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**Elisabeth D. Heineman.** *What Difference Does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Post-War Germany.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. 374 pp. \$21.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-520-23907-4.

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Elizabeth Heineman's study of women's marital status in Nazi and post-war Germany is not only a brilliant contribution to our understanding of how gender works, but also an important analysis of German history. Heineman's purpose is two-fold. One is of empirical character, filling the historiographical hole of a marginalized group, single women, by crossing the German borders of 1945. The second one implies a development of theory: exploring marital status as a category of difference between women.

In 1946, Germany had seven million more women than men. Never has the surplus of women been larger in Germany than after the Second World War. Heineman gives a broad sweep over the conditions of women in different marital status, single, married, divorced, widowed and never married women from the early Nazi period, through the war and years of occupation until the consolidation of liberal democracy in West Germany and communism in East Germany. Women were living without men: husbands were at the front or dead, and some women naturally never got the chance to marry. Under what conditions does marital status come to figure as a central determinant of women's position? How do ideology and public policy shape the significance of marital status for women? What role do demographic, economic and cultural factors play? These are the main questions Heineman investigates chronologically for all three German states between 1933 and 1950.

The Nazis made fundamental changes in conditions for marriage during the interwar period. The central theme for this fundamental change was population politics. Population politics and its impacts on married women have been investigated earlier, but Heineman's

theoretical purpose makes it a necessary part of her comparative approach. These politics were mirrored both in the conditions for marriage and the situation for unwed mothers. Even though unwed mothers had a difficult situation under Nazism, suspected as they were of being asocial or not being able to control their sexuality, some of them had better chances than others. Unwed mothers who had good prospects of getting married later had the same status as divorced or widowed women. But expectations that women marry also created a new type of single women, women who were not accepted, racially, eugenically or socially. The Nazis also made use of single women as cheap labor. On the other hand, single women maintained Nazi mass organizations. Being single and of a certain age was considered only a temporary stage; these young women were expected to marry soon.

Economic change and war altered attitudes towards married women. The war narrowed the distance between the everyday life of married women and single women. Numerous women got married but continued to stay with their parents, while some married fiances post mortem—a special Nazi invention. Many women never experienced everyday marital life. War facilitated marriage under the new conditions as administrative paperwork was minimized. Quick marriages often ended with divorce. About one million women were widowed during the war. Older widows mourned their sons, while younger widows were expected to overcome the death of their husbands. But it also became more difficult for them to meet men. About ten thousand women ended up in concentration camps after relationships with forced laborers. Heineman notes the more than 600,000 single women working for the armed forces, who experienced a complete change in their everyday lives: not merely

work at the front, but life apart from parents and participation in mass youth activities.

In consequence, marital status lost importance during the war, at least in practice, and continued to do so during occupation, with the difficult living circumstances and continued absence of husbands. Even though Heineman finds it difficult to say what marital status meant during this period, it is obvious that later differences between single women and married women were formed by contact with the Allied Forces in both East and West Germany. In the Western zones, friendly treatment was expected, but at times disappointing; association with western occupiers brought luxury in the form of chocolate, cigarettes and nylon stockings, but women who fraternized with troops were often regarded as prostitutes. In the Eastern zone, rape and poor treatment were expected and became a reality. Moreover, women's role in the labor market changed. Western women worked to "fill holes," while eastern women were integrated into the market to address a lasting problem. But men's positions could not be filled with uneducated female labor. The return of prisoners of war was assumed to change the situation only slightly, but not provide a solution. The problem of interned husbands led to new ideals of women standing alone in both east and west.

The situation on the labor market reflected discussions in western women's journals. At the same time that feminists questioned marital laws that predated the Nazi period, family reunification failed to live up to expectations. The return of broken men frequently increased wives' burdens rather than lifting them; at the same time, women had learned to manage on their own. Still, after occupation, marriage rates rose, the age of first marriage fell, the number of illegitimate children also declined and paid work by married women decreased. The male breadwinner ideal was re-established. After 1949, single women and mothers disappeared from public discussion. In the GDR, labor and political issues dominated public debate. In the FRG, equality of the sexes was incorporated into the constitution, but marriage law restored differences between men and women as well as between married and single women, and mothers and non-mothers. FRG marriage law ignored women's possibilities for education and different opportunities for employment as well as differences in income between the sexes, economic consequences of divorce, and the legal situation of illegitimate children. Hence, the new marriage law was discriminatory. In practice, segregation of jobs gave women lower salaries and many aspects of treatment of women were turned back to their status in

the 1920s. Marital relations in the FRG were also complicated as a result of the pension situation, and single women were seen as a problem. Heineman has interpreted the hatred against single women, especially the so-called bachelorettes, as a threat to conservatism because of their sexual and material consumerism.

In contrast, the GDR attempted to narrow gaps between the sexes and between married and unmarried women. In mass organizations, married women were regarded as a problem. Equal pay for equal work was one of the programmatic changes conducted by the regime, differing from the western solution. Despite the official state culture of the GDR, however, women stayed home with their children as soon as they could afford to do so. The new family ideal consisted of a couple working at the same workplace, where both continued to work even when they were having children. Women's participation in the labor market was regarded as much more important on an ideological level than marriage. The fact that the two-year plan for 1949-50 demanded 250,000 new workers made the participation of women necessary, independently of their marital status. Access to the labor force in the GDR was also steered by elimination subsidies for single women and mothers. The matter of illegitimate children was seldom discussed, and the number of illegitimate children rose in the GDR (in contrast to the FRG).

One of Heineman's most important results, then, is that marital status still created a larger difference between women than did the separation of East and West Germany. Single women were regarded as a temporary phenomenon and problem, and the housewife was the mother ideal in both East and West Germany. For different reasons, two incomes were necessary in both states. Differences in involvement in the labor market can be related to the lack of men in the east. Thus, the difference between women of the same marital status was only a small one during this early period, although they were living in different states with different ideologies. In short: a husband still made a significant difference.

Heineman's work shows impressively how well marital status works as a marker of difference between women during different times and ideologies. It also shows how crucial conservative marriage laws and the male breadwinner ideal have been for creating a difference between married and unmarried women both in private life and on the labor market. Despite challenges from feminists during the interwar period, these laws remained unchanged for a long time. Widening the per-

spective to include mothers, wed and unwed, not only challenges the male breadwinner ideal but Heineman's analysis is an important contribution to the discussion on differences and competition between different groups of women.

The comparison between the two German states, but also different economic situations shows how the impact of marital status can change over time and how this is constructed, both by economic and demographic challenges, but also by state culture to some extent. A comparison of Nazi Germany with other states or periods in German history is not only methodologically challenging, but also politically. Although Heineman's chronological and synchronous comparisons are difficult in many ways, at the same time they constitute the strength of her work. The comparison is not systematic. Not all periods and states are compared with each other, which partly affects the theoretical purpose of her work. While the Nazi period is used as a background shaping the historical problem, with the Second World War creating single women's status and conditions in harsh contrast to Nazi family ideology, the period of occupation is partly used to show historical roots for the further development of marital status in the two German states. Examples of this development are the participation of women on the labor market as outlined by the Allies, and the decision against equal pay in the West and for it in the East. In this case the chronological comparison asks for explanations relying on historical development.

The comparison between the two different German states is partly interpreted as two different ideological attempts to form marital status. However a discussion on the Nazi attempts here would have contributed to a follow up of the theoretical purpose. Heineman's conclusions show something else, namely the fact that the lack of men was much larger in the East than in the West, which makes the reasons for difference more demographic than ideological, and the difference in demography was already used earlier as an explanation for the incomparability of Nazi Germany with the two post-war Germanys.

The need for female labor seems to have had a greater impact on the different consequences of marital status than public culture and state ideology. This is mostly obvious in the case of the Nazi period, when marriage loans were first used as a measure to rid the labor market of women. Later, when there was a stronger demand for labor, this allowance turned into the opposite, forcing

women to work at least for some time in order to qualify for the loans. While Heineman goes into more details of social and eugenic criteria as conditions for marriage under the Nazis, she does not discuss the impact of race for everyday life to any extent. What happened to married and single women in concentration camps? What happened to married mothers and unmarried mothers there? Did a husband make a difference?

The results show how intimately the labor market and marital status were intertwined. According to the official state attitude in the East, marital status did not matter on the labor market but the culture of a male breadwinner, tied to a question of private and public economy, was decisive for how individuals managed to combine employment and marital status. The choice was of course not between employment or housework alone, it was between employment and housework or housework—as research on welfare states has shown. In both parts of Germany, and even during different periods, the male breadwinner ideal was stronger state interventions around it. And even though the experience of war did lead to a questioning of traditional differences between marital status and the male breadwinner family ideal, it always ended with a longing for and thereby a strengthening of the male breadwinner ideal, after both World Wars. Perhaps this is why an analysis of the situation of returning husbands is at stake again.

Heineman's work is inspiring and recommendable for everybody interested in German women's history and discussions on gender. While the part on Nazi Germany offers little new material for specialist readers, the subsequent sections on Germany under the occupation of the Allied Forces and the comparison between East and West Germany are not only of theoretical but also of empirical interest. Heineman has uncovered the single women in the East, created by the war, who were not visible for contemporaries, because they were not a problem like their sisters in the West were. Heineman has conducted both a thorough and a thoughtful analysis of differences between marital status, which sheds new light on theoretical approaches only contrasting men and women, which makes differences between women invisible. The result shows the differences between women of different marital status independently of time and state culture. Heineman pointed out that she did not want to write the last word on this subject. Her study provides an invitation and inspiration for further investigation of theoretical implications on marital status for gender relations.

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