



Gender – Nation – Emancipation. Women and Families in the ‘long’ Nineteenth Century in Italy and Germany. Ruth Nattermann, Europäische Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 17.04.2015—18.04.2015.

Reviewed by Mirjam Höfner

Published on H-Soz-u-Kult (June, 2015)

Gender – Nation – Emancipation. Women and Families in the ‘long’ Nineteenth Century in Italy and Germany

The history of the long European Nineteenth Century is widely characterized as a period of rising or rather increasing national consciousness, nation building, and growing nationalism. While looking at the contemporary processes of constructing national identities, historians need to deal with questions of social affiliation as well as the experience of exclusion. Situated in this wide-ranging topic, the workshop *Gender – Nation – Emancipation. Women and Families in the long Nineteenth Century in Italy and Germany* focused on the expansion of women’s participation in national politics in Germany and Italy, with particular attention to the relationship between female and Jewish emancipation, as well as the hypothesized twofold marginalization of Jewish women in 19th-century civil society. The two-day seminar on 17 and 18 April 2015 was organised by RUTH NATTERMANN (Munich) at the Historicum of the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, as part of an international and interdisciplinary network of scholars, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, in collaboration with the Wissenschaftliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft des Leo Baeck Instituts.

In their opening remarks, RUTH NATTERMANN (Munich) and ANNE-LAURE BRIATTE-PETERS (Paris) outlined the specific objectives and general background of the German-Italian comparative approach. After addressing recent historiographical development, Nattermann stressed the continuing lack of comparative studies of women’s and gender history regarding these two

so-called late nations. Hence, the network of scholars deliberately focused on research into gender and nation, including the particular interdependence between female and Jewish emancipation, based on four analytical issues: The relationship between women, families and national discourse; female identities; women’s emancipation movements, as well as the involvement of women and families in the development of nationalism and war. In order to answer the question how women contributed to the aggressive, imperialistically-orientated nationalism at the beginning of the 20th-century, Briatte-Peters referred to the importance of the contemporary international dimensions of women’s organizations in order to reveal mutual influences and transfers of ideas across national borders.

The first of five panels included three talks on the topic of *Constructing the Nation* and was presented by Michael Brenner (Munich). Focussing on the paradigmatic moment in the national struggle of the 19th-century by acknowledging the crucial role of families in processes of national renewal, STEFANIA BERNINI (Sydney) opened the panel by presenting the central ideas of her transnational analysis of family narratives and their engagement with the national cause. Combining a biographical perspective with the study of family-based memorialisation, Bernini explained the close connection between nation and historiography on family culture with regard to the case of the Italian *Risorgimento*, emphasizing the importance of the generational concept in

national discourse.

The contribution by PHILIPP LENHARD (Munich) addressed "Gender Aspects" in traditional Jewishness on the basis of the Frankfurt Circumcision Debate of 1844, which was triggered by the members of the "Jewish reform association" who did not want their sons to be circumcised any more. Lenhard's insightful discourse analysis revealed vivid conflicts regarding the question "Who is a Jew and why?": Not only was contemporary Jewish Androcentrism seriously contested by the rejection of this central *rite de passage* of belonging to the Jewish people, but the general relationship between individual concerns and common rules of the "Jewish family" were also scrutinized, as Lenhard demonstrated in detail.

SILVIA GUETTA (Florence) completed the first panel with her talk on the transformation of Jewish education models during the Emancipation Period in Italy, focusing in particular on the situation of women. In connection with the challenges faced during the process of integration of the Jewish minority into the young Italian nation state, Guetta outlined the difficult task for Jewish women regarding the creation of an Italian Culture: The Jewish-Italian concept urged them to be teachers of the young generation, inventing a new model of education, which was both Jewish and civil.

GIULIA FRONTONI (Göttingen) opened the second panel on "Conceptions of Womanhood", chaired by Xosha M. Nãez Seixas (Munich). In her research paper, Frontoni drew comparisons between the contemporary discourses among writing intellectuals and noble women on the social functions of women within German and Italian Nationalism around 1848, outlining two models of political femininity: The "Political Woman" and the "Mother of the Nation", both closely linked to the specific features demanded for the creation of national consciousness.

The feminist perspective was also emphasized in the speech by ANNE-LAURE BRIATTE-PETERS (Paris). Analysing the various family settings of leaders in the radical feminist movement during the German Wilhelminian Empire (1890-1918), Briatte-Peters argued against the contemporary representations of these radicals as individualists rejecting the institution of family. On the contrary, such radicals proposed a higher conception of family, as Briatte-Peters showed in her clear and detailed description of the radicals' lifestyles.

The first day of the workshop concluded with a sophisticated keynote panel, which offered specific insight

into the interdependence of "Gender, Nation and Emancipation in Germany", as well as "Feminism, Emancipationism and Women's Associationism" in the Italian context. Introduced by Sylvia Schraut (Munich), who chaired this keynote panel, ANGELIKA SCHASER (Hamburg) outlined gender as the key category for understanding nations from a historical perspective. Featuring a broad analytical overview of respective German historiographical developments, Schaser pleaded for more biographical, local, and regional research as a basis for understanding this entangled history, both on a national and international level. Furthermore, she underlined the essential consideration of religious aspects in historical research for a deeper knowledge of contemporary women's movements.

PERRY WILSON (Dundee) delivered the second keynote, indicating the huge gaps in current historiography on the early Italian women's movement in general, as well as early fascism in its first wave in particular. Her contribution included fascinating reflections on the use of the problematic term of "feminism", especially in transnational research, highlighting the need for discussion when labelling forms of feminism in order to understand the various motivations of the women's movement.

The first panel of the workshop's second day, chaired by Margit Szilasi-Janze (Munich), presented current research projects on "Women's Emancipation Movements" in Germany and Italy. The contribution by SYLVIA SCHRAUT (Munich) questioned the creation of the German feminist tradition by scrutinizing the supra-denominational self-description of moderate middle-class feminists. In order to understand the relationship between contemporary women's movements and the nation state, Schraut emphasized the importance of clarifying the protestant affiliation of the moderate feminist representatives, instead of taking their claim of being supra-denominational for granted.

Moving back to the beginnings of a transnational cooperation between German and US-American middle-class women's movements in the second half of the 19th century, MAGDALENA GEHRING (Dresden) focused on the close relationship between international feminist networking, and national hopes of female emancipation. In her PhD project, Gehring analyzes "inter alia" the periodical *Neue Bahnen* of the German *Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein (ADF)*, identifying the critical and ambivalent reception of American feminist activities as the crucial motivating impact on middle-class German femi-

nists.

The contribution by RUTH NATTERMANN (Munich) scrutinized the process of Jewish integration into the young Italian nation state, with a special focus on the ambivalent situation of Jewish feminist activists in the Italian women's movement in the period between 1861 and 1922. Challenging the traditional narrative of an almost linear inclusion of the Jewish minority into Italian society, Nattermann's analysis, based on personal as well as organizational archives, identified the widening gap between Jewish and non-Jewish feminists in the course of the investigation period as a result of the long-lasting influence of family identities in the Italian-Jewish context, on the one hand, and the close link between anti-laicistic and anti-Judaic tendencies of Catholic activists, on the other hand.

The second panel on Saturday, chaired by Paula-Irene Villa (Munich), addressed female and religious identities in conflict. ANNA SEITZER (Regensburg) started the discussion with her presentation on Helene StÄ¼cker (1869-1943), one of the most popular feminists during the German Empire. Introducing StÄ¼cker's radical demands for a reform of sexual ethics, Seitzer drew a vivid picture of an emancipated woman who tried to implement her innovative concept of the "New Woman" and human beings in general, which found one of its most important expressions in her foundation of the "Bund f¼r Mutterschutz und Sexualreform" in 1905.

LIVIANA GAZZETTA (Venice) explored the close link between anti-Judaic and anti-feminist positions in Italy, where the process of Jewish emancipation and the claim for women's emancipation frequently overlapped. Concentrating on the early Italian Catholic women's movement at the turn of the 20th century, Gazzetta emphasized her thesis according to which the accusations of separatism, raised against these socially marginalized groups, were based on the idea that religious – that is Catholic – unity ensured national identity, and that traditional middle-class femininity was the strongest guarantee of this kind of unity.

The last panel of the two-day seminar consisted of three contributions on "Women and Families at War", presented by Stefanie SchÄ¼ler-Springorum (Berlin). The section started with a speech on Jewish women's wartime experience by ANDREA SINN (Berkeley), in which she presented her analysis of Jewish male and female narrations about the circumstances of the lives they were facing at the beginning of the 20th century. Sinn's contribution offered new insight into the ambivalent im-

pact of the First World War on contemporary German anti-Semitism, as well as into the complex interplay of gender, social class, and religious-ethnic culture, both with regard to the social history of the "Great War" in particular, as well as to German history in general.

The presentation by MARIE-CHRISTIN LUX (Berlin), based on her PhD project, widened the Italian-German perspective by an analysis of the complex dialogues in the sophisticated correspondences of four Jewish as well as non-Jewish middle-class couples in French. Lux drew a vivid picture of a previously unknown intimate sphere of war, by presenting the letters not only as examples of conversations between spouses but as intellectual discussions about the war, thus revealing new voices and perspectives on the conflict, especially with regard to female and Jewish war engagement, as well as their respective roles in society.

In his visual history contribution, PHILIPP NIELSEN (Berlin) presented an innovative perspective on First World War "Home-Front-Stories". By analyzing the self-presentation as well as self-perception of Jewish families in war photographs, he focused on albums as a narrative device. As Nielsen pointed out, the reconstruction of the production, distribution and organization of these portraits facilitates an innovative approach towards the wartime experience of German-Jewish men and women, such as the unexpectedly open and visible presence of Jews in the German military, as well as new perspectives on gender images and relations.

This first international workshop on "Gender-Nation-Emancipation" proved to be fruitful for various reasons: The papers presented were of a high quality, discussions were lively – not least because of the language diversity – and the combination of different perspectives on the broad topic concerning "Women and Families in the "long" Nineteenth Century in Italy and Germany" offered exciting insight into both past and present. The next meeting of the DFG-Network, whose cooperation under the direction of Ruth Nattermann has just started, will take place in 2016 in Rome.

Conference Overview:

Opening

Ruth Nattermann (Munich) / Anne-Laure Briatte Peters (Paris)

Panel 1: Constructing the Nation. Discourses on Family, Emancipation, and Education

Chair: Michael Brenner (Munich)

Stefania Bernini (Sydney), *Layers of Devotion: Creating family and nation in the long Nineteenth Century in Italy and Germany*

Philipp Lenhard (Munich), *Contesting Jewish Androcentrism: Gender Aspects in the Frankfurt Circumcision Debate of 1844*

Silvia Guetta (Florence), *Fare gli ebrei italiani. The transformation of Jewish education models during the Emancipation Period in Italy*

Panel 2: Images and conceptions of Womanhood

Chair: Xosá M. Nãez Seixas (Munich)

Giulia Frontoni (Gãttingen), *Political Woman or Mother of the Nation? Ideals of Womanhood in the German and Italian Nationalism around 1848*

Anne-Laure Briatte-Peters (Paris), *Endangering the institution of family? Emancipation and family in the radical women's movement in Wilhelminian Germany (1890-1918)*

Keynote Lecture

Chair: Sylvia Schraut (Munich)

Angelika Schaser (Hamburg), *Gender, Nation, and Emancipation in a German Perspective*

Perry Willson (Dundee), *Feminism, Emancipationism, and Women's Associationism. Historians and the Italian Women's Movement 1880-1918*

Panel 1: Women's Emancipation Movements

Chair: Margit Szãllãsi-Janze (Munich)

Sylvia Schraut (Munich), *The creation of tradition and religious denomination à the German women's movement (1900-1933)*

Magdalena Gehring (Dresden), *The reception of the American women's movement in Germany. Early contacts between the German and American movements in the 19th Century*

Ruth Nattermann (Munich), *Le emancipate? Jewish women in the Italian women's movement*

Panel 2: Female and religious identities in conflict

Chair: Paula-Irene Villa (Munich)

Anna Seitzer (Regensburg), *Women's movement and sexual reform. Helene Stãcker and the Bund fãr Mutterschutz und Sexualreform*

Liviana Gazzetta (Venice), *Anti-Jewish and anti-feminist positions in the Italian Catholic women's movement*

Panel 3: Women and Families at War

Chair: Stefanie Schãler-Springorum (Berlin)

Andrea Sinn (Berkeley), *Joining the German Home Front. Jewish Women and the First World War*

Marie-Christin Lux (Berlin), *Gender and the experience of war in the correspondences of French couples*

Philipp Nielsen (Berlin), *Home-Front Stories: Jewish (Self-)Representation in German War Time Photography*

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

Citation: Mirjam Hãfner. Review of , *Gender – Nation – Emancipation. Women and Families in the 'long' Nineteenth Century in Italy and Germany*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. June, 2015.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=44589>

Copyright © 2015 by H-Net, Clio-online, and the author, all rights reserved. This work may be copied and redistributed for non-commercial, educational purposes, if permission is granted by the author and usage right holders. For permission please contact H-SOZ-U-KULT@H-NET.MSU.EDU.