



PROJECT MUSE®

Hexen—Huren—Heldenweiber. Bilder des Weiblichen in
Erzähltexten über den Dreißigjährigen Krieg (review)

Gerhild Scholz Williams

Monatshefte, Volume 99, Number 1, Spring 2007, pp. 102-103 (Review)

Published by University of Wisconsin Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mon.2007.0019>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/212817>

Book Reviews

Hexen—Huren—Heldenweiber. Bilder des Weiblichen in Erzähltexten über den Dreißigjährigen Krieg.

Von Waltraud Maierhofer. Köln: Böhlau, 2005. xi + 451 Seiten + 33 s/w Abbildungen. €39,90.

The reason why the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) continues to occupy an important place in the collective memory of Germans even today is less owing to the ongoing vigorous historical research; rather, this must, in large part, be ascribed to the frequency with which the War still appears as a theme in literature. From Grimmelshausen through Schiller, Hölderlin, Stifter, Raabe, Meyer, Freytag, Brecht, to Grass, the Great or German War—as the event was already known to contemporaries—continues to occupy the imagination of writers and readers. While a comprehensive study of the whole of its literary reception remains a *desideratum* (Hans Medick, 1999), the book under review goes a long way toward reaching this goal. In her study, Maierhofer investigates important aspects of the interaction of literature and the Thirty Years War focusing specifically on the construction of women characters in the context of this historical event.

The study turns out to be less “racy” than the title suggests. It is a straightforward review of the role of women and images of *Weiblichkeit* in texts which deal, directly or indirectly, with the Thirty Years War. Moreover, Maierhofer also explores how historicist assumptions and attitudes toward this War have changed over the centuries. As she reviews the variations on the theme of *Weiblichkeit* in the texts she has selected for her study, Maierhofer specifically looks at three themes: literature and history, women in war, and feminist literary history. On the basis of these themes, reaching from the mid-seventeenth all the way into the twentieth century, Maierhofer reviews a great many texts—some by known, many by lesser-known writers of both genders. Narratives dealing with women and the War are legion, and one of the challenges confronting the author was clearly the selection of a representative sample that would serve her topic without getting lost in too much repetition. She acquitted herself well of this daunting task. We are introduced to many texts among which even the more obscure exemplars would be fun to read or review in a seminar on this topic. Maierhofer assesses how much of the War (and its historical protagonists) is present in each of the texts, what kind of women emerge from the various narratives, and, finally, how the construction of women characters is affected by the changing views of a war so long ago. This leads her to devote considerable attention to the male characters as well. Because of this broader perspective, the book has almost as much to say about the construction of the men in war narratives as of the women. In the end, it turns out that the *Landstörzerin* Courage is the first and still most memorable among the Thirty-

Years-War-women. The protagonists presented in subsequent narratives about women in war tend to conform significantly more to female stereotyping than Courage.

Along with coherent reviews of historical and feminist methodologies employed in this study of war and women, the book offers useful plot summaries of the many unfamiliar works. Finally, the book concludes with a useful index of the texts presented and a chronology of the Thirty Years War which includes some of the War's major actors.

The book might have benefited from a careful editorial review. The writing style is frequently imprecise and casual; sentences are often loosely constructed making them unnecessarily ambiguous. Repeated use of conjectures and qualifiers (*ziemlich, allerdings, ausgerechnet, vielleicht, vermutlich*, as in "es war vermutlich niemand geringer als Lessing," "Die Idee zur Friedensallegorie stammt wohl von Schiller," etc. etc.) lead to a conversational tone that sometimes detracts from the study's substance. Occasionally, the proofreaders missed a peculiar square behind a number of words, which I assume is part of a programming glitch (92, 247, etc.).

Washington University in St. Louis

—Gerhild Scholz Williams

Zwischen Empirisierung und Konstruktionsleistung. Anthropologie im 18. Jahrhundert.

Herausgegeben von Jörn Garber und Heinz Thoma. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2004. x + 366 Seiten. €98,00.

In his contribution to this volume, Jörn Garber, one of its editors, points to the importance of natural history and its interest in the history of mankind for understanding late-eighteenth-century anthropology and related disciplines (260). Indeed, the 'anthropological turn' around 1770 with its emphasis on developmental patterns, the body rather than the mind, and empirical knowledge in general is certainly affiliated with developments in philosophy and medicine, but it has its main roots in the empirical science called 'natural history.' What emerged as 'anthropology' in the late eighteenth century was a new and independent field of thinking, and not just another subdiscipline of philosophy; philosophy in fact started to lose its dominant epistemological position among the arts and sciences around that time, as Garber notes (260). Keeping such considerations in mind, it should be no surprise that most contributions to this volume steer away from philosophy (with the exception of a nevertheless quite informative essay on the Scottish Enlightenment) and focus instead on scientific, historiographic, and literary texts. And yet, the figures representing the 'canon' of eighteenth-century natural historical and anthropological thinking—Buffon, Bonnet, Camper, Blumenbach, and especially Herder, to name a few—are mentioned, but not really present as a self-evident frame of reference in this volume. The near absence of Blumenbach in many overviews of eighteenth-century anthropology like this one is particularly regrettable. Herder's role as a major player in German cultural history, not just of the eighteenth century, is increasingly recognized. To understand, however, the complex, contradictory, and sometimes also controversial nature of Herder's works, it is important to look at its roots in texts by men like Blumenbach.

That said, this is a very interesting and in many respects also innovative collection on the emergence of the discipline of anthropology in the late eighteenth