

# book reviews



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Anna Artwinska and Agnieszka Mrozik, eds., *Gender, Generations, and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond*, New York: Routledge, 2020, 352 pp., £120.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-0-36742-323-0.

Book review by **Kristen Ghodsee**  
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The concepts of gender and generation got a considerable workout during the plague year of the coronavirus pandemic. In March and April 2020, American social media lit up with debates about the propriety of the phrase “boomer remover” with regard to a disease that disproportionately targeted those over the age of sixty-five. On 23 March 2020, the Lieutenant Governor of Texas, Dan Patrick, said on television that he thought that plenty of grandparents would be willing to die in order to save the economy for their grandchildren.<sup>1</sup> As the stresses of lockdowns continued, psychologists began warning about the deleterious effects on teenagers and young adults whose lives have been put on hold to protect their elders. Around the world, the demands of different generations have been pitted against each other as politicians try to make public policies to prevent health systems from being overwhelmed.

In terms of gender, extended quarantines and school shutdowns have led to an exodus of working women from the labor force. Mothers find themselves disproportionately responsible for home schooling and domestic work even when fathers are available around the clock. The persistence of patriarchal gender roles whereby caregiving responsibilities “naturally” devolve onto the shoulders of women and girls has precipitated catastrophic levels of exhaustion and burnout. It is from within the prison cell of pandemic fatigue that I read with great interest the edited collection of Anna Artwinska and Agnieszka Mrozik, *Gender, Generations, and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond*, and it is through the prism of an extended confinement that I reflect on the importance of both gender and generation as salient categories of analysis for the experiences of twentieth-century communism.

The volume is divided into four sections that deal with theoretical perspectives, comparative historical case studies, biographical accounts, and aesthetic representations. The authors in the first section deploy a theoretical formulation of generation that grew out of Karl Mannheim’s sociological approach from the early twentieth century. Mannheim described generation as a synchronic group of people bound together by their collective experience of certain historical events, such as the so-called Lost Generation that followed World War I and whatever name we collectively decide to give the generation of adolescents and young adults who survived the COVID-19 pandemic.



In their theoretical introduction, Artwinska and Mrozik interrogate the concept of generation within the specific historiographic context of Central and Eastern Europe because of an implicitly normative teleology from bad to good: "Generation is used to measure time from communism—a historical period with mostly negative connotations, perceived as a 'pause in history'—to the arrival of capitalism as a perceived destination point" (16). Perhaps most importantly, the editors unpack the particular political context within which the concept of generation is used to silence or ignore memories or experiences of the communist past that do not conform to hegemonic narratives. "[T]oday anticommunism is part of the mainstream public debate in many countries of Central and Eastern Europe; it is also part of the identity politics of many milieus, groups, and socio-political movements, including women's movements" (20). The essays in this excellent collection push against the widespread anti-communism that typifies much contemporary scholarship coming out of Eastern Europe where younger generations of scholars have been keen to accept fellowships and grants to repudiate the problematic idealism of their elders.

The essays included in the second part of the book constitute a collection of comparative historical case studies that reveal the important continuities between communist women's movements and later forms of feminism, challenging directly the Western concept of feminist "waves" that tend to elide the importance of leftist feminisms in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. An erudite essay by Chiara Bonfiglioli, for example, traces the international reverberations of the Soviet idea of the state-supported worker-mother and how it influenced the policies of Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Italy throughout the Cold War. Similarly, Eloisa Betti critically examines the history of the Italian women's movement and the importance of communist women in setting the feminist agenda.

The third section of the book deals specifically with the biographies of individual women and resists the temptation to see these communists as historical actors without agency—as dupes to a male-dominated Marxist cause. Artwinska and Mrozik argue that "the biographies of women who belonged to the pre-war communist generations are often perceived as biographies of losers, who wasted their lives in the fight for a misguided cause" (20). The final section of the book deals with the aesthetic representation of women who identified as communists. Agnieszka Mrozik has a moving essay about the girls of the Polish Youth Union, and Anna Artwinska writes poignantly about subjectivity and the invention of the self in Svetlana Alexievich's oral history, *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets*.

To round out the collection, the Dutch historian Francisca de Haan, one of the most prominent voices defending the study of communist women as historical agents of women's emancipation, reflects on the importance of the essays contained in the book. "It is not by chance that precisely leftist women's movements have become invisible with the dominant feminist waves metaphor," De Haan writes. There has been an active project to erase the importance of women who advocated for women's rights within the state socialist context because they do not conform to the "grassroots" image of the independent women's movement so lionized in the West. What this thoughtful and important volume of essays teaches us is that the idealized reification of independent Western women's movements is itself an important product of the Cold War.

## ◆ Note

1. Matt Stieb, "Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick: 'Lots of Grandparents' Willing to Die to Save Economy for Grandchildren" *New York Magazine*, 23 March 2020, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/03/dan-patrick-seniors-are-willing-to-die-to-save-economy.html> (accessed 25 February 2021).




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*CLIO: Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 48, no. 2, "Genre et espace (post-)ottoman" (Gendering the [post-]Ottoman world), Paris: Editions Belin/Humensis, 2018, 328 pp., €21.00 (paperback), ISBN: 97-2-410-01429-7.

Book review by **Hülya Adak**  
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The Special Issue of *Clio* entitled "Genre et espace (post-)ottoman" is a must-read for scholars working on gender and women's history, Ottoman studies, post-Ottoman Balkans and Turkey, and post-communism. Bringing together more than a dozen experts on Ottoman history and post-Ottoman realms, including Krassimira Daskalova, Edhem Eldem, François Georgeon, and Ece Zerman among others, the Special Issue provides rich analyses of a wide repertoire of works and genres, including cartoons, ego-documents, autobiographies, journals, travel narratives, art, painting, and archival documents.

"Genre et espace (post-)ottoman" unravels multiple layers of silencing around women's history of the Balkans and Turkey in the attempt to give voice and visibility to women in history. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework brings together almost all of the articles, as gender is explored in relation to class, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality, exposing unique modes of discrimination and power relations. Many articles, for instance, "Femmes, genre et corps dans l'Europe du Sud-Est et en Turquie, mi-XIXe-mi-XXe siècle" (Women, gender, and the body in South-East Europe and Turkey, mid-nineteenth–mid-twentieth century) by Fabio Giomi and Ece Zerman, are highly critical of masculinist historiographies of various national contexts, as they proffer a contemporary bibliography of feminist histories of the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century in Southeastern Europe and Turkey. Gizem Tongo's article sheds light on the significance of an award-winning internationally renowned Ottoman-Greek woman artist, Eleni Iliadis (1895–1975), who lived in Istanbul prior to the forced population exchange following the Lausanne Treaty of 1923. Eleni Iliadis's popularity had fallen amid the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1923), and she was written out of chronicles of art history in Turkey as she moved to Athens after 1923. Gizem Tongo attributes the disappearance of Eleni Iliadis from the official art history of the Turkish Republic not only to her ethnic background but also because she was female (62).

Furthermore, Sara Bernasconi's "Des mediatrices fragiles: Les sages-femmes dans la Bosnie habsbourgeoise" (Fragile intermediaries: Midwives in Bosnia under Austro-Hungarian rule, 1878–1918) gives visibility to Bosnian midwives in their unique positions as intermediaries between the Habsburg Empire and the local inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the turn of the century. Bernasconi illustrates the significance of studying Bosnian midwives, who act as role-models, earning their daily bread, and in some cases, serving as the only breadwinner of the family, as they inhabit an atypical state institution, while catering to all women irrespective of their religious communities.

Edhem Eldem's analysis of the journal of Prince Salahaddin (1861–1915) and the collection of the private correspondence of his father, Sultan Murad V (1840–1904) unsettles Orientalist representations of the harem and Ottoman women, while highlighting the unique lives of the latter, their characteristics, inclinations, and more. For instance, Prince Salahaddin's grandmother Şevkefza Valide Sultan is described in succinct detail (21) from the eyes of the prince. The captivity of two male historical actors leads to "exceptional" texts with details of biographies of women and slaves in the harem. Eldem argues that the narratives of captivity could provide the framework for why the male writers chose to focus on the "unprecedented" representations of women, as well as the family, the conjugal union, and relationships.

The merit of this Special Issue is that it includes unique discussions of the contemporary history of denationalizing women's history in the post-Ottoman realms. Further, the writers in the issue carry out the extremely ambitious task of analyzing each context comparatively to emphasize differences or salient similarities. An absolutely noteworthy outcome of such an endeavor is the rupture it highlights of various post-Ottoman nation-states going through an alienation from the Ottoman past in distinct phases of their nationalist history-writing. Many scholars of the volume highlight the "narrative of rupture" as part of the *raison d'être* of nationalist history writing of this region as they readdress the Ottoman heritage beyond the history of disjuncture. In "'Quel feminism sera le notre?' L'engagement des femmes dans l'Albanie post-ottomane" ("Which feminism will be ours?" The women's movement in post-Ottoman interwar Albania), for instance, Nevila Pahumi argues for a continuity with Ottoman feminism as she analyzes the militant feminism in Albania between the world wars (134). Furthermore, Evguenia Davidova rescues the unique histories of "women nurses" between 1878 and 1941 from the nationalist historiographies in Bulgaria that only serve to explore social transformation under the context of de-Ottomanization (111).

The interview with leading scholar of women's history Krassimira Daskalova is a significant section of the volume as it explores the development of academic networks around women's history across the Balkans and Turkey and the institutionalization of Women's History in higher education in the region as a contemporary development (it can be dated back to the 1990s). Moreover, the articles are highly original in their attempts to denationalize historiography on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and address the heritage of the communist past of the Balkans and the Ottoman past of Southeastern Europe and Turkey.

A further addition to the volume would have been the comparative history of suffrage and women's movements in the region. Moreover, the Special Issue could

have paid more tribute to literary history as a means of writing women's history, the various stages of national canon-formation and the absence of women writers from national canons. Studying fiction by women writers would not only contribute to making women's voices heard, but could serve as an extremely resourceful means of analyzing utopias, dreams, political visions in the post-Ottoman realms. Moreover, a few articles in this Special Issue of *Clio* address sexuality, but a more thorough history of sexuality in post-Ottoman contexts would add to this rich narrative of women's history. Lastly, a longer introduction bringing together the history of institutionalization of gender and women's history throughout the Balkans and Turkey could be instrumental in understanding the logic of the sequencing of the works and the prominent overarching arguments made in individual articles.

"Genre et espace (post-)ottoman" is recommended reading for all. For those who cannot read French, an expanded English version of the entire Special Issue is already online.<sup>1</sup>

### ◆ Note

1. *Clio: Women, Gender, History*, "Gendering the (post-)Ottoman World," *Cairn.info*, July 2018, <https://www.cairn-int.info/journal-clio-women-gender-history-2018-2.htm>.




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Lisa Greenwald, *Daughters of 1968: Redefining French Feminism and the Women's Liberation Movement*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019, 426 pp., \$64.50 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-496-20755-5.

Book review by **Elsa Stéphan**

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Lisa Greenwald's *Daughters of 1968* provides a comprehensive overview of the feminist revolution in France from 1944 to 1981. But the most crucial contribution of her work is to set the record straight about what French feminism truly is. For the "French feminism" taught in philosophy and French departments in the United States over the past forty years has been focused on post-structural feminism. This meant that there was little concern for the larger historical context. As Greenwald writes: "American interest in French literary theory and philosophy led some scholars of feminism to focus on just one element of a large political and intellectual movement and to brand it 'French feminism'" (11). Such an analysis can be traced back to the 1980s. While the important anthology *New French Feminisms* by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (1980) introduced post-structural feminist theory in the United States, it included texts by more than thirty writers, such as Christine Delphy, Benoîte Grould, and Évelyne Sullerot, among others, and reflected the diversity of *feminisms* in the plural. The plurality of French feminism vanished over the course of the decade, as

can be seen in the title of Toril Moi's equally influential *French Feminist Thought* (1991). Indeed, Andrea Nye's review of the latter indicates the narrowing of the French feminist canon, where post-structural feminists come to stand in for French feminism as a whole: "Eight years have now passed since Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron introduced French feminism to American and British philosophers with their collection. In these eight years substantial works by Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous and others have been translated and published."<sup>1</sup> Those were the three names that captured attention. Universities then witnessed the creation of a plethora of courses called "French feminism" in the singular form that unintentionally depoliticized the women's movement in France.<sup>2</sup> Greenwald thus affirms that her book "was written, at least in part, as a response to this truncated vision of French feminism that continues to hold sway in the United States" (13).

While scholars such as Judith Butler, Sherry Turkle, Jane Gallop, and Toril Moi were influential in past decades in bringing the complex ideas of French gender theory to a worldwide audience, Greenwald seeks to restore the history of French feminism as an intellectual and political movement to its material roots as well as to clarify the label "French feminism." She thus focuses on political history through the material context of women's lives—access to jobs and education, and laws governing the family, property, and divorce—"For what mattered most about feminism in France was not philosophy and theory but the ideas and actions of a fiercely political movement and the material and cultural changes that movement wrought" (253). Especially since a significant part of the scholarship on the period is written in French and remains untranslated, Greenwald's book makes an essential contribution by bringing to an English-speaking audience the work of historians Sylvie Chaperon and Florence Rochefort, and political scientist Janine Mossuz-Lavau, among many others.

Greenwald ultimately seeks to redefine second-wave feminism in France by describing the breadth and power of a broader political movement. She begins with post-war feminists who benefitted from the natalist policies that prevailed after 1945 and granted them paid parental leave, child benefits, and universal health care. But, she argues, feminist activism was not embraced before the 1970s. The title of the book highlights the determining effect of that decade, which dramatically changed the political and ideological landscape of France. After women found themselves excluded by men during the May 1968 movement, they created organizations such as the *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes*, MLF (Women's liberation movement) and *Choisir la Cause des Femmes* (Choose the cause of women). These organizations were instrumental in passing laws that criminalized rape, legalized abortion, established divorce by mutual consent, and legislated equal pay.

The book also highlights the crucial link feminist organizations made between patriarchy and colonialism. *Daughters of 1968* reminds us of many of the activists—such as Tunisian-born Gisèle Halimi—who fought for women's rights in both France and its colonies. Many criticized the "colonization" of women's bodies in France, as their male comrades were perpetuating the same colonialist relations they had denounced abroad. Feminist activists also condemned the rape and torture of women during the Algerian war and were publicly opposed to the conflict. This parallel between patriarchy and colonization is, moreover, crucial to understanding contemporary Islamophobia against Muslim women in France. On the one hand, the French colonial

government of the 1950s tried to “liberate” Algerian women from Algerian men and from Islam by granting them suffrage, legalizing divorce, banning forced marriages, and encouraging women to remove their veil. On the other hand, the rape of Algerian women was used as a weapon by the French army. While twenty-first-century France is still slowly acknowledging the crimes committed by the French army during the Algerian war, Greenwald provides a historical background that could explain the contradictions that postcolonial France is still grappling with regarding Muslim women.

*Daughters of 1968* also offers a context for the dissolution of the French feminist movement in the 1980s. The movement imploded when, in 1979, the faction *Psychanalyse et Politique* (Psychoanalyses and politics) trademarked the name *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes* and prevented other groups from using its logo. They explicitly rejected the term “feminism.” Greenwald describes their vision as “particularist,” based on the assertion of women’s difference from men. Ironically, when the media wanted to interview “feminists,” they would turn to the group. In addition, the feminist gains had been so numerous that French women of the 1980s started considering feminism unnecessary after the elections of 1981 when newly elected president François Mitterrand created a Ministry of Women’s Rights and nominated the feminist Yvette Roudy to be minister.

In her conclusion, the author analyzes the impact of feminists on French political culture and determines that “just as the May 1968 events transformed French society, so did the feminist movement” (253). By restoring the social history of 1970s women’s movement, Greenwald reveals the breadth of French feminism(s) and pays a long-overdue tribute to French political history.

## ◆ Notes

1. Andrea Nye, Review of *French Feminist Thought* by Toril Moi, *Philosophy in Review* 8, no. 4 (1988), 143–146, here 143.

2. “Christiane Rochefort,” in *Shifting Scenes: Interviews on Women, Writing, and Politics in Post-68 France*, ed. Alice Jardine and Anne Menke (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 174–191.




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Gal Kirn, *The Partisan Counter-Archive: Retracing the Ruptures of Art and Memory in the Yugoslav People’s Liberation Struggle*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020, 309 pp., 43 illustrations, €86.95 (hardback), ISBN: 9783110681390.

Book review by **Chiara Bonfiglioli**  
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*The Partisan Counter-Archive* is a multidisciplinary monograph that seeks to interrogate the encounter between the Yugoslav People’s Liberation Struggle (PLS) and the

artworks it generated both during World War II and in its aftermath. Political theorist Gal Kirn manages to innovatively weave together critical theory, Yugoslav history, and art history, in order to capture what he defines as the “surplus” contained in some of the artworks produced during the Resistance. Such “surplus” is the emancipatory message of the collective struggle against oppression waged by the grassroots Resistance movement in Yugoslavia, which also expressed an immediate awareness of the unfolding historical and political watershed represented by the Partisan choice to resist Nazism and fascism. A number of artworks created in the very midst of the war—notably poems, films, photographs—best reflect the universalizing and emancipatory “surplus” created by the People’s Liberation Struggle.

The book is divided into four main chapters: chapter 1 gives an historical and political introduction to World War II in Yugoslavia and defines the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the volume. Chapter 2 examines different Partisan art forms, especially poetry, film, graphic art, and photography. Chapter 3 discusses how the Partisan struggle’s inspiration led to different artworks produced during the socialist period that were not easily integrated into the socialist mythology, notably documentaries and monuments to the Resistance that embodied the legacy of the Partisan rupture. Finally, chapter 4 addresses the ongoing historical revisionism that dominates post-Yugoslav states and the widespread discourse of “national reconciliation” that places Partisans on an even footing with local fascist collaborationists, resulting in the widespread destruction of Partisan monuments but also in the creation of new monuments that commemorate local fascist regimes and groups (the Ustasha regime in Croatia, the Chetniks in Serbia, and the Home Guards in Slovenia). The rehabilitation of local collaborationists in the name of national unity is also discussed in relation to the recently established European Union’s commemoration of all victims of totalitarian regimes (2009), which represents a further demise of the memory of European antifascism. Such dominant historical revisionism undoubtedly strengthens the urgency of Kirn’s volume, especially at a time a revived interest for the antifascist legacy has been taken up by new political and social movements in the post-Yugoslav region.

From a gender history perspective, what I found most interesting, alongside the recognition of the role played by antifascist women’s organizations, is the account of individual women’s and female partisans’ contribution to the creation of the most iconic artworks of the liberation struggle. The well-known image of Stjepan Filipović’s execution, for instance, is attributed to female photographer Slobodanka Vasić, who captured the partisan extending his hands and triumphally making fists while exclaiming “Death to fascism, freedom to the people!” just before being hanged in Valjevo in 1942. Another photograph, used for the cover of the volume, was produced thanks to a female schoolteacher who encouraged young schoolboys and girls to form a star in the middle of a snowy field in Babno Polje in 1944, despite the fear of German planes patrolling the area. Interestingly, Kirn includes in his counter-archive another picture, taken this time by the Nazi occupiers, portraying the execution of 17-year-old partisan Lepa Svetozara Radić in Central Bosnia in 1944, which highlights not only the young woman’s resilience and dedication to the struggle, but also the surrounding SS soldiers’ contempt for the local population.



Another striking historical phenomenon discussed in chapter 2 is the amplitude of poems produced during the struggle—40,000 in Yugoslavia and 12,000 in Slovenia alone according to official historian Vladimir Dedijer. Many of these poems—written by both professional and amateur poets—were turned into songs and performed by the grassroots choirs formed within antifascist brigades or during theater performances staged by partisan-actors in the liberated territories. One of them is the so-called *Women's Anthem*, which highlights the struggle for women's emancipation and is now frequently sung by the feminist antifascist choir *Kombinat* in Ljubljana. The book also skillfully tracks the evolution of graphic art, film documents, and photo exhibitions and how they served to mobilize the masses in favor of the Resistance struggle while simultaneously documenting the ongoing fight, particularly in the liberated territories.

The grassroots dimension of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Struggle and its ongoing revolutionary "surplus" is also discussed in relation to Yugoslav Black Wave cinema, which represented an alternative to official film production on war themes. Chapter 3 addresses the work of documentary filmmaker Željimir Žilnik, himself born in a prison camp in 1942 from Partisan parents executed during the war. Žilnik's documentary *Uprising in Jazak* (1972), filmed in the multiethnic region of Vojvodina, highlights the local villagers' collective support for the liberation struggle. Due to its lack of adherence to the official aesthetic of Partisan film, the movie was initially censored, given it was perceived as offending the revolution "by engaging a group of bumps who allegedly represent Partisans" (185). Only after the villagers proved their partisan credentials and formally protested at the municipal office of the regional ministry of culture in Novi Sad, the ban was lifted. In the same chapter, the subsequent discussion of the Kozara and Tjentište memorial parks—erected during state socialism to commemorate specific World War II battles—deserved to be developed more extensively when focusing on the interplay between grassroots initiatives and state support for the war memorials, particularly in relation to recent scholarly and popular discussions on the subject.

Kirn's in-depth knowledge of Partisan art history is especially evident when he deals with his native Slovenia, which figures prominently in the chosen case studies. The author was inspired by the memory of his own Partisan grandfather, who joined the Partisan movement at sixteen years old and survived both fascist torture and the Dachau concentration camp. It is also worth noting that many of the poems analyzed in the book were translated in cooperation with Croatian-Jewish academic and former McGill Professor Darko Suvin, a survivor of the Holocaust in his native town of Zagreb. The volume, therefore, is both an original scholarly achievement and a testimony to intergenerational transmission in post-socialist times. The forty-three illustrations (in black and white and in color) add to the richness of the volume and to the reader's understanding of the context in which most of the artworks materialized. *The Partisan Counter-Archive* will be of great interest to scholars and students in history, art history, museum studies, and critical theory.



Milena Kirova, *Performing Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible*, Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2020, 212 pp., €75.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-910928-77-6.

Book review by **Ivan Stankov**  
University of Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria



*Performing Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible* is Milena Kirova's third book on biblical masculinity, following two volumes of essays in Bulgarian, published in 2011 and 2017;<sup>1</sup> it is a reworking and condensation of these volumes. These three volumes on masculinity, complemented by an earlier published monograph on biblical femininity,<sup>2</sup> comprise an in-depth project on gender identities in the Hebrew Bible. The methodological approach in all four books is deliberately interdisciplinary: anthropology, history of the ancient Near East, literature, psychoanalysis, and gender studies adjoin biblical criticism.

Biblical masculinity studies is a newcomer among other disciplines in the humanities; it developed only during the last three decades. For a time, it followed in the footsteps of women's studies methodology, then started looking around for a methodology of its own. A logical choice for Kirova would have been to follow the methodology of masculinity studies that started developing a few decades earlier. Yet, she made different choice, walking along another path. Interdisciplinary research according to her is specifically appropriate when it comes to gender identities articulated by means of literature and related to the historical reality of a Near Eastern world that existed three thousand years ago. An approach like this could go beyond the limitations of the methodology of masculinity studies born of (and epistemologically based upon) Western ways of thinking typical of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

*Performing Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible* is composed as a sequence of ten essays, each of them given provocative and intriguing titles: "The Perfect Body: An Essay on the Inconceivable," "When Real Men Cry: The Symbolism of Weeping in the Torah and the Deuteronomistic History," "The Bramble King: Banditry and Kingship in the Historical Books," and so forth. The essays are focused on a rich variety of narrative situations, legendary characters, and symbolic functions of biblical men. She highlights characters and situations that are quite popular and well discussed in biblical research. Yet, when read through the prism of gender studies and compared to other characters and situations of ancient Near Eastern literature and folklore, they begin speaking (or "performing") in an alternative way.

Why should the greatest of heroes be beautiful? What are the symbolic functions of being "the youngest brother" in ancient Israelite society as well as in the biblical narrative? How does a biblical man grow old? Why does David, the greatest among the kings of biblical Israel, weep most of all, and in a most eloquent way? These are just a few among the many thematic lines followed in the book. Kirova elaborates on each of them, going deeply into details of the biblical text, little known, yet very

picturesque. Her reflection unfolds on a broad comparative background that includes ancient Greek literature and philosophy, paleo history of the Near East, archaeology of the biblical lands, and anthropology of Mediterranean civilization.

Besides being interdisciplinary, Kirova's research is distinctively based on intertextuality; her discourse weaves an incessant net of interrelations between biblical narrative, prophetic discourse, Near Eastern poetic tradition, Balkan folk songs and legends, ancient Sumerian and classical Greek epic poetry, fairy tales, among others. The book is extraordinarily rich in knowledge and interpretation, yet it provokes the reader to continue "reading" beyond its pages, along a path of their own associations and related ideas.

The main character of the book, the biblical Man, is presented in a sequence of ten different roles; nine of them relate to his "high," or royal functions in ancient Israelite society. A special place is reserved for King David because his (narrative) masculinity is incomparably diverse and multifaceted. The Deuteronomistic history constructs it by amassing layers of various characteristics, including controversial and mutually exclusive ones. In the (book's) essays, David performs as the youngest son of a Judean family with many children; a shepherd-boy; a skillful harp player; a mighty warrior; a courtier and king's son-in-law; a bandit, a lover, an impotent elderly man.

Though King David occupies the center of the critical narrative, a large group of other characters hovers around him, all of them emblematic of biblical masculinity in some of its many embodiments. Patriarchs of Ancient Israel, "judges" like Jephthah, Gideon, and Samson, the founder of Israelite monarchy, King Saul, the early writing prophets Judah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, all of them are prominent actors in the performance of biblical masculinity.

Readers of the book, even those who are not familiar with the Hebrew Bible, learn a lot about its history and religious ideology. Moreover, they begin to comprehend characters and ideas, traditionally considered to be "unique" to the Hebrew Bible, in the broader context of ancient Near Eastern civilization. Kirova delineates the similarities as well as the dissimilarities between the Hebrew Bible and other seminal texts of ancient Mediterranean culture, especially texts written in ancient Greece.

The last, the tenth, essay ("Another Story—Another Man") acts as an epilogue in the composition of the book. At the same time, however, it is a counterpoint to the glorified masculinity that has been presented in the previous nine chapters. For the first time the reader comes to know "an-other" male character, one of those biblical men, who very rarely come to the fore of the narrative or the biblical critics' attention. Who is Paltiel and what makes him "an-other" man are the final questions among many other intriguing questions posed in the book. Though composed of ten essays, *Performing Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible* creates an accomplished and consistent critical narrative on biblical masculinity. The book is written in a manner that grips the reader's mind. It not only provides information on the Hebrew Bible but also articulates interpretative algorithms following a modern interdisciplinary methodology of gender research.

## ◆ Notes

1. Milena Kirova, *David, Velikiya: Istoria i muzhestvenost v Evreyskata Biblia. Chast 1* [David, the Great: History and masculinity in the Hebrew Bible. Part 1] (Sofia: Ciela Publishing House,

2011); Milena Kirova, *Geroichnoto tyalo: Istoria i muzhestvenost v Evreyskata Biblia. Chast 2* [The heroic body: History and masculinity in the Hebrew Bible. Part 2] (Sofia: Kibea Publishing House, 2017).

2. Milena Kirova, *Bibleyskata zhena: Mekhanismi na konstruirane, politiki na izobrazyavane v Stariya Zavet* [Biblical femininity: Mechanisms of construction, politics of representation in the Old Testament] (Sofia: Sofia University Press, 2005).




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Andrea Krizsan and Conny Roggeband, eds., *Gendering Democratic Backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe: A Comparative Agenda*, Budapest: CEU Press, CPS, 2019, 221 pp., price not listed (ebook), ISBN 978-615-5547-07-2.

Book review by **Rumiana Stoilova**

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria



*Gendering Democratic Backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe: A Comparative Agenda* collects analyses on recent de-democratization developments in four Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. With regard to the conservative and nationalistic illiberal shift in CEE, the collection responds to the need for new strategies and coalitions or pro-democratic women's organizations for their activities to be successful. The well-elaborated theoretical framework by the editors Andrea Krizsan and Conny Roggeband identifies the similarities between, and the specificities of, the selected cases: Croatia, Poland, Hungary, and Romania. The authors employ comparative methods, focusing on the backsliding of democratization, the negative effects for gender policies and human rights, and the resistance strategies of women's activism.

The dual focus of the volume is the conceptualizing of gendered aspects in democratic backsliding and understanding the ways anti-democratic, illiberal developments affect offenders against and promoters of gender equality, sexual rights, and feminist narratives. Krizsan and Roggeband outline four dimensions of gendered democratic backsliding: (1) policy decay and decrease in policy substance; (2) undermining of implementation; (3) erosion of consultation mechanisms; and (4) discursive deligitimization of gender equality policies. The four national chapters reveal the different effects of the deterioration of existing gender equality and human rights policies in light of democratic backsliding, together with varied forms of resistance against this deterioration.

The chapter on Croatia, written by Leda Sutlovic, identifies the resilience displayed by state authorities engaged in gender equality policies. Resisting the efforts of conservative organizations, state actors have contributed to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention despite the strong protests it provoked. However, the author also discusses the negative changes that have taken place among the actors and in gender

policies as a result of compromises with neo-conservative forces. The fact that neo-conservative protests are the most attended in Croatia points to the need for new forms of activism with regard to the representation of gender equality and human rights.

The Hungarian case, presented by Andrea Kriszan and Andrea Sebestyen, reveals the politicization of gender equality in parallel with de-democratization tendencies. Diversification along the line of intersectionality is a new development but rising internal tensions, together with the trend of defunding and broken dialogue with state actors, warrant the rather pessimistic conclusion that the women's movement is being disabled. Illiberal developments lead to restrictions on gender studies and gender education.

Marianna Szczygielska gives a different picture for Poland. Opposing ideas exist within the country's political community: the ruling party uses conservative discourse, while women's activism employs liberal democratic and individual rights rhetoric. The author detects processes of defunding women's non-governmental organization (NGOs), dismantling policy infrastructure, and undermining gender equality through normative ideas and welfare policies leading to refamilization of care. But the strong feminist response to such conservative tendencies is seen as standing at the forefront of the struggle for liberal democracy in society.

Ana Chiritoiu focuses on the Romanian case with respect not to democratic backslides but to the weakness of women's organizations in the country and their limited focus on violence. What reduces the chances for more effective and broader gender policies there is not some explicit ideological opposition but rather factors related to austerity. Weak institutions and ineffective practices on the part of state actors, rather than active opposition, is the diagnosis as to what is hampering gender equality policies in this country.

The cross-country comparison presented in the concluding chapter follows the book's double focus: democratic backsliding and the responses of women's movements. The first dimension, that is, the removal of gender policies, is found to be more sporadic. The other three dimensions—implementation, inclusiveness, and communication—are analyzed as providing a better perspective on democratic backsliding leading to marginalization of gender-equality discourses and policies. The identified responses, such as reinvigorated activism, new coalition building, abeyance or demise, are very useful distinctions that may be applied in future comparative research.

Throughout the volume, an insufficiently grounded assertion is that democratic accountability is difficult because of the misrepresentation of women in politics and in public administration. An opposing thesis might be that the difficult issue is not women's representation as such but the awareness and readiness of women in politics to promote gender equality. The presence of more women placed at the highest positions in the state is a desirable goal. This achievement could be positive for gendered democracy only when these positions are held by women educated in liberal democratic values, including gender equality and sexual rights, as an essential part of European identities and values.

The good structure of the entire book and its separate chapters serves the comparison between the complex processes of democratic backsliding that negatively affects gender equality, sexual rights, and feminist discourses in the separate countries. The analytical framework could be applied successfully to other countries in the

region and beyond. The collaboration among scholars with a rich record of academic publications on the topic, as well as doctoral researchers working on national case studies, has resulted in a comprehensive volume that helps us to understand the details of the respective social contexts, as well as the trends endangering gender democracy in the region of CEE. The book represents a valuable and informative study for governmental experts engaged in gender equality policies, for women activists, and for researchers and teachers.



Ludmila Miklashevskaya, *Gender and Survival in Soviet Russia: A Life in the Shadow of Stalin's Terror*, translated and edited by Elaine MacKinnon, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020, 267 pp., \$115.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-3501-3920-6.

Book review by **Rochelle Goldberg Ruthchild**  
Harvard University, USA



Ludmila Petrovna Eizengardt Miklashevskaya was one of the victims of Joseph Stalin's attempt to create a socialist paradise by purging his country of those deemed enemies of the state. Her elegantly written and detailed memoir is an important contribution to the historical record of Russia and the Soviet Union and its impact on ordinary individuals.

Miklashevskaya's life course encompassed many of the major events of the first three quarters of the twentieth century. Marked by the tragic deaths of many of those closest to her, it reflects and amplifies on the traumas of Russian and Soviet history. Born into a struggling assimilated middle-class Odessa Jewish family, in her late teens she ran off with the older theater artist and aristocrat, Konstantin Miklashevsky, helping him sort through his "stuff," from china to jewelry to furniture, the legacy of his formerly wealthy family. Living in revolutionary Petrograd in the frothy creative early Soviet period, she and her husband hobnobbed with major artists of the day, including Maksim Gorkii, Alexander Blok, Andrei Bely, Lilia Brik, Osip Mandelstam, Khodasevich, Annenkovs, Zamiatin, Mikhail Kuzmin, and Mikhail Zoshchenko, among others. Soon her idyll turned sour. Her first major loss came during the Civil War, when her revolutionary commissar brother Sasha was assassinated. Her marriage began to unravel, but she got pregnant twice and had two abortions; the second particularly reluctantly. As the noose tightened on those with noble backgrounds, the couple fled to Paris, where the city's lures could not save their marriage. Restless and dissatisfied, Miklashevskaya fell for the propaganda image of the Soviet experiment and returned to her homeland in 1927.

Unable to leave the Soviet Union, Ludmila fell in love with the historian Izya Trotsky, no relation to Leon, and had a daughter, Elena, with him. Their relatively

comfortable Soviet life ended abruptly with the wave of Stalinist purges in the late 1930s. Izya was arrested and executed; as the wife of an enemy of the people, Ludmila experienced ostracism, but also solidarity. Of her literary friends, some avoided her, some sympathized. Mikhail Zoshchenko was her staunchest ally, providing critical financial and moral support. But Miklashevskaya's freedom was short-lived. Facing arrest, she managed to place Elena with her sister-in-law, thus avoiding the fate of so many children of Stalin's victims, who vanished into state institutions.

In the Gulag system, Miklashevskaya astutely realized that she would never survive the heavy manual labor that was the lot of the average prisoner. She managed to train as a nurse; this ensured her protection from the worst ravages of the system. Miklashevskaya's descriptions of life in the Gulag, its casual cruelty, vile food, sexual and general violence, are particularly vivid and detailed. In a further blow, Konstantin Miklashevsky, despairing about Ludmila's fate, committed suicide in Paris in 1939.

Released after the Soviet victory in World War II, Miklashevskaya had a difficult reunion with her daughter, who had bonded with her sister-in-law. The mother-daughter relationship never recovered. It was not helped by Ludmila's re-arrest at the height of Stalin's anti-Jewish campaign, in the early 1950s. Already devastated by her Gulag experience and other life losses, Miklashevskaya was rocked by her twenty-eight-year-old daughter's death, the final blow to her hope for a return to a semblance of her past life. Miklashevskaya finally won her freedom with Khrushchev's mass release of Gulag prisoners after Stalin's death. Nevertheless, she had to negotiate the treacherous Soviet bureaucracy. Only with the support of prominent writers such as Ilya Ehrenburg did she finally disentangle and win permission to return to her beloved Leningrad, where she lived the final quarter of her life. Greatly encouraged by Iakov Gordin, she finally penned her memoir in the last years of her life while fighting the ravages and pain of myasthenia gravis.

The memoir is notable for its detailed description of the various stages of the author's life. The reader is drawn into Miklashevskaya's Odessa world, life often on the edge, her parents' troubled relationship, their financial fragility, her idiosyncratic rebellious brother Sasha, and her doltish older brother Grisha. Miklashevskaya's escape with Konstantin into the highest levels of early revolutionary cultural society is notable for her quick, sharp descriptions of those in her circle.

Miklashevskaya outlived Stalin, who was finally felled by a stroke on the Jewish holiday of Purim. The efforts of Iakov Gordin and the translator Elaine MacKinnon, have finally brought her memoir, somewhat abridged and edited, to an English-speaking audience. They are to be commended for this effort.

Themes of love, loss, survival, and resilience abound in Miklashevskaya's retelling of her life. The author's recall of the details of the quotidian, her vivid re-creation of significant life episodes and relationships are remarkable. Miklashevskaya's moving account of her individual experiences as a woman within the overarching frame of world changing events, such as wars, revolutions, civil wars, pogroms, and the trajectory of the Soviet experiment, is cautionary, powerful, and among the best of its genre.



Barbara Molony and Jennifer Nelson, eds., *Women's Activism and "Second Wave" Feminism: Transnational Histories*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017, 344 pp., £90.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-4411-3160-7; 2020, 335 pages, £26.99 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-3501-2770-8.

Book review by **Mara Lazda**

Bronx Community College, The City University of New York, USA



This fascinating volume is an important contribution to conversations on the history of feminism, activism, transnationalism, and intersectionality in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Building on a workshop from the 2014 Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, the volume brings together senior and newer scholars from Asia, Africa, North America, Europe, and Australia. In focusing on the practice of transnational activism (5), the volume decenters white, middle-class, Western voices that still misshape histories of women's movements. The volume's authors argue for a redefinition of the "wave metaphor" and claim a place for the national in the transnational, positioning transnational analysis in conversation with Third World feminism. Significantly for readers of *Aspasia*, the volume includes "Second World" activism, acknowledging the leading role of women in socialist Eastern Europe in transnational networks.

In the introduction, editors Barbara Molony and Jennifer Nelson point to the limits of the three "waves" approach to the history of feminist activism, a model that has been US-focused and neglected feminist work outside the United States. Agreeing with recent scholarship,<sup>1</sup> Molony and Nelson write that categorizing feminist activism as waves misses the continuities among movements and the evidence of cooperation and conflict among women of different classes, races and ethnicities, sexualities, and continents (3).

Molony and Nelson find the wave model still useful but suggest opening our understanding of the time periods and types of activism considered feminist. This means beginning the "second wave" in the 1940s and 1950s (instead of the 1960s and 1970s) and extending it into the twenty-first century. World War II, the defeat of fascism, intensified struggles against imperialism and racism, and growing conflict between capitalism and communism were all shifts in power hierarchies in which women participated. Molony and Nelson argue for also opening up the category of women's activism to include "women in movement"<sup>2</sup> not just movements dedicated to "women's rights" because "women who were activists for antiracism, political freedom, community well-being and nationalist justice developed a strong feminist consciousness while working for these other causes" (4).

Each of the volume's three parts focuses on one aspect of broadening the analytical framework of transnational feminist activism. In part 1, "Redefining Feminism,"



five chapters highlight how women organized for change on the local level, which evolved into demands for systemic reforms. In the United States, Lana Dee Povitz shows how “the food activism of United Bronx Parents” led by mothers to improve cafeteria quality in individual schools became intersectional alliances that contributed to “gender justice” even if they did not see themselves as activists or feminists (30). Women adapted existing institutions and transnational concepts to fit their local needs. April Haynes demonstrates how Black young women in the US South spoke out for sexual and racial equality, introducing principles of Black Power into existing YWCA programs on sex education. Eileen Boris traces how the women of the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) of Gujarat created a distinct type of sector-based trade union, with a “feminist twist to Gandhian self-sufficiency” (88) but also engaged transnational institutions such as the International Labor Organization. In her chapter on Soviet feminist dissidents, Rochelle Ruthchild shows that there was grassroots feminist activism that challenged the Soviet claim to have emancipated women. This activism was connected to a prerevolutionary Russian feminism, as well as the Russian Orthodox church. Less a study of individual women’s activism, and more a deep examination of the significance of specific local contexts, Natacha Chetcuti-Osorovitz’s chapter considers how the growing Muslim community in France has led feminist movements to reassess feminism’s adherence to secular principles of universalism.

Part 2, “Reconsidering ‘Second Wave’ Feminist Genealogies,” examines the activism of Second and Third World women to provide ample evidence for beginning the “long second wave” after World War II and extending it into the twenty-first century. Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney traces the continuities of Chilean women’s activism from the 1920s to the present. She shows how activists’ use of maternalism evolved, as they rejected Pinochet’s co-optation of traditional motherhood, and became more radicalized in making demands for gender equality, including equality in the family. Magda Grabowska makes a case for both extending the “second wave” and for the leadership of “Second World” women in it. She discusses how Polish women in the 1940s and 1950s were essential in setting the agenda for the Women’s International Democratic Federation, founded by socialist-feminists in 1945 in Paris. Grabowska argues that Polish women were marginalized from the transnational movement and its history in the 1960s because of a shift in Western priorities to focus on the “Global South” as well as a resurgence of “traditional values” nationally and transnationally. Seung-Kyung Kim and Na-Young Lee show how a shift in Korean feminism in the 1980s that recognized sexual violence as systematic created the language to speak about World War II “comfort women” survivors and their need for justice. Based on an analysis of Mary Daly’s *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978), Priya Jha points to continuities created by white, second-wave feminists. White feminist ideas of “global sisterhood” failed to recognize differences among their nonwhite “sisters” and preserved imperialist structures of inequality.

The third and final part, “Transnational Feminist Linkages” illustrates how “transnational feminist activism can both reify and unsettle the nation” (5). These five chapters highlight how women in movement adapted transnational ideas of decolonization

and antiracism to their national spaces as well as sought support for their national campaigns in transnational spaces. These spaces were both physical and conceptual. Chicana activists in the Silicon Valley, Jeannette Alden Estruth writes, “self-identified as ‘Third World People’ colonized within the United States” (217) and—asserting control over their spaces—organized walk outs of school buildings that helped bring about the inclusion of Chicano Studies curriculum among other reforms. The activists in Amanda Ricci’s chapter on Haitian and Mohawk Women’s movements physically traveled between Canadian, Haitian, and Mohawk spaces, while also seeking transnational solidarity with women of color marginalized in other national contexts. Vera Mackie’s chapter on justice for Korean “comfort women” and Rachel Sandwell’s chapter on the African National Congress in exile trace how taking the national movements out of their original contexts informed feminist work back “home.” Finally, Purvi Mehta shows how Dalit feminists worked in India to highlight their differences from Dalit men and from other Indian women, but also created transnational solidarities with women marginalized in other countries.

This is far from the first work to point out the weaknesses of the “wave” model, but this excellent volume will be of interest to scholars of transnational feminism as well as a useful text for teaching upper-division students. This short review cannot adequately represent the complexity of each chapter’s analysis nor the coherence of the volume connecting the temporal and geographic breadth of the contributions. Considering the range of cases and types of activism the volume covers, readers might finish their reading more convinced of the need to do away with the “waves” entirely rather than revise them.

## ◆ Notes

1. In addition to the scholarship Molony and Nelson cite, see Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
2. Sheila Rowbotham, *Women in Movement: Feminism and Social Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1993).




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Nina Konstantinovna Petrova, ed. *Zhenskie sud'by voiny* (Women’s war fates), Moscow: Veche, 2019, 600 pp., P 655.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-5-4484-0954-7.

Book review by **Adrienne M. Harris**  
Baylor University, USA




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In *Zhenskie sud'by voiny* (Women’s war fates), historian Nina Konstantinovna Petrova, details Soviet women’s activities during World War II—on the front, on the home

front, in occupied territories, and in captivity in Nazi Germany. Drawing on sources primarily held in the Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennii Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI; Russian State Social-Political History archive), M-1 fond, Petrova discusses both wartime contributions and postwar situations and receptions. Many of her primary sources resulted from two initiatives: *Komsomol'skaia Pravda's* (Komsomol truth) 1961 request for memoirs penned by war veterans and the newspaper's 1965 solicitation of letters on the topic of "the most memorable day of the war." While the newspaper published a small number of these letters, the vast majority did not see publication. Using these letters and other archival documents, Petrova presents portraits of Soviet women in 1941–1945: their motivations, feelings, and experiences, as well as the place that the war and comrades continued to occupy in these women's memories for decades following the war. The book concludes with thirty-one archival photographs depicting women in service, partisans, veterans, women laborers on the home front, forced laborers sent to Nazi Germany (*ostarbaitery*), and children who contributed to the war effort.

Petrova divides her book into six chapters. The first chapter "At Their Own Request, At the Call of the Motherland," discusses female soldiers and partisans, their motivations, military specialties, and circumstances. She provides details on women's responses to the war as volunteers, provides a chronological overview of mobilizations, and discusses challenges that arose upon mobilizing women. Quotes from archived letters capture these women's motivations in the letter writers' own words. After this overview, Petrova aims to fill gaps in the public's knowledge by focusing on individuals or groups who have not found widespread renown; for example, she dedicates fifteen pages to the 21,293 women who served in the navy. She includes some biographical vignettes on medical personnel, discusses those who worked in military hospitals, in communications, in military academies, and in women's military units. The author's intention to inform the public of forgotten or lesser-known heroes becomes clear as she introduces readers to the women's fighter aviation regiment (as opposed to the well-known 46th Guards Night Bomber Aviation Regiment), to snipers other than Liudmila Pavlichenko; and to partisans other than Zoia Kosmodemianskaia—namely Vera Voloshina who accomplished the same feat (*podvig*) as Kosmodemianskaia on the same night in another village only kilometers away.

Petrova continues her focus on female military personnel into her second chapter "For the Sake of Life on Earth," narrating the heroic exploits that have not been memorialized in the nation's collective memory. She identifies individual women who served so that each woman's "name might be recalled at least one time" (94–95). Petrova pays special attention to nurses and medics who died in the line of duty and after posing the question "who does not know about Panfilov's 28?" she asserts "but no one talks about the nurses who were in this battle" (113). She concludes with a discussion of two pilots who perished during the war yet were not decorated posthumously as Heroes of the Soviet Union until the 1990s and the circumstances that contributed to these injustices and their positive resolutions.

In the third chapter "Labor Front Heroines," Petrova includes statistics and examples that underscore the importance of the labor front. While she discusses women

working in a wide variety of professions, she highlights women who became miners and the difficulties of underground work. Petrova includes a chapter on children (chapter 4, "Children and War") because the work involved with the evacuation of children and the establishment of children's homes and boarding schools fell almost entirely to women. She includes statistics on the sheer number of evacuated children and children's homes established after the commencement of the war.

In the fifth chapter "To Survive and Tell," Petrova aims to remind readers of what Soviet women experienced at the hands of the Nazis—both those who lived in occupied territories and those who were sent to the East as forced laborers. She devotes attention to women's camps because she finds that Russian society has largely ignored what women forced laborers and prisoners of war experienced in transport to Nazi Germany, in captivity, and upon their rehabilitation.

The final chapter "Women's Memory of the War" turns to questions of memory: why women largely remained silent about their wartime experiences for the first sixteen years of the postwar period, why they responded so robustly to *Komsomol'skaia Pravda's* solicitations, what happened to these letters, and what objectives most letter writers expressed in their stories. The author identifies the archived bodies of letters written in 1961 and 1965 as a "collective written monument" (*kollektionyi pis'mennyi pamiatnik*).

The volume could benefit from several structural revisions to make it easier for scholars to navigate: subheadings would be helpful but above all, an alphabetical index and/or a list of names by military specialty would be welcome. Such a list would also memorialize authors and subjects of reminiscences, advancing Petrova's stated goal of cultivating the memory of World War II by locating these names together in a memory list. The book also includes a few unclear transitions, for instance, a discussion of poet and combat medic Yulia Drunina (54–55) between a discussion of the formation of women's mortar and machine gun battalions (53) and the creation of women's military units (*boevye formirovaniia*) (57). Theory of collective, cultural, or social memory would enhance the author's chapter on memory. Nevertheless, the book is a welcome contribution to the scholarship on Soviet women's wartime activities and especially to the memory of their experiences.

While Petrova's book will undoubtedly interest historians of gender and war, as well as those interested in RGASPI M-1's holdings, Petrova's rich discussions of memory, forgetting, and commemoration, as well as many of her devices for rectifying gaps in the collective memory of World War II, will prove to be invaluable as a primary document to scholars of memory. Petrova points to historical failures of memory, circumstances and situations that motivated women to write about the war years after it had concluded. Yet just as valuable for scholars of memory, the book itself serves as a monument and as snapshot of memory efforts in 2019. The monograph reflects anxieties and anguish about the fact that many were not remembered and will not be remembered.



Feryal Saygılıgil and Nacide Berber, eds. *Feminizm: Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce, Cilt 10* (Feminism: Thought in modern Turkey, vol. 10), Istanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık A.Ş., 2020; 880 pp., with an extensive bibliography, Index, and annexed section of selected primary texts, 789–880; ₺71.50 (hardback), ISBN: 978-975-05-0003-9.

Book review by **Ayşe Durakbaşa**  
Center of Near and Middle Eastern Studies  
Philipps-University of Marburg, Germany



This compiled set of articles, edited by two feminist researchers, and written by feminist writers of different generations, steps out of the previous volumes in the series—Political Thought in Modern Turkey—which have been edited and written primarily by male authors. Although many of the previous volumes such as “Kemalism,” “Nationalism,” “Conservatism,” “Islamism,” “Liberalism,” and “Leftist Thought” included one or two articles about the way these different political strands of thought approached the “woman question,” it is only in this final volume that women/queer feminist thinkers, researchers, and writers have generously been given a space to tell the history of the feminist movement and feminist thought in Turkey. This huge volume of articles written by eighty contributors also testifies to the impact of the academic discipline of women’s studies itself, which has proved to be a productive, innovative, and internationally recognized research stream in the social sciences in Turkey, mainly with the rise of a second wave of feminism in the aftermath of the military coup in 1980. The book can be read as the outcome of the strong vein of academic feminism in a number of master’s programs established in various branches of the social sciences and in the Centers for Women’s Studies in the main Universities of Turkey, in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of feminist historiography, I shall underline a few significant contributions that this volume has made, apart from the coverage of significant turning points in modern Ottoman-Turkish history in relation to the history of the women’s movement, and the main ideological and political discourses of public debate. The structure of the book mainly follows a chronological history of the women’s movement in Turkey; however, the subtitles of the articles inform the reader about the main debates and highlight brief insertions of case stories about specific events, publications, or short biographies of women writers, researchers, and activists.

The history of the Ottoman women’s movement is retold according to a now well-accepted periodization: (1) The Early Ottoman women’s movement until the proclamation of the Constitution (1868–1908); (2) Ottoman feminism in the Constitutional period (1908–1922), with a prolific range of women’s organizations and women’s press, including the period of the Turkish National Struggle (1919–1922); (3) First wave Republican feminism in the early Republican period (1923–1935), marked by

Nezihe Muhittin's Kadınlar Halk Fırkası (Women's People's Party) later known as Kadınlar Birliği (Women's Union) and its closure by the Kemalist regime in 1935.<sup>2</sup>

Aware of the frequent criticisms that have been raised against ethno-centric accounts about Turkish-Muslim women, hegemonic in the Turkish academic feminist literature, the editors have been deliberate and careful to be inclusive of the demands for women's rights (19) in the multi-ethnic Ottoman society by giving space to a few portraits of leading feminist figures<sup>3</sup> from non-Muslim communities such as Ottoman Greeks, Armenians, as well as an article about Kürt Kadınlar Teali Cemiyeti (Association for the Progress of Kurdish Women, 1919) founded as an auxiliary of the Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti (Association for the Progress of Kurdistan, 1918). As Ebru Aykut writes, women's periodicals of the late Ottoman period, whether by Muslim-Ottoman women of different ethnicities or non-Muslim women, are the basic sources for writing the history of the Ottoman women's movement, and only in more recent studies have historians shifted their focus to the activities of women of non-Turkish and non-Muslim communities in their research agenda (58). It is interesting to see the commonalities in these different contexts, that the main emphasis is placed on the education of women as mothers, that is, as breeders and trainers of the younger generations. Efi Kanner brings out an interesting research question regarding the channels of communication between different ethnic and religious communities, and the women in these communities, through schooling, informal networks in neighborhoods, and possibly participation in literary and intellectual circles of the educated elite (52–55). Various articles in the collection underline the common themes in the formulation of women's rights within nationalisms and the increasing effects of Turkish nationalism within the Union and Progress Party, evident in the period before and after the Armenian Catastrophe of 1915. Also, interestingly enough, Ottoman women often expressed their claims with the feminist demands of their Western sisters in mind, however, in a much more modest fashion (43–55). Neither Muslim nor non-Muslim Ottoman women wanted to forego their roles within the family as mothers and in the household as home-keepers (61). Particularly inspiring for further research is Emine Hızır's article about Middle Eastern Women's movements in Ottoman-Turkish women's periodicals (78–83), a generally neglected topic in the history of feminism in Turkey.

The articles about the later periods in the history of the Republic cover Kemalism as an official secular ideology of "state feminism," as a discourse of sexual egalitarianism with modified versions in the Turkish Left as well as the Turkish Right, which emerged in a Turkish-Islam synthesis as the official ideology of the state after the 1980 military coup. In the area of feminist historiography, I find important Selin Çağatay's intervention, in which she calls for a more thorough study of the period before the rise of the so-called second wave of feminism in Turkey; that is, the period after 1935 that was mainly inspired by Kemalism, and unfortunately marked and therefore neglected as a period when women's demands were subdued within the project of Kemalist modernization (313–330). In contrast, women's activities within philanthropic organizations and in professional organizations of various kinds as well as within the leftist political parties and organizations in the 1960s and 1970s give us insights about more recent women's history that bred the feminists of the 1980s. Aksu Bora's critical article about the use of the "waves" metaphor inquires how the emphasis put on the

rise of “new feminisms” might have misled feminists and feminist history writers to disregard the ongoing “undercurrents” of women’s rights movements from various strands, those usually put aside as “just philanthropy,” “womanist,” “essentialist,” “non-feminist,” if feminism is understood within an exclusionary perspective. The editors’ choice of including articles that discuss “women’s agency” by giving accounts of gendered subjectivities, life histories, and biographical stories of individual women allows the reader to comprehend the social-cultural context anew. For example, Nagehan Tokdoğan discusses how the stories of women in the Ülkücü (far right ultra-nationalist) movement reflect not only consent with the traditional codes of femininity but also violations of border lines in relation to the private and public roles of women. Many articles in the volume also reveal and accentuate women’s voices in women’s literature (699–773), in popular feminist writing, journalism (e.g. Sevilay Çelenk’s article on Ayşe Arman’s De-facto Feminism, 164–177), and TV serials (184–192). In the last part of the book, it is promising to read about feminist publishing in Turkey and see the impact of feminist criticism in literature, in translation studies, and in the visual and performative arts, which could flourish as a new vein of inquiry and research in the humanities (682–787).

The study material of women’s periodicals as valuable sources for feminist historiography not only of the late Ottoman and early Republican periods but also for the later phases of feminism has been thoroughly used and acknowledged in the volume. A number of articles<sup>4</sup> on second-wave feminism in Turkey, including Gülnur Savran’s overview (84–103) of the socialist feminist periodical publications *Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs* (Socialist feminist cactus, 1988) and *Feminist Politika* (Feminist politics, 2009) justify that various themes, topics, discussions, and argumentations can be traced in the women’s journals, giving an overall sense of feminist politics in Turkey.<sup>5</sup> Besides, the popular women’s magazines (127–138) and Duygu Asena (1946–2006), as the chief editor of *Kadınca* (Womanly, 1978–1992) and *Kim* (Who, 1992–1998) are also rightfully acknowledged (143–147) to have served in the popularization and dissemination of feminist ideas among women in general, which have helped to legitimize feminist demands in the public eye, although arousing fury among conservative sectors of society at the same time. Increasing use of IT technologies and proliferation of different media, more recently, have brought about a rich “feminist blogosphere” (174) of feminist blogs, Islamist-feminist blogs, blog writers, virtual feminist archive spaces, YouTube interviews, talks, podcasts, e-journals, and websites such as *Çatlak Zemin* (Cracked ground), *5 harfliler* (5 Lettered), *Reçel Blog* (Jam blog), and others. Hence, digital activism, networking, and social media campaigns have marked the feminist movement of the first quarter of the twenty-first century (158–183). These media and diverse publications of various organizations reflect how relatively new positions are articulated in the discursive terrain, which is now more open to feminist interpretations of Islam (216–238)<sup>6</sup> and other critical approaches to Turkish feminism from the Kurdish women’s movement (273–292),<sup>7</sup> or the LGBTI movement (198–215). The public discourse, which had been dominantly shaped by secular discourses of Kemalism, Kemalist feminism, Marxism, or feminism, with gradations of Turkish ethno-centrism and hetero-normativity, has become increasingly pluralized and flexible to construct common grounds for feminist activism against the gender-politics of the authoritarian

AKP [Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi] (Justice and Development Party) regime. In fact, *Barış için Kadın Girişimi* (Women's Initiative for Peace, 2009) was one such initiative that Turkish feminists built in connection with the Kurdish women's movement (302–312).

After the ruling Islamist party, AKP consolidated its hegemony over the society, transforming the structure of the state as well as the official ruling discourse toward an Islamist presidential system, a new gender ideology was gradually fabricated based on complementarity of the sexes and "gender-justice" coined within Islamist premises, in place of "gender equality" as a universal value in the understanding of women's rights.<sup>8</sup> The anti-gender policies of the AKP government are assessed in the volume with reference to other authoritarian political regimes in Europe and elsewhere, and within the context of the current setbacks in the global regime of gender mainstreaming and gender equality (571–572). Fatmagül Berktaş maintains that these developments can be interpreted as attempts to construct "a new contract of fraternity" for an authoritarian conservative "restoration of masculinity"<sup>9</sup> which has long been in crisis in the face of challenges by feminists to the patriarchal system (567–574).

The editors have made tremendous effort to be inclusive of women's movements with different worldviews and to delineate the achieved possibilities of dialogue, interaction, and collaboration despite debate and conflict within that public space. The volume definitely provides the reader with a broad and comprehensive inventory of women's movements and feminist praxis in Turkey. However, contributions that develop feminist theoretical insights further are limited in number. Apart from İnci Keresticioğlu and Aylin Özman's article (641–666) on the different phases of academic feminism in Turkey and Yelda Yücel's article on (587–601) "feminist economics," overall critical evaluation of the state of feminist research and knowledge in the Turkish academy is fairly limited.<sup>10</sup> A thorough bibliographic study and critical evaluation of the published works and unpublished theses in women's studies-gender studies, those accomplished either in the various disciplines of the social sciences or in the programs run by the women's centers, would have been quite informative for researchers and readers. Such a critical survey of academic literature could serve a number of functions. First, it could help to map out the state of feminist studies, topics of interest and neglected areas of study, research design and methodology, disciplinary limitations, interdisciplinary endeavors, career paths, feminist team work, and praxis. Moreover, the increasing ideological function of the women's centers in the last ten years in line with the familial and conservative model of women enhanced by AKP's gender regime could be shown.

In the section subtitled "theory and concepts in feminist thinking," Meltem Ahıska's article "The power-drive and the time for feminine politics" (488–498) is challenging because she calls for the powers of the "repressed feminine" against the phallic symbolic order. Ahıska's article is also a response to the heated discussion and debate about "Who is the subject of feminist struggle?" We are reminded that women, both as subjects of subordination within the material conditions of patriarchal capitalism and as the Other of the phallic symbolic system, are also endowed with the experiential knowledge and ethical capabilities to transcend the heteronormative and patriarchal gender order (494–497). This is not to dismiss "critical masculinity studies" or queer



studies inspired by feminist inquiry. A number of articles indicate the possibilities of “feminist sisterhood” with women of different political world views and religious beliefs (499–519), as well as the search for common ground for action with men or LGBTI individuals who wish to live in gender-equal relationships (579–585).

I wish the book contained more information about the educational background of the writers, who have, I believe, somehow been educated under the influence of Western feminism. It would have been much more comprehensive if the editors had included a brief biography of each writer, with some information about where she acquired her degrees, topics of her graduate and post-graduate theses, and how she had affinity with the feminist movement in Turkey. The writers’ awareness of global feminisms and theoretical knowledge in the area of feminist studies equip them with a broad vision that enables comparative assessments of various cases of women’s movements from diversified strands of ideologies, such as the Turkish nationalist women’s movement, conservative women writers, Islamist feminists, and the Kurdish women’s movement. Most significantly, such a widened scope shows how feminisms can be studied in the plural, inspired by postcolonial theoretical insights and examples of such research elsewhere in India, Latin America, and in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region.

One must admit that this extensive volume certainly gives a thorough overview of the different phases of the women’s movement in Turkey and also the new trends within feminism in contemporary Turkey; however, most of the articles seem to delineate different instances in this whole story rather than make critical evaluations about, for example, the blind spots, unasked or unanswered questions, or the lacunae in feminist thinking in Turkey. Nonetheless, the remaining questions such as “what could be new areas of research?” or “which new lines of inquiry can kindle novel ways of thought and emancipatory action?” are equally stimulating. In this volume, the reader will find numerous examples of organizational strategies and models for women’s collaborative action and empowerment in the Turkish context and also discover new ways to fight against anti-feminisms of various kinds. The thoughtful and moving essays about feminist researchers and academics such as Şirin Tekeli (88–91), Ferhunde Özbay (590–595), and Aynur İlyasoğlu (522–528), who have recently passed away, remind us of the zeal, intelligence, and wit of these women and many others who guide us in this ongoing struggle.

## ◆ Notes

1. The 1990s is usually characterized as the period of institutionalization of feminism in Turkey at the universities, in the state structure, especially in the ministry responsible for women and family; this institutionalization is also evident in the proliferation of women’s foundations and non-governmental organizations in general, in line with the integration of Turkey into the European Union and with legislation developed in accordance with international agreements on women’s rights as indicators of the pro-feminist globalized gender regime (148–157).

2. See Yaprak Zihnioglu, *Kadınsız İnkılap: Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği* [Revolution without Women: Nezihe Muhiddin, Women’s Republican Party, Women’s Union] (Istanbul: Metis, 2003).

3. Zabel Asadur (Sibil) (1873–1934), the founder of Azkanver Hayuhyats Ingerutyun (Milletperver Ermeni Kadınlar Cemiyeti, Nationalist Armenian Women’s Association, 1879) (33–41); Kornilia Prevezyotu (1878–1964), the editor of the journal called *Vosporis* (Vosporos means Bosphorus), defended ideas within the frame of *l’egalite dans la difference* (equality within difference) that is, exalting the role of women in the family and the Orthodox religious community as mothers, wives, and philanthropic community service workers (46–49).

4. The fourth page of the weekly called *Somut* (The actual, 1981) (104–110), *Yeter!* (Enough!, 1988–89) (111–115) *Feminist* (Feminist, 1987) (116–126), *Amargi* (Amargi, 2006–2015) (193–197), *Pazartesi* (Monday, 1995–2006) (138–142). Women’s journals serve as an important medium of debate and dissemination of feminist theory and praxis and are used extensively in this volume to review various feminist issues, for example, feminist criticism of family (532–548) or motherhood (549–559).

5. For example, the topic of feminism and politics of the body, including debates about population planning, birth control, reproductive health, and rights as well as sexuality and politics of love and desire is mainly discussed using women’s journals (411–454).

6. The writer of this article is Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, who is one of the founders of Başkent Kadın Platformu (Capital City Women’s Platform, 1995–2019) whose doctorate thesis, “Kadın Karşısı Söylemin İslam Geleneğindeki İzdüşümleri” (The repercussions of misogynist discourse in the Islamic tradition) in the field of Islamic theology was published in 2000. Tuksal mentions *Havle Kadın Derneği* (Havle Women’s Association, 2018) as the first Muslim women’s association in Turkey that declared that it would benefit from the accumulated feminist knowledge and contribute to this heritage (237).

7. The title of this article, “Türkiye Kürt Kadın Hareketi Tarihi ve Feminist Hareketle İlişkiler: Dekolonyal Bir Feminizme Doğru” (The history of Kurdish women’s movement in Turkey and its relationships with the feminist movement: Toward a decolonial feminism) is itself telling as it points to the significance of postcolonial critical feminist theorization for the recognition of indigenous feminisms. The article on *jineoloji* (science of women) (293–301) is inspired by the postcolonial feminist theories that criticize universalistic theories and value the indigenous cultural empowerment of women.

8. Gülşen Çakıl-Dinçer argues that one can identify three approaches within the Islamist women’s movement: (1) a distanced standpoint toward feminism based on an Islamist understanding of female nature and male nature as a matter of God’s creation; (2) an Islamist feminist standpoint that develops a critique of marginalization of women’s position based on re-interpretation of Koran and basic Islamic texts in favor of women’s equality to men in creation; and (3) the discourse of women’s human rights, a more easily accepted discourse because of the alien connotations of feminism as an ideology belonging to the West (239–250).

9. This is a term used by Deniz Kandiyoti. See “Türkiye’de Toplumsal Cinsiyet Krizi Yaşanıyor” [A gender crisis is being lived out in Turkey], Interview by Evrim Kepenek, *Bianet* [Bianet], 25 September 2019. Such moves of the AKP government to illegalize abortion and curb women’s reproductive rights, to make amendments in the Penal Code regressively to allow the release of a rapist in the case of his marriage to the victim, or to make changes in the Civil Law and let Müftüs conduct civil marriage or to lower the age of marriage and legalize child brides, or to limit a women’s right to alimony after divorce can be considered attempts to restore patriarchal masculinity.

10. To name a few feminist academics, Serpil Çakır from Istanbul University, Yıldız Ecevit from Middle East Technical University, Alev Özkanç from Ankara University, could have contributed to this edition with such commentaries based on their expertise and experience in women’s studies and feminist criticism.



Marsha Siefert, ed., *Labor in State-Socialist Europe, 1945–1989: Contributions to a History of Work*, Work and Labor: Transdisciplinary Studies for the 21st Century, vol. 1, Budapest: CEU Press, 2020, xv + 466 pp., \$105.00 / €90.00 / £85.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-963-386-337-4.

Book review by **Lex Heerma van Voss**

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*Labor in State-Socialist Europe* is a coherent edited volume, focusing on the tensions and contradictions that work, the labor movement, and policies toward them posed for state socialist societies in East-Central Europe. In the forty-four years of their existence between the end of World War II and 1989, these societies had to find a position for work, workers, and workers' demands within nations that defined themselves as "workers' states." As several of the authors remark, workers' states are sometimes overlooked in global histories of work. This volume convincingly argues that they are an interesting special case and should be included. It also shows that socialist workers and industries were often in contact with their Western peers, the political isolation of the Eastern bloc notwithstanding.

Nominally, in these socialist states, the working class was in power. Marxist theory, as understood by the authorities, made it impossible for such capitalist excesses as unemployment, worker exploitation or differences between the remuneration of men and women for the same amount of work to exist in socialist states. Actual practice often refused to yield to such theoretical insights. In earlier historiography, state socialist societies were perceived as being run by overbearing and very powerful regimes. Later studies suggested that the actual power of the regimes on the shop floor tended to be very limited. This volume paints a nuanced image, with the regimes intolerant of systematic opposition, but factory councils and even trade unions often quite able to mitigate state exploitation of workers.

The volume describes many similarities with the development of labor relations in capitalism, either contemporary or in similar phases of development, but the outcomes sometimes markedly differed in the real existing socialist political context. Among the East-Central European socialist states some had a developed industry, like Czechoslovakia. In states where these were lacking, like Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, or Albania, heavy industry was rapidly built up, with all the worker exploitation and labor turnover that was common under capitalism in its building phase. It was as difficult to recruit peasant workers for these factories as it had been in Western Europe or the United States. As Ulf Brunnbauer and Visar Nonaj show in their study of recruiting workers for Bulgarian and Albanian steel factories, the Eastern European socialist states had the advantage of state power. Conscripted young men could be

released from the army if they were willing to accept a factory job. Peasants could shed the stigma of belonging to a kulak family. Like in Communist Russia and China, urban residence permits were used to induce peasants to accept factory jobs. These state means countered the fact that unemployment was theoretically unknown and thus less of a disciplinary force than it was under capitalism. Depending on how the costs had to be born, socialist factories sometimes preferred to keep surplus workers employed as a labor reserve.

Quite similar to contemporary capitalism, another solution to labor shortages was labor migration, in this case between state socialist countries. Alena Alamgir analyzes Polish, Cuban, and Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia. Neither the Polish nor the Cuban workers were satisfied with their wages and working conditions. The Czechoslovak authorities believed that the Cuban workers went on strike after having learned from the Polish workers that striking was the way Solidarity (*Solidarność*) improved conditions in Poland. The Vietnamese workers were perceived as more docile and industrious, but they also agitated for more training and for better jobs. The embassies of the fellow workers states, which had sent these workers, were actively engaged in furthering their nationals' living and working conditions.

The history of gendered work shows comparable similarities with capitalism. Natalia Jarska, for instance, analyzes work in Poland in the 1950s. On the one hand, the Polish authorities argued that jobless women were less problematic than male unemployment, even if—after the loss of life in the war—women often were the sole breadwinners of a family. If there was a shortage of jobs, the state stressed that women were less productive than men and less in need of jobs. But on the other hand, there were real attempts to provide women with the jobs that they were entitled to on the basis of Marxist theory and the Polish constitution. Similarly, Chiara Bonfiglioli concludes that women in socialist Yugoslavia carried the double or triple burden of paid and unpaid reproductive work, but that paid work was nevertheless a source of self-respect and self-realization for them. The socialist regime offered them better education, and through this more social mobility, and some voice both in factories and in politics.

All this was, as a number of the chapters show, experienced differently by different generations with different historical experiences. Eszter Bartha and Chiara Bonfiglioli argue that the socialist states fell when they had transformed class conscious workers into consumers, and then were unable to satisfy rising consumer demands in the 1980s. In her introduction to the volume, Marsha Siefert promises the reader some generalizations, some surprises and some rethinking. The volume certainly lives up to these promises and makes a strong argument for including socialist states as a special case in global labor history.



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Zilka Šiljak Spahić, *Sociologija roda: Feministička kritika* (Sociology of gender: Feminist critique), Sarajevo: TPO Fondacija, 2019, 274 pp., €10.00 (paperback), ISBN: 978-9926-422-17-2.

Book review by **Lejla Mušić**

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The sociology of gender represents the most contemporary, the most subversive, and one of the youngest sub-disciplines in sociology, investigating the social dimensions of gender. The sociology of gender replaces the notion of gender as a social construct, and sex as biologically given, with the understanding that gender and sex are entirely socially constructed, since surgical intervention is available to both males and females. As an intersection of sociology and gender studies, the sub-discipline includes femininity and masculinity studies, as well as research on human reproduction through sexuality studies, and incorporates the LGBTQ matrix and transgender reproductions of identity.

The work under review was written with the intention of being used primarily as a textbook for gender, women's, and cultural studies; anthropology; ethnology; history; human rights; and sociology. The book's content comprises seven chapters that critically examine, based on sociological theoretical insights and empirical research, social constructs of gender, but also the interaction of gender with other social phenomena and structures. Through the analyses of different perspectives on gender, the author focuses on notions on femininities and masculinities, in relation to themselves and the community.

Because the book is intended for students, setting aside the fact that there are not enough such books, each chapter ends with precisely and relevantly chosen chapter questions, and offers reading and document lists for further understanding of the selected topics. Šiljak Spahić includes discussions about the importance of the feminist and sociological imaginations as key factors for sociological interventions and broadening scientific knowledge.

In the first chapter, "Conceptual and Theoretical Definitions," the author describes the discipline of the sociology of gender as: "one of the fields of theoretical, sociological, and empirical investigations concerned with questions of gender construction and gender interaction with other social notions and structures. It focuses on the social norms that continuously influence our understandings of femininity and masculinity, and the creation of socially accepted identity and praxis" (15). This chapter contains definitions of the most important concepts from status, social stratification, role, and norm, through stereotypes and prejudices, to sexism, androcentrism, and patriarchy.

Theoretical approaches toward gender and sex include biological, interpersonal, cultural, anthropological, and critical gender theories. Inside the complex field of critical gender theories, the most important feminist critique, as a focus of this book, is offered within the context of conflict theory, standpoint theory, and queer performative theory. The author brilliantly, but subversively, incorporates these theories in the first chapter, from the position of the Islamic feminist theologian.

The second chapter, "Feminist Demands for Equality," offers an analysis of feminisms, through its waves, namely four of them, ending with the multiple perspectives of various branches within feminist theory, including REI feminism, ecofeminism, cyber feminism, and even multicultural feminism, with a special focus on Islamic feminism. In particular, the chapter highlights, deconstructs, and demystifies the important differences between Muslim and Islamic feminisms.

The third chapter introduces the theme: "How We Learn Where Our Place Is: Gender/Sex Socialization?" This chapter focuses on the differences in male/female socialization, with the illustration of gender bias in toys, and discusses cartoons, not only Disney princesses but also DreamWorks animated movies. Illustrations by Jakov Causevic, from Zilka Šiljak Spahić's TPO Foundation series of short cartoon publications by Bauk FemiNauk Group Brkate, flabbergast readers by depicting comic everyday situations that involve gender themes. At the end, the chapter offers a definition of sexual harassment.

Chapter four, "Gender and Family: The Institutionalization of Gender Regimes," defines family and marriage with a feminist critic of Talcott Parsons' concept of family, as it twirls around the gender-based definition of housework, with illustrations by Jakov Causevic and Neven Misaljevic that reveal the differences between female and male dishwashing. This chapter openly celebrates reproductive rights and freedoms with the slogan by Sarah Cunningham, that *Reproductive rights are human rights!* (112).

Chapter five, "Work, Gender, and Economy," focuses on the dichotomies of male/female professions and raises the question of historical justifications for gender differences in earnings. Chapter six, "Gender, Language, and Media," emphasizes the importance of feminist linguistics for contemporary feminist and gender studies. The author embraces gender and ideology discourse, remembering the late Nirman Moranjak Bamburac, one of the founders of the master's program in gender studies (at Sarajevo University), and embracing her photography. The feminist critique unavoidably includes the theme of the objectification of the female body and the negative consequences of female emancipation, such as girls' gang activities and imprisonments.

Employing a visual approach through the photographs, short sketches, and illustrations of different kinds, Zilka Šiljak Spahić offers a unique contribution to understanding the discipline of the sociology of gender that will positively influence its reception in the future. Since very few authors in Bosnia and Herzegovina publish in the field of sociology of gender, this volume deserves considerable recognition, among sociology of gender experts and students as well. Navigating among the antonyms, binary dichotomies, and vast array of scientific sources, with specific recognition of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian feminist theologian perspective, this colorful course book will be of inestimable value for Bosnian and Herzegovinian sociological and gender studies scholars and students alike.



Věra Sokolová and Lubica Kobová, eds., *Odvaha nesouhlasit: Feministické myšlení Hany Havelkové a jeho reflexe* (The courage to disagree: Hana Havelková's feminist thought and its reflections), Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Humanities, 2019, 605 pp., price not listed (paperback), ISBN: 978-80-7571-038-3.

Book review by **Zdeňka Kalnická**  
Ostrava University, Czech Republic



The format of the book *Odvaha nesouhlasit: Feministické myšlení Hany Havelkové a jeho reflexe* (The courage to disagree: Hana Havelková's feminist thought and its reflections) resembles that of an homage. It was prepared for the occasion of the seventieth birthday of Hana Havelková, one of the most distinguished gender-oriented sociologists in the Czech Republic, with two purposes: the first, to gather articles written by Hana Havelková (sixteen out of more than seventy) published from 1992–2015 in journals and books to offer them to readers for the first time “in one place”; the second, to “detect” her influence on Czech gender discourse. The book begins with an introduction “Feminismus jako metoda” (Feminism as method) where Věra Sokolová instructively summarizes important features of Hana Havelková's feminist method of research and teaching. The volume is then divided into two parts: Part I collects the writings of Havelková, while Part II provides a scholarly assessment of Havelková's legacy.

From the beginning of her interest in feminism (around 1990), Hana Havelková actively participated in two theoretical contexts—the Czech and the Western. She was one of the first Czech gender experts to take part in Western feminist discussions about the status of women in the state socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. By moving within those two different contexts, Hana Havelková had a unique opportunity to reflect on the situation of Czech women both from “inside” and “outside.” She articulated the difference between Eastern (Czech) and Western feminisms as “a reality without a theory” and “a theory without reality” (85).

Concerning Hana Havelková's understanding of feminist philosophy, she formulated her standpoint very early in the article “Kdo se bojí feministické filozofie?” (Who is afraid of feminist philosophy?), published in a special issue of *Filosofický časopis* (The philosophical journal) where feminist philosophy was introduced to the Czech intellectual community for the first time.<sup>1</sup> Havelková wrote: “The expression ‘feminist’ does not refer to this topic [women as a demographic group] but to a certain *method*, the set of conceptual instruments, structure of argumentation etc., constituted by particular interests” (31). It means that she viewed feminist philosophy as a special kind of philosophizing, and especially as an analytical instrument.

She was interested in various topics, among them: the possibility of applying Western feminist theories to the Czech context; the particular character and development

of the "gender order" in the Czech Republic during socialism; the gender-oriented agenda in the Czech Republic after 1989.

Among other topics, Havelková focused in particular on the use of Western feminist theories and categories to explain the different social-historical experiences of women under socialism in the Czech Republic. She claimed that the direct application of these instruments on Czech "women's condition" was not possible, as the development of Czech society from 1948–1989 created a particular structure of "gender order." In the study "'Patriarchy' in Czech Society,"<sup>2</sup> she concentrated on the category of patriarchy, emphasizing that in the Czech environment one cannot speak about fundamental but only functional patriarchy. She showed that the division of men's and women's roles had been inscribed into different political (totalitarian) and social (egalitarian) contexts, which changed the character of the public and private spheres, and thus "changed the way in which social phenomena have been gendered" (46). In the article "Abstract Citizenship? Women and Power in the Czech Republic," she rejected an understanding of Czech women as conservative (from the gender point of view) and as second-class citizens. She pointed to a very important element that occurred in discussions between Western and Eastern European feminists,<sup>3</sup> and created barriers for their symmetrical position in the dialogue: while feminists of the previous Eastern bloc tended to explain their conceptualizations as influenced by social circumstances, feminists of Western countries did not do that and they articulated their claims as universal, taking their own rootedness in their particular social reality for granted (85).

The relationship between the public and private spheres and their historical transformations were very profoundly analyzed in the study "Dimenze 'gender' ve vztahu veřejné a soukromé sféry" (The gender dimension in the public and private sphere). Havelková understood those three categories as interconnected: "as it is valid that the relation between private and public sphere *determines social roles* of both sexes, it is in reverse also valid that the social (political) *understanding of gender roles* is one of the main elements to create the *structure* of the relations between private and public" (64). In another article, "Od lidských práv k životní volbě. Transcendence a pragmatismus. O moci a mezích lidských práv" (From human rights to live choice. Transcendence and pragmatism. About power and limits of human rights), Havelková went even further to claim that it would be necessary to reinterpret the contents of the terms *public* and *private* (and terms *work* and *service* connected with them) and to understand their relation as not hierarchical. In the paper "Problém tzv: harmonizace. Náprava 'nezamýšlených důsledků' moderní společnosti" (Problem of so-called harmonization: Remedy for 'unintended consequences' of modern society), after analyzing the historical and theoretical roots of the problem in question, Havelková claimed that the recent problem of how to harmonize work and family life was a consequence of the "disconnection of men from responsibility for care and the disconnection of women from the world of creation and public responsibility," and the "dichotomist and sharp separation of these 'domains'" (208). The article "Women in and after a 'Classless' Society" offers detailed analyses of women's situations during (and after) socialism differentiated according to phases of the "inner" development of the Czech socialist regime. It was a result of Havelková's understanding that a much deeper and complex picture of "women's situation" in socialist Czechoslovakia was needed to be able



to fully understand the differences between their situation and the one of women in most Western countries. The article “Mezi pragmatismem a ideologií: Obrana socialisticky emancipovaného ženství” (Between pragmatism and ideology: Defense of socialist emancipated femininity) is something like a virtual dialogue with Gerlinda Šmausová, another prominent feminist sociologist. Havelková valued the importance of the workplace as a source of “lived” emancipation of Czech women stressed by Gerlinda Šmausová, although she questioned whether the term “emancipation” was sufficient enough to grasp the specificity of women’s experiences under socialism.

Havelková was very interested in the development of gender-oriented institutions and groups in the Czech Republic after the so-called soft revolution. In several texts, she analyzed how the gender agenda has been addressed: “Ženské hnutí a genderová kultura v Česku 1989–2003” (Women’s movement and gender culture in Czechia 1989–2003); “Otazníky českého ženského hnutí po roce 1989” (Queries of Czech women’s movement after 1989); and “Náměty k diskusi o českém genderovém kontextu” (Suggestions for discussion about Czech gender context). In the last article (from 2007), she insisted: “We still owe to ourselves and to the public audience the complex and thorough gender research of former eras—both communist and transformational” (181).

Havelková not only wrote about that need, but made a huge effort to do the work. She initiated a project, which resulted in the book she co-edited with Libora Oates-Indruchová, with the participation of a number of authors. The volume *Vyvolastněný hlas: Proměny genderové kultury české společnosti v letech 1948–1989* (An expropriated voice: The transformations of the gender culture of Czech society from 1948–1989) was published in 2015. It is one of the best achievements of the Czech community of gender experts. It reflects on the “gender order” of the Czech Republic during state socialism and helps to understand it not only for the Czech but also for the international audience (a shorter version of the book appeared in English).<sup>4</sup> For that book, Havelková wrote an article based on detailed research of archival materials and documents entitled “(De)centralizovaná genderová politika: Role Státní populační komise” [(De)centralized gender politics: The role of the State Population Committee]. It is important, representing the combination of “hard” sociological research and “soft” theoretical gender reflections, and Havelková excelled in both. Her conclusion was that the State Population Committee “functioned as a main instance to compensate for the reflexive, articulating, and also forceful role of women’s activism and feminist inquiry resembling that of Western research within Women’s Studies, though the role was significantly limited as a consequence of being closed in certain scientific paradigms as well as because of the impossibility of a free feminist critique of society” (298). According to her, “discord, similar to that of *egalitarian* and *differential* feminism taking place in the West from the 1970s was not present in the Czech context because egalitarian politics was never understood as something in conflict with the assumption of the fundamental differences between the sexes” (293). And she claimed: “The opposition of equality and difference is a kind of artificial dichotomy” (116).

Writing about Simone de Beauvoir in the article “Druhé pohlaví—věc veřejná” (The Second Sex—The public issue), Havelková highlighted de Beauvoir’s idea that “the concepts ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are to a great extent historical constructs” (58). Like de Beauvoir, Havelková also sympathized to such a constructivist approach. On the

one hand, however, Havelková analyzed historical and social changes that impacted femininity and masculinity, while on the other—one can find in her writings statements that indicate that she might find also the opposition between constructivism and essentialism (culture and biology) “a kind of artificial dichotomy.”

Hana Havelková’s writings provoke thinking. She articulated theoretically based and sophisticated hypotheses and reflections of the “gender order” under state socialism (and later, during the post-socialist period up until 2020).<sup>5</sup> For men and women from Czechia, she offered theoretical explanations of their own lived experience (valid to a large extent also for other countries of Eastern bloc). For men and women from other countries, she offered a possibility of understanding the specific conditions of socialist (and post-socialist) men’s and women’s lives.

The second part of the book consists of twenty-five chapters written by feminist thinkers from abroad, colleagues, collaborators, and pupils of Hana Havelková. These texts are of a diverse character (from theoretical to personal), and cover different topics. Together, they offer a unique opportunity to learn about Hana Havelková’s personality, the different activities she engaged in during her life, and the impact she made. The group of contributors consists of well-known gender experts like Herta Nagl-Docekal, Christiane Brenner, Marina Hugson Blagojević, Magdalena Górska, and Jana Cviková from abroad, as well as by many others from the Czech Republic (Gerlinda Šmausová, Libora Oates-Indruchová, Jana Valdřová, Jitka Malečková, Blanka Knotková-Čapková, Jan Sokol, Lubica Kobová, Tereza Jiroutová Kynčlová, Kateřina Šimáčková, Denisa Nečasová, Iva Baslarová, Jan Matonoha, Kateřina Kolářová, Pavla Špondřová, Petr Pavlík, Jarka Devine Mildorf, Petra Ezzeddine, Tomáš Pavlas and Veronika Šprincová, Tereza Havelková, and Barbora Havelková).

These texts enrich the scope of topics dealt with by Hana Havelková in the first part of the book. Just to mention a few: Herta Nagl-Docekal reflected on the situation of feminist philosophy in a post-feminist context; Christiane Brenner concentrated on pro-natalism and sexuality in socialist Czechoslovakia; Gerlinda Šmausová analyzed the situation of women in science; Jana Valdřová offered a gender analyses of language; Jan Matonoha presented the example of gender-oriented discursive analysis; Libora Oates-Indruchová analyzed the character of gender criticism in the Czech context; Blanka Knotková-Čapková introduced the problem of postcolonial feminism; Denisa Nečasová looked at the images of the new socialist woman; Iva Baslarová focused on the way popular Czech play-writer Jaroslav Dietl presented women in his television series; Kateřina Kolářová uncovered the metaphors on which the neoliberal politics in the Czech Republic after 1989 were based and offered a rereading of the lesbian “crip” vision; while Lubica Kobová reflected on the phenomenon of *affidamento* (the title of one of Hana Havelková’s texts). Other texts focused on Havelková’s legacy: Jitka Malečková stressed Hana Havelková’s importance in forging an interdisciplinary bridge between history and feminism; Petr Pavlík dealt with her role in the establishment of the Department of Gender Studies at Charles University in Prague; Petra Ezzeddine underlined her activities within civil society (Hana Havelková was one of the chairs of the Czech Helsinki Committee). The most personal texts were written by her two daughters, both gender-oriented professionals themselves (Barbora Havelková in the area of law and Tereza Havelková in musicology). All the texts show how widely

and deeply Hana Havelková influenced the members of gender expert community, not only in the Czech Republic, but in the region as a whole.

The book is an important source of information for those interested in the “gender order” of the socialist regime and its transformation after 1989 in the Czech Republic and possible theoretical frameworks for its reflection and explanation.

### ◆ Notes

1. This issue was prepared by Hana Havelková and Jiřina Šmejkalová-Strickland and published in 1992.
2. Three out of sixteen texts included in the book are published in English.
3. In fact, the Czech Republic is part of Central Europe, so the term is political rather than geographical.
4. An English version was published under the title *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice* (London: Routledge, 2014).
5. Hana Havelková died a year after the book in question was published—on 31 October 2020.




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Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, Piotr Perkowski, Małgorzata Fidelis, Barbara Klich-Kluczevska, *Kobiety w Polsce, 1945–1989: Nowoczesność, równouprawnienie, komunizm* (Women in Poland, 1945–1989: Modernity, equality, communism), Cracow: Universitas, 2020, 520 pp., 49.00 zł, ISBN: 978-83-242-3630-5; 29.00 zł (e-book), ISBN: 978-83-242-6504-6.

Book review by **Sylwia Kuźma-Markowska**  
University of Warsaw, Poland



Since the collapse of communism, scholars of twentieth-century Polish history have cherished new possibilities of working on topics formerly censored or quenched and analyzing a plethora of previously unavailable primary sources. New methodological inspirations trickling down from Western Europe or North America spurred interest in fields and subdisciplines previously neglected in Polish historiography. One of them certainly was women’s and gender history. Albeit not as popular as the political history of Polish state-socialism, insights into the experiences of and scholarly discourses about women under communism were regularly published as monographs, collective volumes, or journal articles. Few of them, however, were noticed by the mainstream national historiography of communist Poland. The multi-authored publication—*Kobiety w Polsce, 1945–1989: Nowoczesność, równouprawnienie, komunizm* (Women in Poland, 1945–1989: Modernity, equality, communism)—offers the chance to modify this state of affairs due to its broad thematical and chronological scope, its approachable

scholarly discourse, and because of its unexplored topics and areas that provoke questions and encourage further analyses.

*Kobiety w Polsce, 1945–1989* is the outcome of many years of work of a team of researchers specializing in the social and cultural history of communist Poland. The book is comprised of seven main chapters devoted to a variety of topics, preceded by a methodological essay about writing on gender, history, and communism by Małgorzata Fidelis. Some chapters are single-authored, while others are written by two contributors. The book is comparative and provides numerous references to the events and phenomena of the second half of the twentieth century in other countries. The authors situate their analyses in the contexts of transnational developments such as the Global Sixties and refer not only to publications on Western Europe and North America, but also on the communist countries of the region such as the German Democratic Republic or Bulgaria. *Kobiety w Polsce, 1945–1989* relies on Western methodologies of writing women's and gender history developed since the 1970s and is based on a wide range of primary sources such as archival documents, diaries, memoirs or periodicals, used to study discourses, as well as women's experiences and practices. Some chapters also briefly delineate the earlier evolution of examined concepts and spheres of women's lives, situating the phenomena pertinent to communist Poland in a broader historical context.

Out of seven thematical chapters, two are devoted to the public endeavors of women; the rest focus chiefly on phenomena related to the private sphere. In the chapter on women in politics, Piotr Perkowski juxtaposes Stalinist-era postulates of women's political participation with later decades' emphasis on domesticity and "the reduction of the notion of equality to the issues of family" (78). Perkowski also discusses the involvement of women in strikes and emphasizes the paradoxes of women's engagement in the 1980s protests initiated by the Solidarity movement. His conclusion about the conservative vision of femininity that characterized the movement is linked to the post-1989 political climate that, according to Perkowski, constituted "the continuation of the processes of late communism" (97). Perkowski hence links the post-democratic backlash with 1980s Solidarity postulates and undertakings.

The second chapter that concentrates on women in the public sphere discusses working women and refers to the category of "conservative modernity" used by Małgorzata Fidelis to highlight the Stalinist-era narratives regarding women in the labor force and the post-Stalinist shift to domesticity and motherhood. Fidelis stresses the tension between women's wage work and their private roles as wives and mothers that became particularly acute during the pronatalist decades of the 1970s and 1980s when authorities fashioned a new model of "mother-worker" that prioritized the first of these roles.

In the chapter on women and the household, Perkowski and Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz again refer to one of the main angles of analysis of the book—modernity—as they examine alterations in discourses and private and public practices related to household maintenance. The authors also devoted an entire chapter to the history of Polish girls and girlhood under communism. In this part of the book, Stańczak-Wiślicz examines the models and patterns of upbringing and education of girls and young women, paying considerable attention to the girls' own narratives of their lives and experiences. One would wish that a similar detailed and apt analysis would be de-

voted to elderly women and to the communist discourses and practices pertaining to gender and old age.

In the chapters on family, motherhood, and reproduction Barbara Klich-Kluczewska and Piotr Perkowski present public discourses as well as behaviors of women whose motherly and reproductive practices underwent vast and profound changes in the second half of the twentieth century. Klich-Kluczewska opted to adopt biopolitics as a frame of interpretation in the chapter on health, reproduction, and violence. As a result, this part focuses more on official discourses and totalitarian institutional practices than on the agency of women who underwent abortions, gave birth, or experienced violence.

The last thematical chapter by Fidelis and Stańczak-Wiślicz focuses on the rituals of the body, fashion, and beauty, and presents them in a novel manner as part of a global phenomenon related to the development of beauty culture and the beauty industry, in which communist countries participated along with capitalist ones.

The almost five hundred pages of analyses pertaining to women in communist Poland shed lights on several unexplored topics and at the same time presents in a concise and approachable way the results of research on women's history in communist Poland over the last thirty years. The book encourages new analyses and interpretations as well as opens possibilities for further exploration of the topics and areas the authors decided to omit. One such topic is certainly the role of the Catholic Church in the lives of Polish women as well as women's engagement in Church-related activities. The book aptly incorporates rural women in its examinations, in spite of relatively scanty scholarly publications on the topic. *Kobiety w Polsce, 1945–1989*, however, illustrates the need for studies pertaining to older women, both those living in the cities as well as in the countryside. One important area of scrutiny would be the impact of the communist pension system on women as well as public and private roles of elderly women living under communism. Ultimately, one must hope that the authors' findings will be incorporated into mainstream analyses of communism in Poland as well as into the scholarship on social and cultural history and women's and gender history in Poland and East Central Europe.



Vassiliki Theodorou and Despina Karakatsani, *Strengthening Young Bodies, Building the Nation: A Social History of the Child Health and Welfare in Greece (1890–1940)*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 2019, 374 pp., \$95.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-963-386-278-0.

Book Review by **Evguenia Davidova**  
Portland State University, USA



*Strengthening Young Bodies, Building the Nation: A Social History of the Child Health and Welfare in Greece (1890–1940)* is one of the recent additions to the growing CEU Press

series on the history of medicine. The book presents the thorough research of two Greek historians who bring together two fields: history of childhood and social history of medicine. This combination proved to be a fruitful contribution not only to Greek but also to Balkan history of public health and medicalization of national and social policies, including the “professionalization of children’s health and welfare” (5). Vasiliki Theodorou and Despina Karakatsani shed an additional light on the rise of state intervention by exploring child healthcare not in a family setting but in an educational institutional framework. This focus on the national biological capital coincided with the “preventive turn” of medicine and the emergence of diverse medical and social professionals. The book is organized in chronological order and encompasses fifty years that reveal both continuities and ruptures in the strategies pursued by liberal and authoritarian regimes. It consists of three sections and nine chapters.

The first section, “Health and Children’s Welfare in Greece (1890–1920),” examines the emergent field of public health in Western Europe and its impact on Greek (male) pioneers: doctors, educators, and social thinkers who were educated predominantly in the West. It was in this period when the symbiotic relationship between the nationalizing modern state (the School Hygiene Service at the Ministry of Education) and the voluntary sector (Women Patriotic Welfare Foundation) initiated expansion of institutions for child healthcare, such as school medical inspections and polyclinics. This reorganization was intimately related to the militarization of Greek society and the new understanding of the crucial role of schools in preparing healthy offspring of the nation.

The second part, “From Moralization to the Social Turn in Medical Concern (1922–1935),” traces child welfare within major changes in Greek society. The turning point in this development was the influx of refugees from Asia Minor in the early 1920s. Moreover, this was also a period of internationalization of social policies with regard to children and refugees. It is not a coincidence that Ministries of Health and Social Welfare emerged in most European countries in the 1920s. Within this context new approaches to school hygiene developed, such as the introduction of hygiene as a school subject, architectural improvement, summer camps, and open-air schools.

The third section fleshes out the impact of the Metaxas authoritarian regime (1936–1940) on child and maternal welfare policies. While the dictatorship paid special attention to improving children’s health, it also tried to instrumentalize motherhood and infancy. In the 1930s, eugenics gained a wide currency and that refocused the state’s gaze on constructing the nation’s biological and historical continuity. And yet the emphasis was on a mother’s education rather than her health. One wishes, though, that these gender dimensions were compared to population policy and the medicalization of women’s reproduction in Romania and Bulgaria.<sup>1</sup>

The book is successful in illustrating the quantification of school hygiene as a tool of increased state control for influencing hygienic behavior and nationalizing young bodies. Furthermore, it provides persuasive evidence of chronological continuity in the policies and discourses between the Greek liberal and authoritarian governments. In both cases the emphasis was put on child healthcare rather than on the mother’s health protection. While the book presents the state’s perspective, case studies based on memoirs and diaries of (former) students, parents, and teachers would have of-

ferred views of diverse actors from a gender-specific angle. Theodorou and Karakatsani emphasize the patronizing state policy toward working-class families and the growing impact of the (male) medical elite in the public sphere, but miss the opportunity to highlight the patriarchal views of the influential pediatric doctors. It would have been especially suitable to present perspectives deriving from women medical workers, social workers, and mothers from various social backgrounds and ethnic origins.

*Strengthening Young Bodies, Building the Nation: A Social History of the Child Health and Welfare in Greece (1890–1940)* is a valuable contribution to the intersection of the social history of medicine, biopolitics of the modernizing nation state, and public health discourses. The authors present the medicalization of school policies and practices not as a byproduct but as a prominent component of state centralization and modernization of public health. The book would be of interest to students and researchers engaged in the European social history of medicine and the study of childhood.

### ◆ Note

1. Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Modern Romania* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 2002); Svetla Baloutzova, *Demography and Nation: Social Legislation and Population Policy in Bulgaria, 1918–1944* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011).



Maria Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins: Imagining Utopia, 1870s–1920s*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020, 384 pp., \$115.00 (hardcover), ISBN: 978-1-350-15033-1.

Book review by **Jana Tsoneva**  
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences  
and **Georgi Medarov**  
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria



Maria Todorova's latest book is a timely intervention in our staid, unimaginative presentism that besmirches every political utopia as "totalitarianism." The book explores the history of social-democratic movements from the perspective of their Bulgarian incarnation from the Second International to World War I. In scrutinizing the tribulations of Bulgarian socialism before 1917, when the socialist "utopia of the future" still felt nebulous, Todorova puts an understudied radical movement right in the center of contemporary academic debates. This shift in perspective allows her to construct a theoretical tour de force, dealing with a dizzying range of questions ranging from utopia, memory, and ideology to feminism, transfer of ideas, and historiographic methodologies and turns.

Todorova shows how the "global turn" in historiography has neglected social democracy, despite the movement's roots precisely in transnational political imaginaries.

Her focus on the relatively obscure Bulgarian social democracy reflects her preoccupation with shifting scales as a means to destabilize dominant narratives and binaries. Todorova's investigation moves her analysis from "aerial views of large-scale movements of ideas to closer pictures of characteristics of groups and, finally, to close-ups of individuals," depicting a polyphonic entanglement "of spaces, generations, genders, ideas and feelings, and different flows of historical time" (8).

The book is structured in three parts. Each explores a different set of theories and binaries, scaling down from the global toward individual biographical trajectories and formations. Core-periphery, tradition-modernity, Eastern-Western (socialism), nationalism-internationalism, young-old, women-men, are some of the dyads Todorova fractures by bringing forward evidence of cross-pollination and temporal destabilizations in "purer" forms of socialism found precisely where least expected, such as in "backward" places and genders.

The first part, *Centers and Peripheries*, shows how Bulgarian socialists carved their own identity amid internal multiplicities and tensions, influenced by both German and Russian socialism, without being reducible to either. The second part, *Generations*, looks into the complex class structure of Bulgarian social democracy and the way socialists, being predominantly teachers and lawyers, reflected on their intellectual backgrounds. World War I, followed by the violence against socialists after the 1923 coup, induced the militarization of the left, forging the radical "new" generation. Todorova then zooms into tales of individual formation (*Bildung*) moving toward discussions of the personal politico-emotional trajectories of socialist women from elite and underprivileged backgrounds in the final part.

Todorova takes on established ways of framing the popularity of socialist ideas as a "transfer" from a putative core to "backward" peripheries. For example, she highlights the Bulgarian contribution to one of the most vexing questions in the history of Marxist thought, namely, ethnicity and nationalism. More specifically, the "Balkan federation" was Bulgarian socialism's answer to the plethora of problems generated by the decline of the European empires.

Through such examples Todorova proposes to think of the socialist movement in Europe not in the patronizing framework of a unilateral "transfer" of ideas, but as a common movement articulating diverse spatio-temporal moments (at least until the 1920s). In addition to subverting the core-periphery framework, the book shows that sometimes "copies" shine brighter than "originals." For example, Western socialists often conflated empires and nations, and even some, like Eduard Bernstein, called for a "socialist colonial policy" (49). By contrast, socialists from the newly formed Balkan nations ventured much more piercing analyses of the emancipatory potentials of national revolutions. In hindsight, today's hegemonic decolonial turn shows who was "on the right side of history."

This is particularly the case with parts of the book dealing with feminism and the place of women in the movement. Todorova reveals the unique contributions of women, typically marginalized by their contemporaries, also reflected in mainstream scholarly writing about socialism. Instead of discussing well-known and illustrious "great men" such as Georgi Dimitrov or Christian Rakovsky, Todorova braids serendipitous archival findings about unknown or forgotten women with the histories of



better-known female socialist leaders. She rescues the socialist woman from “the enormous condescension of posterity,” highlighting the decisive role women played in the political formation of the first generations of activists in Bulgaria. The reasons are somewhat trivial: at the turn of the century, schools were the bulwark of socialist indoctrination and teaching was one of the few public occupations available to women. While some women did politicize because of their husbands, Todorova marshals evidence for women’s engagement with socialist thought and action independent of (and sometimes against) husbands and fathers, and over and against the rapidly modernizing Bulgarian society, busy importing not only radicalism from the West, but also Victorian gender roles. It helped that unlike its Western role-models, Bulgarian peasant society was more egalitarian, with men and women sharing relatively equally the burdens of work. Most interesting in this regard is the case of Angelina Boneva (chapter 6), a poor peasant woman who defied the gravity of her class and conservative rural conventions to become a teacher and a dedicated socialist activist. She married only to shorten a prison sentence. (This does not mean that love was unimportant for socialists, despite the scientific trappings of their *illusio*, as chapter 7 compellingly shows).

Today, the regret that socialism has contracted into a beleaguered intellectual movement is often voiced. Yet maybe it is more apposite to think of this predicament as socialism returning to its (pedagogical) roots. In that sense, we can finally begin rehabilitating “Eastern” socialism, often maligned as “abnormal” and “untimely” because of the absence of “mature, objective” conditions in these then largely rural backwaters. The early Bulgarian experience and its radicality, some aspects of which long predate similar developments in the West, such as the demand for female suffrage (149), teaches us that socialism is first and foremost the result of imagining utopia rather than the working out of economic conditions.




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Jessica Zychowicz, *Superfluous Women: Art, Feminism, and Revolution in Twenty-First-Century Ukraine*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020, 420 pp., \$63.75 (hardcover), ISBN: 978-1-4875-0168-6.

Book review by **Irina Genova**

New Bulgarian University, Institute of Art Studies, Sofia, Bulgaria



Jessica Zychowicz’s book *Superfluous Women: Art, Feminism, and Revolution in Twenty-First-Century Ukraine* studies the art practices connected with the feminist movement as part of the protests in Ukraine in the first decades of the twenty-first century. The text is organized into five chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. The book contains multiple references in the endnotes, a bibliography of thirty pages, and an index of names and notions, which reflects the extensive research background of the analyses. An important part of the book is the visual material—sixty-eight reproductions

and documentary photographs, many of which have been published for the first time. Some of the photographs have been taken by the author herself; she has sought out others, together with their copyrights.

The focal point of the first chapter of the book, "Performing Protest: Sexual Dissent Reinvented" is a case study of the Femen group—a feminist protest group, founded by four women in the town of Khmelnytskyi in 2008, that staged street protests in Ukraine. The author analyzes the motivation behind those artistic actions against the background of both the preceding years (the separation from the Soviet Union after its collapse in 1991, the protests in 2004/the Orange Revolution, and the political events afterward) and of the current changes in the media environment and globalization. Zychowicz studies the connections between Femen's actions and earlier experiences—from the Bolshevik revolution to the events in 2004. The initial critical reception of the group's art activism has been studied in the book, with a focus on the reactions toward the female nude—a crucial element in the performances. What is of particular interest, from the perspective of visual culture, are the pages dealing with archetypal images, brought to absurdity and caricature in Femen's actions. Among those images are heroines embodying the doctrine of socialist realism (with sculpted breasts and wide smiles); female images presented as nationally specific sex products; Amazons, etc. These pastiches often play off of the stereotypical images of Slavic women in Western culture (photographs, posters, literary works, etc.). The spread of these images into everyday life, into the spaces of the big city, is a prerequisite for the creation of mass stereotypes of female images. Such is the example of Alfons Mucha's lithograph posters and the beauty of Slavic women.

An important aspect of the study is the attention paid to media technologies, globalization, and their role in the protest movements worldwide. When Femen's tactics in its subversive actions toward media clichés started to resemble the tactics of the very production of such clichés (for instance, in the fashion industry or in the construction of a national image of the woman/of the Ukrainian woman), the group began to lose its impact. "Morphing relative to the laws of the media photograph, the structure and design of Femen would soon play a role in rearranging the compass for global protest in the digital age. What Femen did not know is that they had already invented the seeds of their own demise" (75).

The second chapter, "An Anatomy of Activism: Virtual Body Rhetoric in Digital Protest Texts," discusses Femen's media rhetoric, its disagreements, risks, and limits. The author analyzes the controversies in the various times and media positions, concluding: "Their simulacrum of an actual protest reveals how dissidence itself has become a commodity in the contemporary political environment driven by images, icons, and mass information" (125). However, this does not mean that Femen's experience has been rejected and forgotten. The problematic rhetoric of the group is a symptom of "the mutual stereotyping that can occur, all too often, at a cultural crossroads" (126).

In the third chapter, Zychowicz presents the feminist group Ofenzywa, founded in 2010—having the most numerous participants, including academics, writers, artists, and photographers. In the winter of 2013–2014, Ofenzywa members were among the protesters on the Maidan in Kiev. However, their views on "how to address the mar-

ginalization of women amid the violence taking place on the Maidan" (142) diverged. Disagreements concerning the forms of participation led to the disintegration of the group. The focal point in the field of visual studies is Yevgenia Belorusets's photographs. Her two photographic series "32 Gogol St." and "A Room of One's Own" are analyzed as rhetoric against the background of Alexander Rodchenko's photographs, which have become a classic for the Russian avant-garde. "Both series make visible the feminization and the stigmatization of poverty that had infused even the social gatherings on the Maidan," writes Zychowicz (192).

The case studies in the fourth chapter concern the politics of display of two visual art collectives from Kiev: HudRada (eponym for the Soviet Arts Council) and REP (Revolutionary Experimental Space), which created new patterns, turning into devices of expression. Restrictions imposed on the artistic autonomy by censorship are a constant theme in the critical discourse.

The final part, "Bad Myth: Picturing Intergenerational Experiences of Revolution and War," draws attention to the Visual Culture Research Center in Kiev, established in 2008 as a "platform for collaboration between academic, artistic, and activist communities."<sup>1</sup> Through specific case studies again—art events and practices—the author leads readers to the conclusion that today the youngest visual artists seek continuity with the experiences of their grandparents, who lived in Soviet space. "This goes against the 'noise' of the information war, in which the past is often drawn in stark East versus West terms" (281). Here again the political dimensions of the analyses are crucial.

*Superfluous Women: Art, Feminism, and Revolution in Twenty-First-Century Ukraine* is a significant study of the direct links between political context, protest actions, and art practices in this century. The attention focuses on feminist milieus and those advocating for LGBTQ rights in the conditions of consecutive conservative waves and censorship. The place of the events is Ukraine, but in the current media environment and globalization in all areas, they unfold against the active background of the whole world after the time of the Iron Curtain and are part of it. The book offers significant contributions to the problematization of the situation of women and all marginalized LGBTQ groups in societies in the former Soviet sphere of influence. Zychowicz does not hesitate to introduce the reader to the complexities and ambiguities of the struggles for rights, which can often be ideologically instrumentalized and used in other battles. This study should capture the attention of a wide range of research, academic, and artistic milieus.

## ◆ Notes

1. See *Visual Culture Research Center*, <http://vcr.org.ua/en> (accessed 29 May 2021).