

Weitere Rezensionen

Karin Hausen, **Geschlechtergeschichte als Gesellschaftsgeschichte** (= Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft 202), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2012, 394 p., EUR 64,95, ISBN 978-3-525-37025-4.

“Zukunftsvisionen argumentativ zurückzubinden an die Last der Geschichte ist ge-wagt, lohnend und notwendig.” Somewhere near the beginning of the twentieth century’s emancipatory project of reading the past critically, Walter Benjamin said something similar in more poetic terms, but it takes a woman to put the argument in plain words and to set to work to make it happen. The volume which includes that statement (238) brings together twelve of Karin Hausen’s most influential articles published between 1976 and 2000. It opens with the essay which gave the label “Hausen thesis” to the proposition that the discursive polarisation of masculine and feminine “sexual characters” was a product of a late-eighteenth-century social and cultural watershed defined in part by the dissociation between household and work-place among the German middle classes. This is followed by her detailed study of the internal dynamics of marriage in the *Bildungsbürgertum*, “... eine Ulme für das schwanke Efeu”. Studies of the social history of the sewing machine, doing the laundry and early modern approaches to dealing with the shortage of firewood exemplify her work on the relationships between technology and gendered roles in the family. The dynamic interactions between constructions of gender and paid work are explored in her article on the gender politics of modern labour and social policies (*Arbeiterinnen-schutz*, *Mutterschutz* and statutory health insurance) and in two thought-experiments: the 1993 essay “Wirtschaften mit der Geschlechterordnung” and a reflection on work and gender published in 2000. Studies of the origins of Mother’s Day and the *Volkstrauertag* and of policies aimed at war widows and orphans anatomise the process of reconstructing the gender order in Germany following the trauma of World War I. The volume closes with two theoretical-methodological essays on the uses of the concept of patriarchy and “the non-unity of history as a challenge to historiography” (“Die Nicht-Einheit der Geschichte als historiographische Herausforderung”). Most of the chapters are reprints of earlier publications. The study of the *Volkstrauertag*, originally published in English, appears here for the first time in German, while the article on post-war

policies aimed at widows and orphans is the full (and longer) German version of a paper written in 1984 and published in English in 1987. Entirely new, and very welcome, is an essay on the reception of the “Hausen thesis”, to which I will return.

This is not a Festschrift or a jubilee edition; the selection has been made by Hausen herself, and it pays to read the brief introduction, in which she explains her choices in terms of an intellectual trajectory or quest. It is a trajectory that she shares with a generation of academic feminists, among whom she is pre-eminent in combining a willingness to go beyond boundaries in her thinking about the challenges that feminism poses to reading and representing the past with the imaginative testing of those insights in empirical case studies. The term she uses is “Experimentierfeld”. The final object of this experimentation remains political – the emancipation of women (and men) from the oppression of gender hierarchy – and here the 1986 essay on the uses and drawbacks of the notion of “patriarchy” offers a good example of her approach: starting from the question of how productive the notion is for feminist political practice, she proceeds to give an account of its historical uses and meanings. She then turns to an analysis of social practices and institutions to argue that as a shorthand term for male dominance (or “schematische Anklage”), “patriarchy” *understates* the significance of the displacement of power from women to men that occurred in the nineteenth century and obscures the nexus of social, economic and ideological developments which meant that the evacuation of the household as a locus of political power had that result and no other. To unravel this nexus, in which we are still entangled, it is necessary to recognise it in its specific features as a condition of structural tension between “individualism” and “familialism”.

The costs of that tension for academic women are spelled out in Hausen’s chapter on the origins and reception of the “Hausen thesis”, which alone is worth the price of the volume as a document in the gendered and generational history of academic scholarship. It reminds us (though she does not state this) that Hausen began her career not as a women’s or gender historian, but with a pioneering study of economic interests and colonial administration in Cameroon, and in that sense of the way in which the feminist scholarly project emerged out of the wider critical left milieu in the 1960s. More significantly, her account of what set her on course to research the question of when, why and how modern gender stereotypes developed begins with a reminder of how persistent and powerfully constraining they have been in women’s scope for self-fulfilment. She explains how her reading of a 1960 West German survey of senior male academics illuminated the often subliminal forms of discrimination she suffered as a female academic: this study revealed that only two per cent of the male scholars unreservedly regarded women as capable of academic work and 39 per cent unreservedly denied their capacity for mature scholarship. She is also candid about how difficult it was for her as the mother of a small child to put in the work (and the self-confidence) that was needed to expound an argument whose relevance was by no means apparent even to the organiser of the conference at which it was first presented. In the second

part of the chapter she surveys the reception of “*der Aufsatz*”, and engages in a vigorous response to two generations of critics. She observes correctly that it did not take long for her piece – the most ambitious contribution by a German *historian* to a discussion on gender, modernity and middle-class values which was already underway among literary scholars and historians of Britain, America and France – to become canonised to the extent that it was no longer read for the provocative road-map that it was. Many a critical response misrepresented her hypothesis as a simplistic narrative of causation, and she reserves her particular scorn for two kinds of critic: scholars who resist the proposition that something changed significantly in the *Sattelzeit* because there is evidence of discourses on gender difference before that (1980s early modernists), and those who deploy her hypotheses as a foil for the evidence that ‘feminine’ values of domesticity and affection persisted among men of the German middle classes. Hausen explicitly, and justifiably, targets critiques of the late 1990s that adduce historical anthropology as a superior method and overlook the care that she herself has always taken to acknowledge the ambivalences and particularities in the lives of individuals while insisting on the importance of historical process.

Like Hausen’s reflections on the career of her thesis, the volume’s title, “*Geschlechtergeschichte als Gesellschaftsgeschichte*”, has both a retrospective and a future-oriented valence. The introduction makes the point that in view of the range of perspectives on ‘history from below’ that were tolerated and fostered among academic historians from the late 1960s onwards (especially in West Germany), the resistance that gender history faced in establishing itself as an analytical tool *within social history* was not self-evident and calls for explanation in terms of a gendered politics of knowledge and academic institutions (this reviewer can remember the doyen of West German social history dismissing the call to historicise gender roles with the phrase “*der Mann zeugt, die Frau gebärt*”, and a well-known intellectual historian citing Hausen’s study of the sewing machine as the epitome of trivialisation in social history – at meetings of British and West German scholars around 1980). Looking forward, then, the volume in some respects marks the progress that has been made – a present in which women’s and gender history have become well established. Hausen’s work was read and acknowledged internationally as soon as it was available in English and has continued to influence British and American scholars in the field (particularly though not exclusively historians of Germany). In view of this, an Anglo-American reader looking through these essays may be surprised by the paucity of references to English-language literature (a notable exception being “*Wirtschaften mit der Geschlechterordnung*”, which focuses on women in the labour market). Equally striking, though, is the abundance of ambitious and original research in German that she does cite, much of it by her own students now in academic positions *and* with families of their own. The traces of her insistence that gender history is about women *and* men *and* the what-and-how of relations between them can be seen in the flowering of historical masculinity studies – again, particularly in German studies but not only there. In this context, “*Geschlechter-*

geschichte als Gesellschaftsgeschichte” stands as a provocation and a challenge. It calls us to resist the complacency that can come with incorporation (or ‘mainstreaming’) and to continue to push our historical imaginations and narrative powers to the limits in a quest for forms of praxis that have the capacity to transform both the real world and our picture of it.

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Angela Groppi, **Il welfare prima del welfare. Assistenza alla vecchiaia e solidarietà tra generazioni a Roma in età moderna** (= Studi di Storia 3), Roma: Viella 2010, 286 S., EUR 28,-, ISBN 978-88-8334-427-5.

Die Studie von Angela Groppi setzt sich mit der institutionellen Betreuung armer und verarmter, hauptsächlich alter Menschen in Rom vom späten 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert auseinander. Im Mittelpunkt stehen zwei Einrichtungen, die beide ursprünglich zur zwangsweisen Unterbringung von Bettlern und Bettlerinnen sowie vagabundierenden Frauen und Männern gedacht waren, nach wenigen Jahren ihren Charakter aber jeweils fundamental veränderten: das Ospedale dei Poveri Mendicanti di San Sisto, gegründet 1587, und das Ospizio Apostolico de’ Poveri Invalidi, gegründet 1692. Mit der Adressierung von armen Alten, von Gebrechlichen und Kranken, die sich durch eigene Arbeit oder Ersparnisse nicht mehr selbst erhalten und/oder versorgen konnten und auch keine Angehörigen hatten, die sie unterstützten, basierten diese Betreuungsformen auf Freiwilligkeit. Aufgrund der die Ressourcen bei Weitem übersteigenden Nachfrage gab es regelrechte Antragsverfahren, und zahlreiche Personen schafften eine Aufnahme in eines der beiden Häuser nur aufgrund von Empfehlung einflussreicher Dritter. Die in diesem Zusammenhang produzierten Dokumente stellen einen wesentlichen Teil der Quellengrundlage der Untersuchung dar, aber auch gerichtliche Klagen auf Unterhalt gegenüber Angehörigen werden analysiert.

Den Rahmen der Untersuchung bilden das Spannungsverhältnis zwischen familialer und gesellschaftlicher Solidarität sowie die Rolle, die Institutionen wie die oben genannten in der Neuzeit dabei spielten. Dieses Verhältnis konzipiert die Autorin als ein vernetztes, als eines geteilter Verantwortung und geteilter Lasten. Denn man könne weder von einer quasi ‚natürlichen‘ Solidarität zwischen den Generationen ausgehen noch von einer linearen Geschichte, die von immer weniger ‚privat‘ zu immer mehr ‚Staat‘ führe. Vielmehr gelte es, die Verbindungslinien zwischen familialer und öffentlicher Fürsorge sichtbar zu machen – wobei diese gegeneinander laufen oder aber komplementär sein konnten. Die Versorgung durch Angehörige sei zudem nicht als ein rein karitativer Akt zu sehen, da es einen gesetzlichen Anspruch auf Unterhalt gegenüber nächsten Verwandten gab.