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**Review of Gor Ziv, Haggith, ed. היצירתילימ 7077. *Militarizatzya ve-chinuch*. [The Militarization of Education]. Tel Aviv: Babel Publishers, 2005, pp. 369, ISBN 965.512.106-2.**

In 2001, New Profile, a feminist anti-militarist organization, held a conference on "Militarization and Education." New Profile works to de-militarize society in Israel and joined with the Hebrew University School of Education and the Seminar Hakibbutzim Teachers in their efforts to de-militarize Israeli education and culture. The conference, conducted jointly in both Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, was addressed, among others, by Prof. Betty Reardon, a renowned feminist scholar of militarization and education, the author of numerous books, and founder of the Columbia University Peace Education program; by Ayse Gul Altinay, author of *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey*, and many others. It was, as far as we know, the first conference in the world to combine issues of militarization, gender and education. The majority of presenters, however, were Israelis who spoke in Hebrew, describing some of the intricate ways in which Hebrew education is both gendered and militarized, and depicting some of the strategies of feminist resistance to this situation. The feminist methodology of the conference succeeded in integrating the work of feminist academics with that of feminist activists and educators.

Presenters looked at education in the broadest sense, including its informal and indirect components. They clearly demonstrated the existence of a concentrated educational drive

to militarize individuals and society in Israel, to normalize conscription law and the military, and to firmly embed a militarized worldview. Other talks testified to a comparable drive in other countries. Taken together, presentations showed the multiple channels through which the educational drive to militarization is conducted, focusing mainly on the Israeli case. These avenues include children's books, school curricula, advertising, and rituals introduced from early childhood. A few of the talks introduced alternatives for resisting or questioning this drive to militarization, through individual and group intervention, through the reading of Jewish texts as a resource in peace education, or through reclaiming the anti-militarist thinking of past feminist and political leaders.

The conference's proceedings resulted in this book, edited by Haggith Gor Ziv. Most, if not all, of its chapters take a feminist perspective on the militarization of education. The process-oriented concept "militarization" rather than militarism was, itself, formulated by feminist scholars. A groundbreaking feminist project, it invites educators, activists, academics, caring individuals, and media professionals to grapple with questions such as whether, how and in what concrete ways Israeli education (and education in some other societies) is militarized; what type of educational practices are required to maintain mandatory conscription, and others. The questions it poses have already generated a broadening awareness of and debate on these and related issues in Israel. The book's authors believe that this process will continue to produce insights and research on the subject, while providing the conceptual, theoretical infrastructures that support practical action for de-militarization.

## Recognizing and Resisting Misogyny

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**Biljana Dojčinović-Nešić.**

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Review of Blagojević, Marina et al., eds. *Mapiranje mizoginije u Srbiji: Diskursi i prakse* (Vol. II). [Mapping Misogyny in Serbia: Discourse and Practice]. AŽIN, Asocijacija za žensku inicijativu (AWIN – Association for Women's Initiative), Beograd, 2005. ISBN 86-83371-06-9.

More than forty authors have contributed to this collection of texts, most having been active in feminist theory and practice for a long time. The anthology has nine parts: on knowledge, remembrance, creativity, identities, body, marginality, violence and provocation/transformation. Five years after the first volume, which bore the same title, this book sheds light on a somewhat altered situation from more academic point(s) of view. In the introduction, editor Marina Blagojević, a feminist sociologist, points out that the volume is being published in Serbia which is marked by the paradox of coinciding with a growing misogyny and discrimination confronted by an increasing number of forms of resistance to it. Serbia is now in a delayed economic transition which makes all solidarity, both between genders and within one gender, impossible, says Blagojević.

The special value of the volume is the theoretical and critical production of knowledge, based on the context from which it grew. Various fields of feminist and gender studies – from literature to computer technology; contrasting opinions on single important issues; various readings of the same phenomena; new angles (masculinity and male studies) – all these aspects make the volume a worthy treatise on feminist and gender theory in Eastern Europe.

Open Society Fund, Kvinna Till Kvinna and Canadian International Development Agency have funded the project.

## Women's, Gender and Feminist Studies in the Universities of Catalonia

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**Montserrat Palau**

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Trans. Liz Russell

White Paper by GRÈC: *Grup d'Estudis de Dones, Gènere I Feminismes a les Universitats Catalanes. Institut Català de les Dones. [Catalan Women's Institute]. 2005, Edition with CD-Rom.*

[Extracts from this book can be accessed through the website of the Catalan Women's Institute: [www.gencat.cat/icdona/](http://www.gencat.cat/icdona/)].

The road towards a united Europe without borders is a twisted one. As more and more citizens enjoy freedom of movement, education – especially higher education at university level – becomes an essential factor in the construction of this new Europe. The Bologna Treaty, which aims at the official recognition of all EU university degrees, is now being applied in Spain and discussions are taking place to decide which degrees various universities should award according to the new precepts of the treaty. Spain is divided into autonomous communities, each one with its own independent education authorities. In the case of Catalonia, each *territori* (Barcelona, Tarragona, Lleida and Girona) comes under the educational policies of the Catalan Government and new maps in higher education are being drawn according to the needs and interests of each of these territorial communities. This, therefore, is an excellent time to renew, rethink and restructure existing degree courses and also to take the opportunity to demand official recognition of new degree studies such as gender studies (or gender-oriented studies within other disciplines), women's studies, or feminist studies. At present, these disciplines already exist, but they are not officially recognised.

Catalan and Spanish societies feel somewhat uncomfortable with the issue of Gender Studies. The same goes for the university which is quite monolithic and where

the glass ceiling is very obvious. The Catalan Commission for Universities and Research (*Direcció General d'Universitats i Recerca*) published statistics for the academic year 2002-2003 which showed that, of all students who actually graduate from their post-secondary studies, 60% are female compared to 40% who are male. In spite of this, up to 85% of full professors are men, compared to fewer than 20% women. Seen within this context, it is clear that any university curriculum which questions and challenges gender politics at all levels and exposes the discrimination underlying all constructions of nature and culture will not be openly welcomed. Not many will find favour with issues that have the power to challenge the status quo and question certain social practices that represent the Symbolic Order. Such an order – both symbolic and cultural – continues to generate all human activities and pervades areas of research at university level.

Faced with this situation and aware of the importance of finding strategies capable of guiding the immediate future of the EU, our research group at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona, GRÈC (Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class) prepared a “White Paper” report on behalf of the Catalan Women’s Institute. This institute forms part of the autonomous government and is responsible for policies on women. The GRÈC’s White Paper includes a map of all existing university groups dedicated to studies on women, gender and feminisms within Catalonia. It describes what these groups have done in the past and what they are doing now. Our main objective in this document was not only to explore the present situation and to promote work already done in the field but also to provide a platform from which these studies could be considered within the new educational map of the EU, most particularly from our own geographical and political standpoint. The CD-Rom entitled *Grups d’Estudis de Dones, Gènere i Feminismes a les Universitats Catalanes* (Study Groups on Women, Gender and Feminisms in Catalan Universities) represents this platform. White Paper reports usually show the present state of affairs: what has been achieved in the past and what is being done in the present. However, they are also to be understood as

valuable maps for finding new strategies, building bridges between various groups and constructing innovative landscapes for the new Europe of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a Europe that must recognise and celebrate existing differences.

The White Paper gathers together relevant details on collectivities in Catalan universities that study women, gender and feminist issues. It lists the groups’ names, contact addresses, objectives, and UNESCO codes; gives names of individual group members, and records past events. The documented items relate to women’s groups; links with groups in national and international networks; organized events; teaching activities; financed projects; research projects; DEAs (Diploma of Advanced Studies: awarded to students after the completion of a doctoral programme) and doctoral theses. Also included in the document is a list of publications and each group’s plans for the coming four years regarding research and organized events.

Our study shows that Catalan universities have 6 groups within the social sciences, 1 group in health disciplines, 1 in experimental and technological sciences and 3 interdisciplinary groups. The distribution amongst Catalan universities shows that 10 groups are based in the University of Barcelona, 6 in the Autonomous University of Barcelona, and the remaining 5 in the following universities: the Polytechnic University of Barcelona, and the Universities of Vic, Lleida and Tarragona. The oldest existing groups are in the social sciences and the humanities and stem from the 1970s. The most recently founded groups belong to the disciplines of health and technology.

The enormous amount of work required to prepare this White Paper was a joint effort by various parties. Despite the importance of the document, however, it is not officially recognised in Spain. Because feminist, women’s studies and gender studies are not recorded through an academic code number, they are rendered invisible. The White Paper nonetheless offers proof of the enormous contribution from the universities towards gender consciousness-raising in research, science and teaching – not to speak of the

contribution towards improvement of social concerns.

In view of the information and material brought together in this document, some aspects should be stressed regarding the situation in Catalonia: specialists must be authorized to contribute towards decision-making in matters of teaching and research; publications on gender issues should be promoted and fully recognised as academic research; gender issues should be outlined within research and acknowledged in curriculum vitae and teaching syllabi. Women's Studies should be accepted as a degree course alongside other disciplines rather than being considered as "anecdotal" or second class. It is important that different groups link up with networks such as the Catalan Interuniversity Gender Studies Network. International and European networks are just as essential as they offer a united front when dealing with the restructuring of university education and academia in general. Networks such as WISE and *Feminist Europa*. *Review of Books* deserve a special mention here and hopefully other networks will also be founded to promote academic studies of women, gender and feminisms as part of the challenge that the road to Europe has to face.

## The Unending Song in Turkey

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**Murat Cemrek**

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**Review of İlyasoğlu, Aynur. *Örtülü Kimlik: İslamcı Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşum Öğeleri*. [Veiled Identity: Islamist Women]. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları. 2000, pp. 144, ISBN 975-342-055-2.**

At the present writing, the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights has ruled in the case of Leyla Bahin v. Turkey (application no. 44774/98). The ruling which is, according to Article 44 of the Convention, final, paved the path for reopening the veiling question in Turkey. Leyla Bahin is one of the many veiled female students who lost their right to higher education due to insistence on wearing headscarves in universities, and although the Turkish Islamist and right wing

political parties underline that they would solve this problem by enabling women to continue their education in veils, the secular establishment has stepped in to prevent it. On this issue, following the landslide victory of the Islamist-oriented Justice and Development Party (AKP), Abdullah Gul's wife has withdrawn a similar case from the European Court of Human Rights since her husband has become the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Deputy Prime Minister while the daughters of Tayyip Erdogan, the leader of AKP and the Prime Minister, are pursuing their university education in the USA as veiled.

The ban on the Islamic veil in the Turkish public sphere, especially in the universities, and the protests that resulted have been a hot topic in the daily agenda and politics both in political speeches and in academic and popular publications. Parallel to this, the rise of the feminist movement starting in the 1980s in Turkey was first based on the ignorance and later the encouragement of the 1980 military intervention leaders. In the 1990s, the feminist movement institutionalized with the establishment of a state ministry responsible for women and family issues as well as the spread of women's organizations. However, the feminist movement has since splintered, divided into ethnic and religious enclaves thanks to the condensation of globalization, an especially vigorous increase in media facilities and electronic networks such as the internet, helpful to the oppressed communities in (re)defining and (re)producing their identities. Thus, women in Turkey have become more aware of themselves in many different and sometimes competing spheres. This awareness among Islamic-oriented women has resulted in the demand to wear religious garb in public not only as an extension of religious orientation but also to proclaim a gender identity. Paradoxically, although the aim of the veil is to make women less noticeable – especially in sexual terms – via modest attire, this movement has increased women's visibility.

The reshaping of Turkish politics after the 1980 military intervention has resulted in gains for the identity dimension of politics. Women have therefore diversified as feminist, Kemalist (the Turkish state ideology aiming for

top-to-bottom modernization of society which was developed with reference to the founder of the Turkish Republic), and Islamist symbolist. Women's rights were evaluated with reference to Kemalism which made Turkish feminism an extension of the state until the cited fissure.

Thus, Aynur İlyasoğlu's study is an important piece dealing with the intersection of the sociology of religion and gender studies. The author's confessed "subjective curiosity" (15) shaped through authentic questions inspired her to realize this as a PhD thesis. İlyasoğlu criticizes the conceptualization of tradition in its submission to modernity within a sociological perspective making it difficult to observe transitions and continuities within authentic forms shaped by culture. In fact, by simply looking we will see that modernity and tradition can develop simultaneously (16) although both material and ideal beliefs often shatter against the reality of practical daily life (17).

İlyasoğlu underlines as well that female participation in religious movements has not been limited to Islam since women were active in 19th century England's Evangelist, Quaker and Unitarian families (20). However, according to her, Turkish women's orientation to veil in recent years can not be explained solely as religious, as it has been "realizing one's own modernization" crystallized in the colorful style of Turkish veiling rather than the single color of some other Middle Eastern sartorial conventions. These colorful and multivariate styles of veiling emphasize the "feminine" by allowing the "chic" while at the same time not violating religious rules for female attire, including moral codes regarding women's honor (25-27).

İlyasoğlu also engages the Islamist literature produced by female authors and secular female reactions. In this context, she finds that the veil is a social issue *per se* which facilitates a woman's social life by covering her sexual features. This leads İlyasoğlu to observe how Islam views the body in general and woman's body in particular, and how Islam differentiates the concepts of biological and sexual body. Islam approves of sexual satisfaction within the legal boundaries of marriage. Thus, Islam is not an asexual or anti-

sexual religion. The author also finds that the veil as a symbol facilitates Muslim women's crossing from public to private and vice versa, providing a secure space at the intersection of both and enabling veiled women to develop socialization methods while secure within an Islamic context. Briefly, the Muslim woman who demands a place in the secular public sphere while actualizing Islamic truths is realizing her own self-modernization. At the same time, however, these veiled women are necessarily positioning themselves against women who wish to keep secular traditions.

The author also offers a revealing comparison among Turkey, Egypt and Iran on their paths to modernization and the position of women in this process as well as their orientation towards the veil in recent years. She concludes that increased acceptance of the veil is not due only to Islamic revivalism but that the headgear symbolizes the hegemonic struggle of low-paid women for a place in the job market. She knows, too, that after the revolution in Iran the compulsion to veil lessened women's opposition to modernization. Paradoxically, however, Turkish discussions of modernization that focus on women's clothing understand attire as a sign of the modern. Traditionalists see it also in these terms but as negative rather than positive. They are concerned with dress maintaining the moral values of honor and modesty (50). Thus we find polarization on the axis of modernization as well as identity crisis while the veil has been a breaking point in the crystallization of the Islamic movement and its divergence from rightist political movements in Turkey (57).

The essential contribution of the book – beside its thorough theoretical discussions – is its base research on 21 active women in working life who have adopted veiling. Excepting three of them, all women in the group are married; their average age is 36 while the youngest was 26 and the eldest 52. The average time spent in Istanbul was about 20 years which suggests that these women have also adapted to urban life and metropolitan challenges as the extension of the modern city. Thus, their orientation towards Islam was urban-based. Except for one high school graduate and one who left university, all of the

other women in the group have university degrees. The author benefited from snowball sampling after having decided to get in touch with only the working women. These research subjects are also the first university graduates in their families while their mothers had only elementary schooling. Moreover, they are also the first generation of working women with wages in their families and this has changed relations with their environment. Their relations with their mothers are based on respect while with their daughters on tolerance and love, further evidence of the modern trends within their families (92-94). The author underlines that two of these women are working in the civil service and must therefore remove their veil in the office; this strikes them, however, as committing a sin (97).

Although, as we have seen, woman's place has been one of the main targets of discussion of modernization in Turkey; Turkish modernization has not been written from a female perspective. In this context, İlyasoğlu's study is noteworthy in developing an inner perspective on modernization from the Islamist woman's point of view. Moreover, her research is an effort to dialogue with Islamist women. This dialogical approach reveals the importance of identity politics which became even more remarkable after the 1990s. Thus, readers can evaluate change or even modernization in Islamist politics in Turkey through the prism of the female factor. The author deserves praise for her success in developing oral history with snowball sampling. To improve the cross-ideological dialogue, the author could have developed a comparative methodology for a secular women's group but as with all pioneering studies, this minor deficiency can simply be ignored.

## Publications on Literature

### Women Writing in Polish Culture

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#### Elżbieta Pakszys

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**Review of Partyka, Joanna. "Żona wyćwiczona." *Kobieta pisząca w kulturze XVI i XVII wieku*. [„Wife skillful.” Women Writing in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century Cultures]. Warszawa: Ed. Instytut Badań Literackich PAN (ed.), 2004, pp. 259. ISSN 0208-4007, ISBN 83-89348-22-5.**

History teaches us that a “woman writing” doesn't always equal a “woman writer” – one conclusion Joanna Partyka draws in her pioneering examination of gender in literary works by women in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Poland, where female scribes emerged a century after colleagues in the rest of Europe (Italy, France, or England).



In her interdisciplinary approach, Partyka combines methods more commonly applied in Poland to sociology and history; still foreign to literary studies, they have been even less often applied to the comparative history of literature. The innovative methodology is also complemented by a broad scope, reflecting well

on the depth of the author's experience with Polish and European literature as well as her experience of teaching in Spain.

Chapter one, "Classic Polish women writers: truth and myth" examines a nostalgic legend created by 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars in response to Poland's having 'ceased to exist' as a result of the tri-power partition in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As the saying goes, this defeat resulted in a feminized national culture favorable to female literary creativity of which early examples were cherished. Quite the contrary! Though the idea may flatter national pride and nourish Polish men's cavalier attitude towards women's creativity, the author excavates popular satires targeting the "skillful woman" which, though later obsolete, were popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, an anonymous writer can be read denouncing clever and educated women as a real source of evil, infidelity and cunning, hence also especially dangerous for their husbands. Joanna Partyka presumes, then, that the myth of so many early Polish women authors stands on very weak evidence. She focuses therefore only on concrete examples, shrinking an otherwise bulky list of 17<sup>th</sup> century Polish women writers to two clear cases, Anna Memorata and Anna Stanisławska.

Chapter two, "Eve and Mother of God: two faces of woman," presents tensions between misogynist and pro-feminist tendencies traced through ancient, medieval and modern literary traditions resulting in insightful comparative interpretations. After citing the infamous misogyny of the Church fathers, as well as antifeminist content in the *Roman de la rose*, the author reveals certain reverse, pro-feminist tendencies in literature of the Renaissance. Conservative attitudes towards women in Catholic and Protestant countries are seen, however, as leading to women's general infantile state, with the *querelle de femme* taking place almost all over Europe. Against this background, the "ideal" of the Polish "skillful wife" propagated by literary men stands out. They were the ones requiring women to be "beautiful like Helena, coy like Lucretia, pious like Sara, reasonable and faithful like Penelope and rich like Cleopatra." Clearly missing is intellectual acumen, not

popularly valued at all in the female. This reflects in turn on the 19<sup>th</sup> century myth of Polish women as highly placed in Polish culture, a point begging for research and critique.

Chapter three, "Wife, mother, hostess, erudite: education of women in theory and in practice" sets off from reflection on special education programs for aristocratic and especially royal women when preparing them exclusively for future public functions. While all over modern Europe, educational opportunities for women from the lower social strata were in their infancy, the Polish situation did not differ from the rest of the world in this respect. Thus, dominant in 17<sup>th</sup> century Poland were the few convent schools for noble born girls covering only some 10% of the female population. In tune with the scholarly pedagogy of the time, these institutions propagated very traditional and practical models of the educated woman as future housewife and mother with incessantly busy mind and hands. As a result, Polish culture can boast few truly learned females like Maria Cunitz or poets Anna Memorata ("Virgo Polona" from Leszno, Wielkopolska) and Sofianna/Sophia Anna/Corbiniana. Both authors are recognized today as "humanists" writing exclusively in Latin and imitating rather classic patterns of 17<sup>th</sup> century masculine poetry, not as women following the new female literary style lanced in French salons.

Chapter four, "Against or in accordance with nature: women write" delivers broad information and reflection on women's share in modern literary history from before Christine de Pisan to Margaret Cavendish and the French *salonnières*. Especially impressive is the author's awareness of the female pen in Spain and Portugal, data practically unknown in Poland. Highlighted also is a growing division between 'real' literature and *genres* favored mostly by women, like romance and letters, the latter not demanding schooling in rhetoric. This lack is considered responsible for women's predilection for so-called 'natural' rather than 'eloquent' style. Applied literature such as calendars, almanacs, household books, books on child-rearing and health guides, written by and for women, are taken into account as well.

Chapter five, “With unskilled hands for themselves: women’s 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century letters,” interprets the epistolary as a particularly feminine kind of literature attaining its mastery in French salons. But confrontation with Polish evidence strongly suggests a cultural difference in this regard. J. Partyka’s inquiry shows that in Poland, stylistic variety, i.e. a difference between male and female letters, is probably less pronounced than in France, but content differs significantly. There is no place for a style sharpened through “exchange of thoughts, feelings, compliments and jokes.” Instead, Polish female epistolary is a “series correspondence, often reflecting the drama of life” when written by barely literate widows or mothers asking for protection and help in the name of their orphaned children. Literary female epistolary also appears in Poland later than in France, toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Continuing to privilege the personal, chapter six, “Kitchen, cupboard and barn: everyday life described by women’s hand” presents Polish personal and advisory documents (*sylva*) left by five generations of women from one noble family, Orzelski of Wielkopolska, starting from 1589 to 1732. Exemplifying such literature is the diary, since it also contains the family’s genealogical record, birth and death dates, prescriptions for medicines and animal husbandry, accounts etc. Throughout Europe, women’s style in this genre can be characterized as more private, intimate and introspective than in chronicles by men. Furthermore, maverick or erudite female authors reveal a great deal through their diaries. Diarists of this ilk include numerous English noble women such as Margaret Lucas Cavendish. Cavendish’s Polish counterpart would be Regina Salomea Pilsztynowa, an 18<sup>th</sup> century oculist in Istanbul.

The “Convent as a place of women’s creativity” names chapter seven which analyzes the situation among learned nuns. “Everyday, cloistered women had to do with books used in prayer and to encourage proper religiosity” (171). Outstanding prioresses, especially from medieval German territory and quite well known today, are also listed. Now, even if the nunnery seems to be a mere isle of literacy in

the sea of illiterate female masses who presumably felt no need to write and read, monastic life was for some a chance to choose or exchange the *vita contem* (i.e. marriage and motherhood) for the *vita contemplative* (virginity and devotion to God and order) (178). However, provocative differences emerge from a pioneering comparison among Spanish, Italian and Polish convents of the baroque. While in Italian and Spanish convents you could find numerous intellectually active personalities including, for instance, St. Kathleen of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila or Mexico’s Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, such creative writing was rare in Poland. Except for mystic biography by a Carmelite, Anna Maria Marchocka, Poland has produced only Magdalena Mortęska, a Benedictine poet.

Restraint on Polish women’s literary productivity continues as the object in chapter eight which asks, “Why have women written no threnodies?” In the Polish cultural context, this title alludes to one of the best known *ouvrages*, “Treny” written by our outstanding Renaissance poet Jan Kochanowski on his daughter Ursula’s death. The author contends that since ancient times (e.g. Cicero on his daughter Tullia) those who mourned with the help of epitaphs and threnodies after their children’s premature deaths were fathers, not mothers. Hence, men dominated the funeral-like literatures: epigrams, panegyrics, satires, sonnets, fables and fairy tales. These forms also required a writer’s mastery of classic patterns as well as a talent for creative transformation. Naturally, there were a few women among those who actually left threnodies (in Polish Franciszka Urszula Radziwiłłowa, in English Mary Masters) but they seem to prove the rule in following a masculine genre.

The concluding chapter, “‘Skilled wife’ vs. *Femme savante*” discusses the main question considered throughout the book as a whole: shall we ever talk about women’s/ female literature in the Old Polish epoch? The answer is, “no,” despite some isolated examples of Polish women writing. But they did not yet enjoy a certain necessarily receptive environment, feedback or sense of connection between these who write and those who read. In contrast, in France, such conditions existed. The salons

exhibited a noticeable process of literary “privatization,” a loosening of classical forms. Poland produced no comparable centers of private art creation. Whereas French coteries were conducted by the ‘*précieuses*’, the Poles met without participation of women, generally excluded from social gatherings. Continuing to reign were classic oratory and the epic muse. As the book shows, women’s literature could not have emerged in a vacuum. The craft of writing as sophisticated creativity demands a certain educational background, opportunity and skill with discourse as well as the exchange of ideas. Hence, females entered the Polish literary scene only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, not earlier.

The book, a valuable source of interdisciplinary material and competent interpretation, should be of real value for studying gender issues in their historical and cultural contexts. For more orthodox feminists it can serve as a tool for enlightened questioning of national stereotypes and myths.

## Nothing is Over

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### **Biljana Dojčinović-Nešić**

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**Review of Đurić, Dubravka. *All Over, Izabrane i nove pesme sa esejima koji određuju fazu moje poezije od 1996 – 2004*. [All Over, Selected and New Poems with Essays that Mark the Phases of My Poetry, 1996 to 2004]. Beograd: Feministička 94, 2004, pp. 146, ISBN 86-82449-16-1.**

As the subtitle of Đurić’s book says, this is a collection that transgresses genres and borders among poetry, criticism and theory. It gives insight into the multiple identities of Dubravka Đurić, poet and critic, who has been involved, both theoretically and artistically, in performance, language poetry and feminist writing, and has managed to create a poetry school of her own. Also one of the editors of the magazine for female literature and culture *ProFemina*, she has had many roles in creating a space for women writers and readers in Serbia.

The book has four parts. The first three consist of poetry cycles whereas the fourth is a

collection of essays and one interview, all previously published.

The first part, “Fusion of Chain Reactions,” comprises the poetry cycles “Insinuations” and “Essays on Freedom of Movement,” which represent everyday scenes from the point of view of both a distanced and playful poetical self. The second part, “Identities,” further deepens the dialogue of the self and the other. The third part, “The Politics of Identity,” contains overtly feminist poems on the issues of body, masks, and instable identities, self... In her poetry, Dubravka Đurić uses graphic images, photos, visual symbols, and inter-textual material in order to blur the borders between poetry and theory as well as textuality and sexuality.

Part four, „The Discursive Machines: Essays,” explicitly treats all these issues. Here the author speaks with particular authority on strategies of radical poetical practices in Serbia. Comparing, for instance, female poetry in the 80s and 90s, Dubravka Đurić explores the whole cultural context. She focuses on the oeuvres of three representative women poets, their relation to the avant-garde and modernist heritage, and the mobility of their vision as well as the images they have used, and compares the work to that of two other women poets of the 90s, tracing in their poetry life in a closed society.

In her other essays Dubravka Đurić speaks of performance poetry, the relation between poetry, politics, spectacle and gender... Due to the author’s complex interests and knowledge, the combination of texts in this book gives it a whole new quality. Instead of being a mere collection – different works gathered together, the study becomes one important and quite new example of l’écriture feminine – writing the body, crossing the borders between poetry and theory.

## Profiles



### *Alice Schwarzer/Germany*

#### CALL for Reviews

One main aim of *Feminist Europa. Review of Books* is to reveal to English-speaking readers the treasures of European feminist creativity and scholarship in all our languages.

The importance of doing so appears most striking in the case of Alice Schwarzer (b. 1942), a household word in Germany and well-known in many European countries but not in English-speaking women's studies circles. Good friends with Simone de Beauvoir, Schwarzer wrote a popular book on the French pioneer which has been translated. But more than a dozen other volumes are awaiting that same rewarding attention. In short, Schwarzer is Germany's most prominent feminist and deserves international recognition.

As a journalist, author and editor, Alice Schwarzer made an impact on the French feminist movement in the early 70s. In 1974, on returning to Germany, she duplicated the notorious French campaign for abortion rights with its full page ad in *Le Monde*. Although abortion was illegal in both Germany and France, prominent women came out in the

headlines "Nous avons avortées," "Wir haben abgetrieben," "We have had abortions." Although the West German government retained its decision-making power, new legislation eased the process for women seeking to terminate a pregnancy, and the German women's movement took off.

Two bestsellers stand out at the movement's re-launch: Verena Stefan's *Häutungen* (translated as *Shedding* and available from The Feminist Press) and Alice Schwarzer's *Der kleine Unterschied und seine großen Folgen* [Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1975, new edition, 2002]. Both appeared in 1975.

In 1977, Alice Schwarzer founded *EMMA*, Germany's most popular feminist magazine still thriving today ([www.emma.de](http://www.emma.de)). In the early 1990s, Schwarzer also conceived of a unique institution, the FrauenMediaTurm – Women's Media Tower – housed in a medieval fortress in Cologne on the shores of the Rhine.

The thoroughly modern interior provides a unique home exclusively for women's studies material including not only books and magazines but also realia – posters, flyers, invitations, or buttons from the movement, expressing perfectly Schwarzer's desire to blend activism with scholarship. And she acts on this belief as matron of FORWARD – Germany, an NGO against female genital mutilation. In fact, she inspired the earliest campaigns in Germany when, in *EMMA*'s third issue, she published an article called, simply, "Clitoridectomy." The year was 1977.

But these accomplishments alone wouldn't put her on the mind's map of an enormous number of 'ordinary' Germans. An eloquent and powerful speaker, Schwarzer hosted her own tv talk show and is a frequent television guest. Her impact on our culture is perhaps most evident in an eponymous contribution to the language. A little girl in Germany who is daring and fearless has become an "Emma."

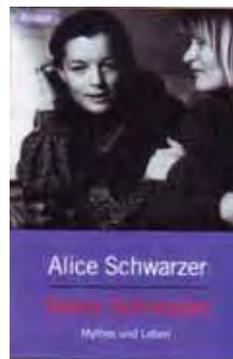
In our next issue, *Feminist Europa. Review of Books* wants to feature Schwarzer with a retrospective, covering her career of not-yet-translated writing. This is an unusual call for reviews since we have solicited mainly by word-of-mouth until now. But we hope that readers in German studies will want to enjoy

one of Schwarzer's many books and write about them for us.  
Interested?

Please contact the editors Tobe Levin [levin@em.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:levin@em.uni-frankfurt.de) or Waltraud Dumont du Voitel [info@stiftung-frauenforschung.de](mailto:info@stiftung-frauenforschung.de)



**„Der kleine Unterschied und seine großen Folgen“.** Fischer Verlag, 1975/2002



**„Romy Schneider – Mythos und Leben“.** Knauer Verlag, 2000.



**„Eine tödliche Liebe – Petra Kelly + Gerd Bastian“.** Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1993/ 2001.



**„Marion Dönhoff. Ein widerständiges Leben“.** Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2002.



**„Das bewegte Leben der Alice Schwarzer – Die Biographie“.** Knauer Verlag, 1999.



„Alice im Männerland – Eine Zwischenbilanz“. Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2002.



“Alice Schwarzer portraitiert Vorbilder und Idole”. Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2003.



“Die Gotteskrieger – und die falsche Toleranz”. Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2002.



“Liebe Alice! Liebe Barbara!“. Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2005.



„Der große Unterschied – Gegen die Spaltung von Menschen in Männer und Frauen“. Fischer Verlag, 2002

For further Publications go to:  
[www.aliceschwarzer.de/](http://www.aliceschwarzer.de/)

## Progress in Research

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**Britta Radike**

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***A Place to Call Home: An Extraordinary Book* by photographer Britta Radike is looking for a publisher.**

The project:

In *A Place to Call Home*, photographed in the Horn of Africa, my subjects are the refugees who fled from Ogaden to neighboring countries Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Kenya. I am concerned about the conflict in Ogaden, a region in South East Ethiopia with a majority Somali population.

Since the Ogaden war ended in 1977, the Somali tribes in this region have been living under Ethiopian military occupation. Although Ethiopia presents itself to the outside world as a democratic country, its military has committed numerous human rights violations in the region.

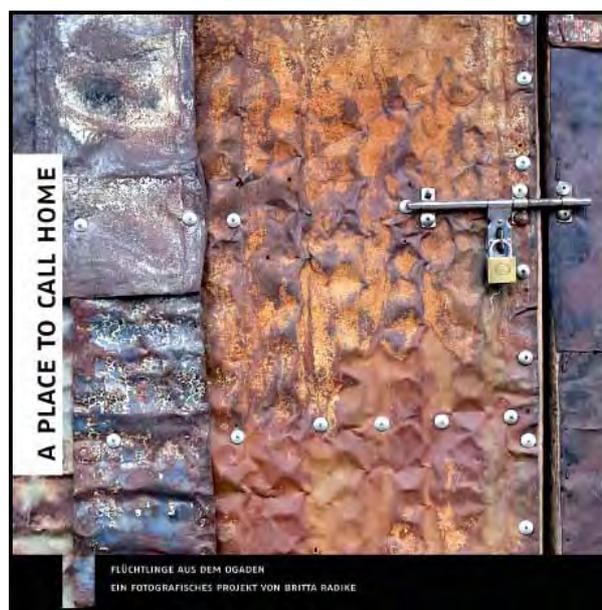
In 2003 I was first confronted with the stories of traumatized women who had been tortured and raped in prison. I conducted interviews by means of a Somali interpreter, and they told me about their lives.

It wasn't easy for me to listen because I knew the women expected more of me than I could give. In fact, there was little I could do. Nothing, really, other than pass their stories on and show their lives in my photos.

In 2006 a Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) Fellowship brought me back to the Horn of Africa to find out what had happened to the people who had fled Ogaden. Most had taken refuge in camps in Eritrea and Kenya, near the Somali border.

My photographs reveal the everyday lives of refugees in exile in order to awaken a

deeper understanding of this people and their social world. Of highest importance was an honorable and aesthetic representation that I hope to have achieved with my pictures. The accompanying interviews tell about the journey into exile, the reasons it was undertaken and conditions in the camp.



Everyday, hundreds of Somalis in Ogaden have been driven to flee their homes. Still, the numbers are less important to me than the task of giving the forced migrant a face, to make clear why these individuals were constrained to leave, and to show where and how they must now live.

The Horn of Africa is simply one place among many in the world where similar violations of human rights are taking place – with all their gruesome consequences.

The project is so significant to me because hardly anyone is reporting on the silent tragedy taking place in Ogaden day after day, not unlike violations in Darfur. Ogaden, however, is simply off the radar of public awareness. I want to change that.

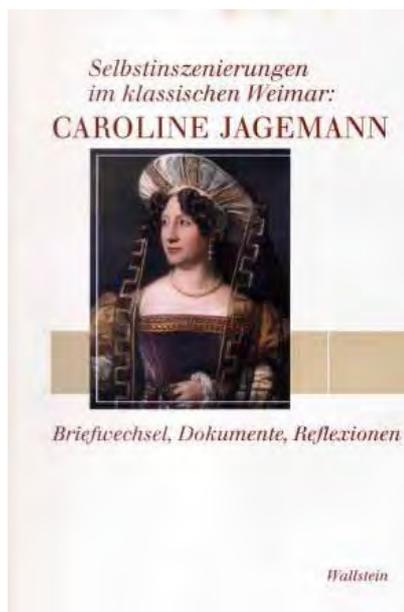
## Practical Use

### Shorttakes

Compiled and translated by Biljana Dojčinović-Nešić, Waltraud Dumont du Voitel, Tobe Levin.

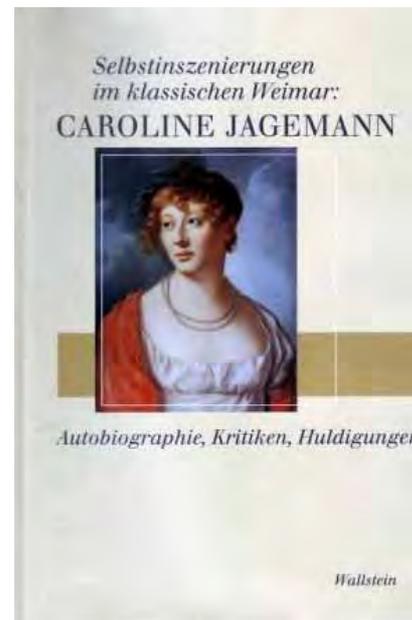
#### Stagings of Self in Classical Weimar: Caroline Jagemann

Emde, Ruth B., ed., with comments by Achim von Heygendorff. 2 volumes. *Selbstinszenierungen im klassischen Weimar: Caroline Jagemann. Autobiographie, Kritiken, Huldigungen*. [Staging of Self in Classical Weimar: Caroline Jagemann. Autobiography, Criticism, Revelations]. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2004, pp. 462/1039, ISBN 3-89244-743.



Actress, opera singer, mistress, and author of intrigue, Caroline Jagemann (1777 – 1848) polarized classical Weimar. Contemporary critics raved about her talent, calling her “Germany’s best-loved actress”; opponents accused her of power-grabbing and immorality. As the only female artist of her ilk, she stood on a pinnacle with the Duke Carl August von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach or Goethe. The constellation offered explosive potential in and of itself, for, in private or on stage, women were

expected to conform to their prescribed roles that included moral purity.



Jagemann was born in Weimar and educated in Mannheim. Goethe hired her in 1797 to perform at the court theatre in Weimar. From 1802, she lived as the mistress of the Duke Carl August. He bestowed on her and their children the title of nobility von Heygendorff.

In 1828, after the Duke’s death, Caroline Jagemann began writing about her experience. The autobiography reflects the spirit of the times but cannot really be read as a socio-historical source. Rather, it exposes the possibilities and strategies involved in self-staging and definitions of authenticity applicable during the classical Weimar period.

This edition interrogates Jagemann’s role as “Goethe’s rival” and “Carl August’s mistress,” as well as her position in the public eye. Jagemann clearly embodies the contradictions characteristic of Goethe’s Weimar.

The first volume contains an introduction to the autobiography and the first part of the life, 1777-1801. Excerpts from contemporary theatre reviews are also presented together with a chronological table and a list of roles. The second volume is devoted to relations among the three protagonists and their varying views on theatre, contemporary staging, dramaturgy and more.

## Heretics

Müller, Daniela. *Ketzerinnen. Frauen gehen ihren eigenen Weg*. [Heretics. Women Doing Their Own Thing]. Markt Zell: Religion-und-Kultur-Verlag, 2005, pp. 287, ISBN 3-933891-6.

“Heretics” were women who forsook the teachings and rituals of the dominant church to do things their own way. Even today, what we know about them remains imprecise and is usually negative – in contrast to their male counterparts, heretics who, if men, are synonymous with original thinking or uncomfortable “truths.” Often, women heretics are confused with witches presented as symbols of women’s resistance to patriarchal conditions. Here, however, we have an effort to restore to their rightful place those women in the history books who have been marginalized, retrieving them from centuries of forgetfulness.



Diaries, letters, theological tracts and above all inquisition records present a detailed picture of these women in Germany and France from the mid-12<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. They were members of a movement of “good Christian men and women” called Cathars by their enemies. Women’s active participation in the church of the middle ages as well as women’s lives and deaths are the focus of the book.

It links charges of heresy to the biographies of women accused of it, thereby revealing a detailed picture of power and church

politics in which women in the Middle Ages made their demands known.

## The Enlightenment and Women in Love

Steidele, Angela. “*Als wenn du mein Geliebter wärest*”. *Liebe und Begehren zwischen Frauen in der deutsch-sprachigen Literatur 1750-1850*. [„As if you were my beloved.“ Love and Desire between Women in German-language Literature, 1750-1850]. Stuttgart/ Weimar: Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2004, ISBN 3-476-45313-8.

„Every moment that I live is fully yours, and there’s nothing I can do to change the fact that all my senses are focused on you,“ wrote Bettina von Arnim to her friend Günderode, and Arnim’s is far from the only women-authored text before 1850 to portray desire between women. Love, open or hidden, is a multi-faceted theme in German-language literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This exhaustive work analyses for the first time how this body of fiction, poetry and memoir reflects a gradually emerging taboo against female homosexuality and uncovers even in canonical work – by Luise Gottsched, Franz Grillparzer, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff and Bettina von Arnim, for instance – astonishing aspects.

## A German Woman in Aswan

Piechutta, Annette. *malesh, malesh – Zwischen zwei Kulturen. Das Wagnis einer bi-kulturellen Ehe in Ägypten*. [malesh, malesh – Between Two Cultures. The Challenge of a Bi-cultural Marriage in Egypt]. Würzburg/ Markt Zell: Religion-und-Kultur-Verlag, 2006, pp 276, ISBN 3-933891-20-5 [old] / 978-3-933891-20-4 [new]).

Clarissa’s desires have been deeply repressed. Or at least it would appear so, convinced as she is that success and autonomy are her life’s aims. But then, on a tour of Egypt, she meets a well-educated Muslim Nubian. She is enthralled by an indescribable fascination. She wants to be with him and finally succeeds, on the last night of her journey, in seducing

him. The meeting with him changes something in her. She begins to question her choices, her lover at home, her career – her life in a major city obsessed with money.

When, a few weeks later, Ashraf proposes, Clarissa fights with her mother, an engaged feminist since the movement began around 1968, for whom it is incomprehensible that a modern woman would choose to enter a society “saturated with religious culture.”

Nonetheless, Clarissa moves to Aswan. Although not a convert to Islam, she must live according to the strictest interpretation of the Koran and faces the contradictions in an Islamic society, the unaccustomed group thinking, the traditionalist’s lack of self-critical perspective and lack of freedom to express criticism and opposition. Nonetheless, the deep love that Ashraf and Clarissa feel for one another permits them to attempt mutual understanding.

However, once Clarissa bears a child with a life-threatening illness that can’t be diagnosed in Egypt, she finds herself driven to despair by *Maktub*, a Muslim’s resigned belief in an all-powerful destiny. As it is written ...

Rarely does a novel appear in which Islam plays such a role, both outside and inside the text. Attention to detail illuminates thematic approaches to patriarchal power, radical-conservative and pluralistic societal structures, family ties, veiling, sexuality as a positive force, Western and Islamic feminisms, resigned belief in destiny and additional topics whose clarification is needed if such different cultures are to live together. Without recourse to cliché, the novel uses major and minor domestic incidents to negotiate bi-cultural understanding.

### **A Homepage for Hedwig DOHM- Year 2006 – a new edition**

In 2006 we celebrate the 175th birthday of Hedwig Dohm (1831-1919). In 1873 Dohm became one of the first people to call for women’s suffrage in Germany and she remained a vibrant voice for women’s rights throughout her life. Her vast oeuvre consists of novels, novellas, serial novels, essays and drama – all of it in the service of increased political, social and economic equality between men and women. This justifies making 2006

Hedwig Dohm Year, to embrace remembrance of this engaged and gifted writer.



To date, many badly researched and error-ridden works on Dohm have appeared. (We’ll note here as a single example that the mistaken birth year of 1833 remains in circulation!) A homepage will now offer well-researched data on the life and work of this extraordinary author and awaken renewed interest in her writing. The aim is a new and accurate collected works.

<http://www.hedwigdohm.de>

### **Women’s writing in Serbia**

**Dojčinović-Nešić, Biljana. “Pain, purification, pleasure, and representations of the body in contemporary women’s writing in Serbia,” *NORA - Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* no 3/2004. [Gender and Power 2]. Taylor and Francis Group, pp. 153-161, ISSN 0803-8740.**

The article described here, penned by a WISE member (featured in *Feminist Europa. Review of Books* despite being published in English), is a revision of the paper read at the 5<sup>th</sup> European Feminist Research Conference, “Gender and Power,” in Lund, August 2003.

Based on Elizabeth Grosz’ division of the main approaches to the issue of the body in feminist theory, this piece aims to present the gradual change in understanding of corporeality among prominent contemporary women authors in Serbia. The examples selected, from writings

by Svetlana Velmar-Janković, Jelena Lengold, and Ljubica Arsić, illustrate the shift from approaching the body in 'generic human' terms and as a locus of collective identity, toward the psychological and social construction of the body, its disassemblage in the parodic game, and through to an integrative understanding of the body as 'lived'. This gradual recognition of the lived body in works by the three selected authors is to be found in the stories about dead bodies, corpses and simulation of the human body.

### Year Book Poland 2006: Women

German Polish Institute, ed. *Jahrbuch Polen 2006 / Frauen*. [Yearbook Poland 2006: Women]. Wiesbaden: Deutsches Polen Institut, 2006, pp. 208, ISBN 3-447-05317-8.

The serial *Polish Yearbook 2006* has a theme for the first time – women. Object of the numerous German and Polish authors is the transformation of Polish women's circumstances since the political watershed, 1989-1990.

Authors, men and women, like Sławka Walczewska, Agnieszka Graff, Kinga Dunin, Adam Krzemiński and more draw from current debates on women in employment and the home, as well as in politics and public life. The Catholic perspective is represented by Alina Petrowa-Wasilewicz and the Archbishop of Lublin, Józef Życiński. In addition, Anna Nasiłowska reports on the Warsaw exhibition, "The Polish Woman" (2005) and Inga Iwasiów on the newest literary trends in Poland featuring female protagonists.

An entire section devoted to literature highlights women authors of poetry and prose. Writers in this part include Manuela Gretkowska, Izabela Filipiak, Monika Luft, Sławomir Shuty and Janusz Głowacki.

Articles by Janusz A. Majcherek and Marek Zając in the final section, "Tendencies," move beyond the Yearbook's theme to treat contemporary political and social developments in Poland. The conclusion presents a broad chronicle of political and cultural events and touches on German-Polish relations.

<http://www.deutsches-polen-institut.de/>

### Apartheid's Shadow

Schäfer, Rita. *Im Schatten der Apartheid - Frauen-Rechtsorganisationen und geschlechtsspezifische Gewalt in Südafrika*. [In the Shadow of Apartheid – Right-wing Organizations and Gender-specific Violence in South Africa]. Münster, Berlin, Hamburg: LIT-Verlag, 2005. pp. 480, ISBN 3-8258-8676-x.

The end of apartheid signaled a change in direction for South African women's organizations: to that point they had been part of the liberation struggle and had de-emphasized specific women's issues. After regime change in 1994, however, they demanded the anchoring of women's rights in the new constitution. Now they are working with the government to improve the real legal situation of women and to reduce rampant gender-specific violence. The study analyses to what extent women's rights organizations have actually succeeded in influencing and altering South African society. A broad empirical base documents women's rights work in various parts of the country, roaming widely to convey historical background and cultural legitimacy of various kinds of violence. Thus, physical and sexual violence against women and girls is addressed in various social contexts. The key is concepts of masculinity that justify power over women's bodies and find their expression in both race and class differences. The book opens new vistas on research in gender, violence and jurisprudence in South Africa.

## Sex Work in Spain

**Agustín, Laura M<sup>a</sup>. *Trabajar en la Industria del Sexo, y Otros Tópicos Migratorios*. [Working in the Sex Industry, and Other Migratory Clichés. Preface by Francisco Vázquez García]. Donist: Gakoa Tercera Prensa, Novedad editorial, 2004, pp. 200. From the Preface by Francisco Vázquez García.**

The essays here trace recent developments in migration studies with particular emphasis on the link between migration and the increase in sex industry work. Agustín's originality lies in her challenge to the field's hegemonic discourse with its emphasis on victims and morality that continues in official documents, counseling efforts, funded investigations and political practices concerned with the "problem" of "prostitution" and its inroads from the 'third' into the First World.

Laura Agustín's chapters invert our gaze. For once, the usual observers become the observed. The aim is to exorcize the demons obscuring our habitual perspective that uniformly reduces migrant women to victims, conjugating them to powerless minors, playthings of circumstance, sufferers from others' avarice, subjected to the inferno of exploitation, deception and violence, forced to bite the hard bullet of sexuality.

In her work, Agustín refuses to enter into the game of "intellectual universals" but prefers instead to move among the uncertainties of the "specific intellectual" based on concrete knowledge obtained on the ground. She doesn't invoke natural or human dignity. She doesn't claim to speak for anyone but rather describes situations as they appear without interjecting her own complicity or ambivalence. Before proposing solutions, she eschews ventriloquizing to allow the protagonists a voice.

### Contents

Working in the sex industry

Forget about victimization: migrant women as protagonists

Sex work and violence against women: Utopian visions or war of the sexes?

The Spanish family, the sex industry and migrant women

Questioning the concept of 'place': migration as something more than loss

The unsaid: desires, sentiments and the search for well-being

The need for various kinds of research

Migrant women in the sex industry (IMSERO)

Additional information: [hiruga01@sarenet.es](mailto:hiruga01@sarenet.es)

## From Israel, a Torah Song

**Levine, Yael. *Simkhes Toyre Lid le-Rivkah Tiktiner*. [In Hebrew]. [Simchas Torah Song by Rivkah Tiktiner]. Jerusalem, pp. 32, 2005.**

Available from Sifrei Yerushalayim:  
[jerbook2@netvision.net.il](mailto:jerbook2@netvision.net.il) or  
Tel.: 972-2-6433580.

Rivkah bat Meir Tiktiner (d. 1605) was the first Jewish woman to compose an extant book, the Yiddish musar work for women "Meinekhet Rivkah" (Rebeka's Nursemaid). In 1609 it appeared in two editions, the first issued in Prague, where the author migrated from Poland.

Rivkah Tiktiner also composed a Yiddish song, "Simkhes Toyre Lid," consisting of eighty lines, a hymn of praise to The Creator. The motif of future redemption includes the banquet of the righteous that figures prominently in the second part. The dates of composition of both "Simkhes Toyre Lid" and "Meinekhet Rivkah" are unknown. Two undated editions of "Simkhes Toyre Lid" have reached us, however, probably published in Prague in the seventeenth century.

The Yiddish version of "Simkhes Toyre Lid" appeared in a critical edition by Chone Shmeruk, first in a 1978 article on Rivkah Tiktiner, and subsequently in an updated version of his book *Sifrut Yiddish be-Polin* (Magnes Press, 1981). In "Simkhes Toyre Lid le-Rivkah Tiktiner," Shmeruk's updated critical Yiddish edition is reproduced, followed by the first Hebrew translation (with Dr. Boris Kotlerman) of "Simkhes Toyre Lid." An index to motifs appearing in the song is also included.

"Simkhes Toyre Lid," although chanted by women when they decorated the Torah scrolls prior to Simhat Torah, contains verses that are not really gender-specific (See

A. Ya'ari, *Toldot Hag Simhat Torah*, Jerusalem 1964, p. 464). Therefore, the song might well be reclaimed in our time by both men and women alike.

The Yiddish text of "Simkhes Toyre Lid" and its Hebrew translation appearing in Yael Levine's edition are prefaced by a scholarly introduction beginning with the known biographical information about Tiktiner. A Yizkor prayer in her memory has been published for the first time from the manuscript "Kuntress Beit Knesset Altneushul bi-Prague" (Jewish Museum of Prague, ms. 113). This prayer is the only known source which makes mention of her husband although the manuscript is defective at this particular spot, making the precise name impossible to discern.

The introductory chapter also compiles for the first time the evidence concerning learned women in Prague. Most interestingly, on several inscriptions in the ancient Jewish cemetery there is reference to women who devoted their time to Torah study. One of these learned women was Rivkah (d. 1579), aunt of R. Isaiah Horowitz, the Shelah. Additional learned women were Feigele Katz, daughter of the Maharal, and mother to Hava Bacharach.

The latter was uniquely learned, and her grandson, R. Ya'ir Hayyim Bacharach, wrote in the introduction to his book of responsa *Havot Ya'ir* that he chose this title in her honor. (This work contains, inter alia, the first responsum concerning women and the recitation of kaddish). R. Ya'ir Hayyim Bacharach also related in the preface to this work, in the name of his father, that after her husband passed away, the Shelah wished to marry her. She, however, chose not to remarry "in honor of her husband."

### **Born in Jerusalem, died in Paris**

**Chombard-Gaudin, Cécile. *Une orientale à Paris. Voyages littéraires de Myriam Harry*. [A Woman from the East in Paris: Literary Journeys of Myriam Harry]. Paris: Masion-neuve & Larose, 2005.**

Who remembers Myriam Harry? This woman of letters, who was born in 1869 in Jerusalem and died in Paris in 1954, made

generations dream upon publication of her four volumes in the cycle of Siona narrating her childhood. Upon discovering the series, Cécile Gaudin was seduced by Myriam Harry and became her first biographer. Gaudin has drawn together the episodes in Harry's life on three continents – Europe, Africa, Asia – and set up a chronology less fanciful than those of the novelist. If the writer was often beguiled by events in her own life (*L'Île de volupté*, 1908), she called on her talent to prettify her past. Doesn't she admit that it's thanks to Sacher Masoch that she'd come to France?

Between the two world wars, Myriam Harry became an exceptional observer of the Middle East. Accompanied by her husband, the animal sculptor Emile Perrault, she traveled through Syria, Lebanon, and Iran just after regime change (*Femmes de Perse*, *Jardins d'Iran*, 1941), and through Palestine as Zionists were beginning to anchor their colonies (*Les Amants de Sion*, 1924). At every stage, the author asked herself about the future of nations, the influence of the West and above all about the condition of women. In *Les Derniers Harems* (1933), she compared Muslim law to the Napoleonic Code, underscoring the positive aspects of each. An astonishing figure in feminine literature - Cécile Gaudin has included photos of Harry in local dress – is certainly worth rediscovering.

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<http://eprints.unife.it/annali/lettere>

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**Caroline Wilson** has translated the review of Elina Noradi, "Women directors in Contemporary Spanish Cinema..." from Spanish into English.

## What is "Feminist Europa. Review of Books"?

**Feminist Europa. Review of Books** is a journal written in English which reviews feminist scholarship, creative and popular work by women published in Europe, (preferably) in languages other than English.

**Feminist Europa. Review of Books** was launched in 1998 as a project of the Division Communication and Cultural Practice of Women's International Studies Europe (WISE) under whose generous auspices six issues were produced. Starting with its new issue 1:1-2 of 2001, it has been relaunched and is now published frequently by the German Foundation for Gender Studies, whose projects are in perfect tune with the goals pursued by our reviews journal.

**Feminist Europa. Review of Books** wants to strengthen ties among feminist scholars and women's communities active in all European countries. Have you ever wondered what happens in the rest of Europe, outside of your own country and in languages you do not command? Our aim is to facilitate awareness of the productivity and debates within women's studies across linguistic and cultural barriers in Europe, drawing on an extensive pool of scholars and activists committed to transcultural and transnational discourse. We host publications that have an impact on women's culture and deserve to be known outside their local context; we foster the flow of information across national borders and language boundaries.

**Feminist Europa. Review of Books** is a unique project dedicated to transnational communication and committed to the creation of a new Europe, a Europe in which, i.e., feminists in France are perfectly aware of the discourse articulated by feminists in Ukraine, and communities in Seville can build networks with scholars in Sarajevo and activists in London.

**Feminist Europa. Review of Books** can greatly profit from the contributions offered by the networking community that the journal aims at creating. Our policy since the beginning has supported the presentation and diffusion of individual works and has encouraged reviewers to shape their contributions in different and personal ways. We believe that a community of women must speak in different voices and aim at offering a forum in which they can all find a place and a fruitful occasion for exchange and communication.

Clearly, **Feminist Europa. Review of Books** contributes to the objectives and projects pursued by the **German Foundation for Gender Studies**.

## What is The German Foundation for Gender Studies? [Deutsche Stiftung Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung]

It is a private initiative, which supports international projects. To make visible women's agency, traditions, culture and contributions to the history of humanity — these are the Foundation's aims.

Largely excluded from the historical record, women, like men, have always acted on the broader stage but too often remain unacknowledged. Such erasure inspired Dr. Waltraud and Dr. Roland Dumont du Voitel when, in December 1996, they inaugurated Germany's first feminist foundation.

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