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Abstracts

Anna Becker, “Antiquity” and “Middle Ages” in the Political Philosophy of the “Renaissance”: Gender as a Tracer between Continuity and Change

In her famous essay “Did Women have a Renaissance?” Joan Kelly-Gadol contended that “there was no Renaissance for women – at least, not during the Renaissance”. For Kelly-Gadol it was the ideology of Renaissance civic humanism that constructed the household as an inferior female domain to the superior political and public world of men. Civic humanism, she argued, was a philosophy built upon women’s “domestic imprisonment” and their exclusion from the public sphere. This article reconsiders the topic of gender in fifteenth and sixteenth century civic humanist and Aristotelian writings. It argues, against Kelly-Gadol, that in Renaissance Aristotelian political thought marriage was considered a highly political topic and the wife was understood to be political in more than one sense. Along the way, this article considers issues of periodisation, continuities, and change in the history of political thought.

Annalena Müller, Manipulated Memory – The Seventeenth Century Tale of Female Dominion and Male Servitude in Fontevraud

The order of Fontevraud is well known for its particular organisational structure: in 1115, Fontevraud’s founder, Robert of Arbrissel, placed a woman at the head of the mixed gender congregation. The idea of Fontevraud as a place where women ruled and men served has long taken firm roots in historiography. This article revises the notion of Fontevraud’s organisation as an unusual inversion of gender hierarchy tracing its construction to the seventeenth century, when the order’s Bourbon abbesses introduced undivided abbatial rule in Fontevraud. The expansion of abbatial authority led to severe internal quarrels between the monks, fighting to maintain their traditional rights of codetermination in Fontevraud, and the order’s most ardent advocate of abbatial absolutism, Jeanne-Baptiste de Bourbon (1637–1670). During the almost twenty-year-conflict, the latter manipulated Fontevraud’s sources and history to reflect her ideal of abbatial sovereignty. In the end, these manipulations of Fontevraud’s medieval organisation were successful: not only did they justify abbatial absolutism in the seventeenth century, but they have also informed our image of Fontevraud until this day.

Glenda Sluga, On the Historical Significance of the Presence, and Absence, of Women at the Congress of Vienna, 1814–1815

In the 1960s, the Austrian historian of the Congress of Vienna Hilde Spiel noted “Never before – or after – have a group of statesmen and politicians, assembled solely and exclusively to deal with matters of commonweal interest, labored so extensively and

decisively under the influence of women – not in Munster, nor in Rastatt, not in Versailles, nor yet in San Francisco.” Taking as its focus the aristocratic Duchess of Sagan and Princess Katharine Bagration, and bourgeois Anna Lullin-Eynard, this essay asks: What was the significance of the presence of women at the Congress of Vienna, and of their relative absence in the political history of that event ever since? Its aim is to inquire into the gender dimensions of an event that has come to be viewed as a *Zeitenschwelle*, marking the break between *ancien* and modern forms and norms of international politics and diplomacy.

Judith Szapor, The Women’s Debating Club of Countess Károlyi. Hungarian Women’s Revolutionary and Counter-Revolutionary Activism in 1918/19

The Women’s Debating Club, founded in early 1918 by Countess Katinka Károlyi and Rosika Schwimmer, represents a previously unexplored case of women’s activism in the era of Central European revolutions in 1918/19. The Club’s original mandate was to agitate for women’s suffrage and peace; after the democratic revolution in Hungary in October 1918 it was to serve as an informal meeting place for politically active women of all stripes. The former mandate was made obsolete when war ended and the suffrage was introduced by the Károlyi-government; and the latter was subverted by right-wing, nationalistic women who used the Club as a launching pad for their counter-revolutionary organisation in early 1919. The Club’s short history thus foreshadowed the shift from left-liberal to right-nationalistic in the Hungarian women’s movements and political life at large; and as an institution straddling the private and the public, it demonstrated the limits of women’s activism even in revolutionary times.

Lisa Malich, Hormonal Nature and its Technologies: The Hormonisation of Pregnancy in the Twentieth Century

Today, both body and mind of pregnant women are often portrayed as being ruled by hormones. In this article, I will trace the history of this hormonisation. Drawing primarily on German advice books and several other popular and medical sources, I will emphasise the importance of widespread biomedical technologies for this process. Compared to related phenomena like menstruation or menopause, the predominance of the hormonal model as a framework for understanding pregnancy is a relatively recent development. While the former were attributed to female sex-hormones since the 1920s, popular discourses on pregnancy rarely mentioned endocrine changes. Only since the late 1960s and increasingly in the 1970s, pregnancy was defined as hormonal. Two actors were central in this regard: the contraceptive pill and immunological pregnancy tests. These two technologies not only influenced endocrine concepts of gravidity, but also established progesterone and HCG as the primary ‘pregnancy hormones’. In this way, the hormonal pregnancy materialised in a biopolitical configuration, shaped by everyday practices, discourses and the politics of individually controlled reproduction.