

schen Umfelds, die sich zwischen den Polen der Streichung von Subventionen einerseits und der Instrumentalisierung der Frauengeschichte durch die Politik andererseits bewegt.

Als weiterer verbindender Faktor über die Zeiten bleibt schließlich der Eindruck, dass Frauen stets – und weit mehr so scheint es als Männer – ihre Person mitdenken. Frauen legen offen, dass ihre Wissenschaft untrennbar mit biographischen Erfahrungen verbunden ist, und dass die Geschichte der Geschichtswissenschaft immer auch eine Geschichte der Personen ist, die Wissen schaffen.

*Christina Antenhofer, Innsbruck*

Mihaela Frunza und Theodora-Eliza Vacarescu Hg., **Gender and the (Post)“East”/“West” Divide**. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Limes 2004, 286 S., EUR 7,50, ISBN 973-726-044-9.

The volume contributes to the cooperation between researchers and activists from the former Soviet Union states and from ‘Western’ countries in tackling gender and feminist issues, with a focus on aspects of ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ discourses and diverse constructions of feminisms. The articles were originally presented at the seminar “Gender and the (Post)‘East’/‘West’ Divide”, organised in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in May 2004. The volume demonstrates that feminism has registered an increasing academic interest, a constant NGO preoccupation, and an educational aim, in order to internalise the feminist agenda in the Eastern European ‘region’. Clearly defined politically and theoretically, the texts promote public awareness for gender issues, tolerance, and diversity and contribute to gender studies in Central Eastern Europe.

The authors analyse feminist and gender issues and the ‘West’/‘East’ divide from complex and ambitious perspectives. Most texts deal with the recent changes that ‘Eastern’ Europe has undergone, intersect with gender politics, and explore particular study cases. The contributors focus on diversity and challenge issues such as women labour market participation, political involvement, reproductive rights and domestic violence in the recently experienced context. Due to the integrative, comparative and interdisciplinary approach, the volume cannot be considered homogenous.

Divided into five parts, the book intends to requestion the present contextualisation of feminisms in Europe. The five sections critically approach mainstream views on gender, the divisions inside and the resistance to feminism and the challenges the socialist/communist context has brought along. As the title itself suggests, the volume aims to avoid both the essentialisation of the terms ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ might induce and also the assumption that the ‘umbrella’ terms of ‘post’ and various ‘-isms’ sum up the experience of former Soviet countries in Europe. The authors explore social, political and power relation experiences, and several complexes Eastern European feminisms have to face up. Thus, the articles start from, allude to or challenge ‘Western’

feminist texts that have defined feminisms worldwide. Moreover, they interrogate the impacts the European Union integration and the general phenomenon of globalisation have on 'Eastern' and 'Western' feminisms.

Part one, "Discourses of Gender/Feminism: 'East' and 'West'", sets up to outline the topics and the overall purpose of the volume. This section explores the 'East'/'West' divide in spatial and political contexts from several perspectives and experiences. It emphasises the existence of feminisms as against an essentialising binary divide into 'West' and 'East' feminisms since, in both spatial and theoretical terms, one needs to question who is 'we' and who is 'I'.

In this section, Mihaela Mudure defines the position of 'Eastern' feminism in relation to its 'Western' counterpart as an evolution to an "oxymoronic space" (13) or a "zeugmatic locus" (15). Starting from two rhetorical figures, the author theorises "the bridge of our back" (14) as the precise position specific to East/Central European feminisms within world feminisms. Drawing attention to the ambivalence in East/Central European feminisms and also to the tendency to negotiate their identity, Mudure concludes that East/Central European feminisms should acknowledge their rediscovered history, establish a dialogue with religion,<sup>1</sup> address the relationship with 'Western' modernity, and "participate in the general traffic of ideas in their own voice" (25) in order to overcome the trap of "passing"<sup>2</sup> as European feminisms.

In "Limited Relevance. What Feminists Can Learn from the Eastern Experience" Anca Gheaus explores the legitimisation of the "we in the East" and the relevance of political theory recently produced by 'Western' feminists, particularly in an 'Eastern' European context. The article questions the feminist arguments that present justice and care as harmonious values and not as "genuine dilemmas" (52) in an original case study of private tuition that has run parallel with the official educational process in both communist and post communist Romania.

Elaine Susan Weiner identifies how standpoint theory and recent approaches to narrative and narrativity as "a means of reconciliation" (32) can transcend the apparent simple 'East'/'West' divide, yet marked by complicated epistemic tensions. The article argues against the false foundation of a homogenised and victimised "Central and East European woman" (38). By analysing the narratives of Czech female managers and factory workers as appropriation of a hegemonic narrative, the author emphasises the 'West' and 'East' as non-absolute distinctions.

"Border Crossers. Gender Discourses Between 'East' and 'West'" critiques the generalised and dichotomic usage of the categories of 'Westerners' and 'Easterners', with an emphasis on the qualitative analysis of images and gender stereotypes in discourses.

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1 Michaela Mudure considers religion a key factor in the process of Romanian feminism negotiating its identity, since, after the fall of communism, it has dominated the ethical discourse and constituted one of the few cultural offers in the Romanian countryside.

2 The term alludes to Nella Larsen's novel "Passing" (New York 1929).

Veronika Wöhrer explores how 'East' and 'West' are defined in relation to gender roles and pinpoints the overestimation of 'East'/'West' differences. However, in this article, it is debatable whether the terms of "post-socialist" and "capitalist" (75) replace the problematic dichotomy 'East'/'West' or rather reconstruct it.

"Gender and Politics, Politics of Gender: Case Studies", the second chapter, focuses on the gender dimension of politics or women's political participation in Eastern European countries such as Romania, Hungary, Poland and Lithuania. This section attempts to define shared feminist experiences in the post-communist decades of 'transition'. The articles emphasise women's positions and feminisms in terms of difference or sameness, and the difficulties to overcome.

In problematising feminist representation and legitimization, Magdalena Dabrowska claims that the set of values promoted by the Polish feminism radically differs from the ones the majority of Polish women respect. She stresses three major issues that also define this volume. First, the author annihilates the notion of one 'Western' feminism and argues for feminisms in 'Western' and 'Eastern' Europe, due to the plurality of feminist politics and discourse. Secondly and implicitly, there is no single feminism as "the most 'Western'" (112). Thirdly, the author argues that it remains debatable whether the common experience consists sufficient reason to "speak about all post communist countries as about one, homogeneous, simply 'Eastern' entity" (112).

Similarly, Mihaela Frunza argues that feminism is not largely accepted in contemporary Romanian society but tends to remain concentrated at the level of academia and civic society, probably due to the ambiguous feminist discourse. In "Reflections on *Artemis* – A Romanian Feminist Project", Maria Diaconescu analyses this latter aspect. However, the argument that before 1989 sexuality was overlooked in Romania can be theorised against, since anti abortion policies and the institutionalised norm of heterosexuality defined communist Romania in a poignant way.

"Gender Trouble? Performing Lesbian Identities in the 'East'" concentrates on the several ways 'Western' discourses of sexualities construct lesbian communities and identities in post socialist Albania, Russia and Romania. This section analyses the impact the 'Western' discourse has had on uncovering "repressed" sexualities in post-socialist 'Eastern' Europe. The articles further show that Eastern European feminisms should advocate queer thinking and gender as a continuum instead of a bluntly essentialising dichotomy 'lesbian'/'straight'. By presenting the contexts of Albania and Romania, Shannon Woodcock concludes "the culture of confession does not function similarly in the east and west" (182). However, this conclusion tends to limit the terms of 'East' and 'West' and reproduce the criticised dichotomy.

Part four, "Gender in the (New) Media: Queers, Dolls, Cyborgs, Monsters and Humans", centres on the impact mass media and popular culture discourses have on constructing and performing gender/sexual identities in Eastern Europe. The articles emphasise that consumer culture reproduces a traditional construction of sexual identities into dichotomies, reveals traditional gender roles expectations, and reiterates

stereotypes in advertisements, video games, computer games, soap operas or television series addressed to teenagers.

The texts in the last part, "Challenges of Approaching Gender: Political Theory, Multiculturalism and Epistemology", explore the engendering of political theories, the relationship between feminism and its postmodernist epistemological foundation. The implications of feminist epistemology are related to the critique of the 'East'/'West' divide. The texts conclude that Eastern feminisms should not copy the Western feminist way, but choose their own means and approach.

In conclusion "Gender and the (Post)'East'/'West' Divide" takes up multiple challenges and is a remarkable achievement in many respects. In its diversity, the volume reopens the issues of feminisms, gender identities and gender performance, and gender studies within the present European contexts. It succeeds in blurring the 'West'/'East' divide, mainly due to the emphasis on the existence of plural feminist identities and discourses. Perhaps what is strongest about this volume is its challenge to the categories 'white'/'black', 'capitalist'/'post socialist', 'straight'/'queer', which have different echoes in 'Western' and 'Eastern' feminisms and that it points to the limits of the concept of 'post communism'.

*Cristina Ivanovici, Salaj/Birmingham*

Frank Stahnisch u. Florian Steger Hg., **Medizin, Geschichte und Geschlecht. Körperhistorische Rekonstruktionen von Identitäten und Differenzen**. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag 2005, 297 S., EUR 49,-, ISBN 3-515-08564.

Die Erforschung von Medizin, Körper und Geschlecht aus historischer Perspektive erfreut sich in den letzten Jahren wachsender Aufmerksamkeit. Mit ihrem Sammelband, der aus einer Tagung zu Ehren der Medizinhistorikerin Renate Wittern-Sterzel hervorgegangen ist, streben Frank Stahnisch und Florian Steger eine Bestandsaufnahme aktueller einschlägiger Arbeiten an, die sich mit der Kategorie Geschlecht befassen. Gegliedert nach den Rubriken „Identitäten“ und „Differenzen“ finden sich Aufsätze von MedizinhistorikerInnen, HistorikerInnen, PhilologInnen und einem Juristen. Das zeitliche Spektrum, das die Beiträge abdecken, reicht von der Antike bis in die Gegenwart. In ihrer Einleitung kritisieren die Herausgeber eine noch mangelhafte interdisziplinäre Vernetzung von körper- und medizinhistorischen Arbeiten. Indem sie die Artikel in eine kulturwissenschaftliche Debatte um Körper und Geschlecht einzuordnen suchen, wollen sie diesen Mangel beheben.

Im ersten Beitrag unter „Identitäten“ befragt Sabine Föllinger Texte der frühgriechischen Dichtung, ob in ihnen eine „geschlechtsgebundene Körperwahrnehmung“ zu finden sei. Letztlich befasst sie sich mit der Darstellung von Körpern und versucht,