Abstracts

Carola Sachse

The Vivisection Debate — On the relation of science, society and state in late 19th century Germany

In Germany the Vivisection Debate was one of the first public arguments between the so-called lay-public and specialised scientists about ethical boundaries to biosciences. The article presents the vivisectors, their opponents and their campaign, within which gendered positions of men and women as well as gender metaphors played a highly ambivalent, but crucial role. The debate focussed on the most spectacular of the new laboratory techniques: the physiological, pharmacological and surgical experiment on the living animal. In the background, however, rivalling medical worldviews, moral values and concepts over the relations between humans and animals were negotiated. The outcome of this debate marks a successful power play of science and state. This alliance succeeded in defending its science-ethical defining power and marginalizing the science-critical public.

Keywords: Vivisection, German Empire, ethics of science, lay public, science and state

Astrid Schürmann

Marie Curie and her Laboratory: Promoting women's right to science?

During the last twenty years gender studies of science have shown that science in its social aspects is marked by gender-based exclusions. Regarding the laboratory built up and directed by Marie Curie between 1906 and 1934, it is astonishing to find a remarkable number of mainly foreign female scientists. The author outlines how Curie used the university system to expand her staff and discusses her possibilities to promote women against the background of the educational system in France. Curie’s staffing policy is related to her experiences during her scientific education, her teaching at the Ecole normale de jeunes filles in Sèvres, her marriage to Pierre Curie and her relation to her daughter Irène Curie.

Keywords: Women in science, radioactivity, educational system in early 20th century France, promoting women

Hélène Rouch

The Difference of the Sexes in Adrienne Sahuqué and Simone de Beauvoir: Their Reading of biological and medical work

The beginning of the 20th century saw the emergence of new disciplines such as endocrinology, genetics and biochemistry, whose contribution along with those of zoology, anatomy and embryology created the conditions for the development of a science of reproduction. We can follow this evolution, in France, in its relationship to the socio-historical context, by the readings of scientific works by two feminist authors Adrienne Sahuqué (Les Dogmes sexuels, 1932) and Simone de Beauvoir (Le Deuxième sexe, 1949). Although they do not use the same sources and their study of scientific literature on sexual difference not always lead to the same analysis, they agree on the necessary distinction between sex and gender. Comparing their positions shows that
they were precursors to the current debates on the content and relationships of these two notions.

Keywords: Adrienne Sahuqué, Simone de Beauvoir, french feminism, sex and gender, history of life sciences in France

Helga Satzinger

A Weimar mongrel. – Hannah Höch and the debates in biology on gender, races, and genes.

Genetic experiments fueled a political conflict in Weimar Germany on the proper place of women in society. The geneticist Richard Goldschmidt cross-breeded certain insects from different geographical populations and produced animals no longer belonging into the category of female or male organisms but to so called intersexes. He used these experiments for the development of his theory of the gene and the understanding of sex determination. His younger colleague and racial hygienist Fritz Lenz however used it for his argument that miscegenation, the crossbreeding between members of different races, inevitably leads to the degeneration of that group of people he saw as the most developed: »the Nordic race«. At the level of genetics it can be shown, that two different gene theories were used in two different scientific and political concepts. One concept used a strict binary gender order, the utopia of a pure superior race, and the gene theory of Thomas H. Morgan. The other concept saw female and male aspects present in one organism, thus allowing »intersexes« to occur, miscegenation was not a threat to the nation and the genes did not have to be stable all the time and in any context. Against the background of this biomedical debate three photomontages of Hannah Höch from the 1920s and early 30s can be seen as a radical comment and utopian integration of gender and racial differences towards a new synthesis to overcome hierarchy-creating dichotomies.

Keywords: Richard Goldschmidt, Fritz Lenz, Hannah Höch, genetics, intersexuality, race concepts, miscegenation, Dadaism, National Socialism, history of art, history of science

Susanne zur Nieden

Theo Langs research on homosexuality in the »Third Reich«

The physician Theo Lang carried out research on the genetic conditionality of homosexuality at the Deutsche Forschungsanstalt für Psychiatrie in Munich. The story of this research project and the final failure of Lang's professional career represent a rather paradox scientific political movement: on one hand, the government persecution of homosexual males was the prerequisite facilitating the venture of this ambitious scientist; on the other hand, the result of his research collided with the very conditions, the project was based upon. The empirical evidence for the heredity of homosexuality Theo Lang strived to attain was in fact suited to question police persecution and criminal prosecution of homosexuals misconduct. True, heredity psychiatric was buoyed with the Nazi seizure of power and biological heredity concepts were translated into National Socialist »racial policy«. Within an extremely politicised context featuring the delinquent homosexual as the bogeyman, the definition pattern of homosexuality as illness, however, loses its significance in science during National Socialism, of all things.

Keywords: Theo Lang, heredity psychiatry, homosexuality, Deutsche Forschungs-
Heike Hartung

Jezebel's Daughters: Dangerous Women in the late Victorian Sensation Novel

Following the idea that nineteenth-century culture imagines the femme fatale as a secular version of the witch or the demonic woman, I focus my article on the iconography of the »white woman«. In Victorian England this iconography is shaped both by »deviant« and conventional female roles. It is also shaped by the intermedial connections between sensation novels and Pre-Raphaelite painting. Wilkie Collins’s novels are exemplary for the ways in which both the ambiguity of these images and the novel’s gendered narrative positions can act against the author’s progressive political convictions.

Keywords: Wilkie Collins, femme fatale, sensation novel, Pre-Raphaelite painting

Marc de Leeuw and Sonja van Wichelen

A new discourse on civilisation? The Film Submission Ayaan Hirsi Ali and the War on Terror in the Netherlands

In this article the short-film Submission, made by the politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali and the filmmaker Theo van Gogh, is taken as a starting point to analyze how the Dutch discourse on Islam and the discussion on multiculturalism relate to global liberal feminist discourses and the ideological rhetoric surrounding the »war on terror«. The authors argue that Submission not only re-frames and reduces Muslim women to a stereotypical oriental Arabic and exotic imaginary, but also produces a »clash of civilizations« where backward Islam is once again juxtaposed against the Enlightened West. The authors further analyse Hirsi Ali’s position in the media where she is represented as an authentic victim, a »liberated convert«, a whistleblower, and an »expert«. This position appears crucial for the sudden popularity of Hirsi Ali’s anti-Islamic statements. Within post 9/11 climate Submission and Hirsi Ali’s public statements, evoke not only a conflation of the »war on terror« with anti-Islamic sentiments, but also enhance hostility towards religious and ethnic minorities.

Keywords: Hirsi Ali, Islam, Multiculturalism, Liberal Feminism, »War on Terror«, Otherness, Life Narratives