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Sleeping with the Political Enemy: Woman's Place in Discourses of Race and Class Struggle in 20th Century Central Europe

*Abstract: In this paper, I shall argue that the convergence of ideologies operating through the creation of enemies like racism and Bolshevism with discourses regulating gender relations in the Central Europe of the twentieth century had the grave consequence of questioning women's position in the political community. In short, I shall argue that in the context of racist and Bolshevik discourses, the very fact of being female was in itself a political threat to women. To demonstrate my point, I shall discuss two recent publications. First, I shall analyze the context of the convergence of racist and misogynist discourses in turn-of-the-century Vienna through discussing András Gerő's book, *Neither Woman Nor Jew*. Second, I shall explore how the discourse of class struggle affected the political status of Hungarian women in the Stalinist era through discussing Eszter Zsófia Tóth's book, *Kádár's Daughters*.*

In this paper, I shall argue that the convergence of ideologies prone to create enemies like racism and Bolshevism with discourses regulating gender relations in the Central Europe of the twentieth century had the grave consequence of questioning women's position in the political community. In short, I shall argue that in the context of racist and Bolshevik discourses, the very fact of being female was in itself a political threat to women.

First, on the basis of András Gerő's book I shall demonstrate that on closer examination the convergence of racist and gender discourses meant that anti-Semites were also misogynists in turn-of-the-century Vienna. To continue, I shall take my argumentation beyond the contemporary texts Gerő cites and conclude that the logical consequence of the intertwining of anti-Semitism with misogyny was that 'woman' came to mean an enemy of the German Volk just as threatening as 'Jew'.

Neither Woman Nor Jew

It might be surprising that I look for ideologies that operate through creating enemies and gender related ideologies in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, the very place, which according to the traditional approach in historical science based primarily on the works of Carl Schorske was the experimental laboratory of modernity, a colorful, sensual and aestheticised metropolitan high-culture producing geniuses and general masterpieces (Schorske 1981). Lately, however, this approach has been subjected to criticism and refinement by historians, who have pointed out the cultural contradictions of turn-of-the-century Vienna, including for instance, the prevalent racial aggression and gender based discrimination of the period. Accordingly, the culture of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna can no longer be conceptualized unproblematically as male-culture without gender sensitive self-reflection. This world has been, instead, increasingly seen as a key site in redefining gender relations (Uhl 2000; Szívós 2001, 229). To support my claim, let me refer to Thomas Laqueur's much debated work, *Making Sex*, in which Laqueur analyses Freud's theory of psychosexual development from a gender perspective (Laqueur 1990). Laqueur takes issue with Freud's claim that the vagina is the site of a healthy adult woman's erotic sensitivity, to where gratification moves from the clitoris during puberty. Laqueur argues that with this theoretical move, Freud invented, rather than discovered vaginal orgasm, since before Freud, only clitoral orgasm existed in scientific discourses. Hence Freud adjusted the biology of female genitals to the social norms of heterosexual intercourse, making the act of transformation of the female body in accordance to the needs of male

domination a condition for sexual emancipation. That is, by moving female orgasm from its biologically-defined place to its culturally-specified place, Freud excised the clitoris from Western culture, transforming the female body in a way that it could be considered normal only in so far as it produced neurologically unjustified symptoms. For Freud, then, 'woman' has an unquestionable place in society, but only as long as she is willing to interiorize its male-centered, hierarchical logic, that is, to accept her inferior position.

Beside from a gender perspective, the cliché of 'Vienna 1900' can also be criticized from the perspective of racial discrimination, with contemporary scholars no longer considering the capital of the Monarchy to be the open and humane Vienna Schorske and his followers used to depict. Vienna was also the city of the young Adolf Hitler and his like-minded fellows, for whom the noisy metropolitan lifestyle and an experience of strangeness did not seem to be a productive space, but rather a destructive chaos (Hamann 2000; Szívós 2001, 230–33). This antagonistic, racist Vienna was also preoccupied with femininity, but from an entirely different perspective from that of Freud's. As we have seen, the conceptualization of women offered by Freud is far from being innocent, since in exchange for an unquestionable place in society, women were required to interiorize male domination, that is, participate in exercising their own oppression upon themselves. In contrast, the Vienna of Hitler's like-minded fellows was explicitly misogynist, where 'woman' was no longer only a savage to be civilized, but rather an enemy. Furthermore, I shall argue that 'woman', in fact, was seen as a deadly enemy of the political community. Let me start from the book of Gerő, professor at Eötvös Loránd University and at Central European University, *Neither Woman Nor Jew. The Confluence of Prejudices in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at the Turn of the Century*, which deals with the intertwining of racial and gender stereotypes in turn-of-the-century Vienna (Gerő 2010).

Many researchers have already pointed out the centuries-old close relations between gender and racial stereotypes, and the complex ways antifeminism and anti-Semitism have intersected both in popular culture, and in scientific discourses (Planert 1998, 12; Volkov 2006, 129–44). For example, folk discourses about anal bleedings of Jews in the Middle Ages, then the reinterpretation of these bleedings as menstruation in the sixteenth century, functioned to create and reproduce the stereotypically feminine image of Jewish men (Willis 1998; Oişteanu 2009, 60). In the meantime, anatomists were trying to understand the differences between male and female human skeletons by comparing the female body to bodies of those races they considered inferior (Schiebinger 1987). Also, to bring an example specifically from turn-of-the-century Vienna, Sander Gilman argues that Freud's psychoanalysis can be considered as a transmutation of racial categories of his age into gender categories. Gilman claims that Freud was struggling to get rid of the contemporary notion of the feminine Jewish male located in between (non-Jewish) "man" and "woman" by creating universal male and female bodies and feminine and masculine gender identities upon which to build his psychology (Gilman 1992, 168–77).

Gerő explores and analyses the same interchangeability of racial and gender categories in a Viennese intellectual context that had such a large influence on the young Hitler. Specifically, Gerő argues that the openly misogynist discourse intertwined with the abundant racist, primarily anti-Semitic, ideology in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. On the one hand, he attempts to reconstruct this particular, simultaneously misogynist and anti-Semitic, pseudoscientific political discourse, which remained outside all three of the cultural and historical scientific canon of turn-of-the-century Vienna and of Austria's national memory. On the other hand, Gerő positions the pseudoscientific texts of this discourse in the intellectual and political context in which they were produced and which was in turn affected by them.

Gerő bases his argumentation of the convergence of misogyny and anti-Semitism on the fact that at the end of the nineteenth century, the European crisis of the faith in progress and in the idea of a nation that includes all citizens were answered by three politically significant responses, all of which were based on the secularization of religious traditions of the God/Satan dichotomy. The first intellectual historical development, misogyny, was built around the concept of gender, the central notion of the second, racism, primarily anti-Semitism, was race, while the third, the Bolshevik version of Marxism, concerned itself with class, with each of them creating their own 'enemy-images', that is, the "woman", the "Jew", and the "bourgeois", respectively. In the capital of the Monarchy, two of these three structurally similar ideologies, racism and misogyny intertwined. Why in Vienna? On the one hand, Gerő links this phenomenon to the mutual hate and sense of superiority apparent between all ethnicities of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in that period. On the other hand, he finds that the specifically Austrian-German crossroad of identity politics following the founding of the German Empire was behind Vienna's striking vulnerability to those political ideologies that constantly attempted to create enemies. For Austrian Germans this crossroad of identity politics meant that their "Germanness" could logically only be defined as a racial category, in other words, Austrian Germans experienced a stifling strangeness of home, which strangeness was commonly expressed by the broad and multiple idea of "Jew".

Gerő analyzes a number of texts from such male authors as Otto Weininger, Georg von Schönerer, Guido List, Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, and Arthur Trebitsch, all of whom attempted to speak on behalf of the political community of the German *Volk*, i.e., Aryans, in spite of the fact that ironically the majority of these authors were by some definitions Jews. Through citing these texts, Gerő argues convincingly that in the minds of Viennese racists 'Jew' regularly came to be associated with 'woman' and thus misogyny and hatred of Jews became inextricably intertwined. From the texts cited in Gerő's work, for the purposes of this essay, I shall briefly outline only the main points of the most important and famous one, Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character* (1903), which is an extraordinarily misogynist and anti-Semitic work despite the fact that Weininger himself was a Jew. He left a great impression on contemporary European culture not only because his thoughts were neatly in line with the *Zeitgeist*, but also because of his peculiar life story, more specifically, his romantic suicide. In his famous work, which included his dissertation and three additional chapters of cardinal importance for his thesis, he expanded and applied anti-Semitic logic to women, and misogynist logic to Jews. Namely, Weininger created a homology between women and Jews and provided a detailed description about what are the feminine characteristics of his idea of "Jew" and what are the Jewish characteristics of his idea of "woman." In short, Weininger argued that both Jews and women have in common that they are unable to sacrifice themselves for the higher goals of the community and that their short-sighted selfishness does not go beyond the wanton pursuit of coitus. Gerő interprets the writings of the other authors mentioned above as the diffusion and vulgarization of Weininger's thesis.

In the following, I shall argue that the texts Gerő analyzes can be interpreted as not only proving the intertwining of misogyny and hatred of Jews, in short, the misogyny of anti-Semites, but they also lead to the production of the German (Aryan)/woman dichotomy defining the political community in a way that the entire female sex comes to be excluded. In 1903 Weininger also advocated that in his more feminine than ever era Aryan men should avoid intercourse with women so as to be able to destroy the idea of 'woman' and, I would add, also the community he wanted to save, not to mention the whole of humanity. By contrasting the Aryan male instead of the male with 'woman', Weininger moved beyond the parallel between the dichotomies of man/woman and German/Jew and transformed the originally gender categories into racial categories in so far as he assumed that women differ from men in their Aryanness, i.e., Germanness.

Georg von Schönerer, the leader of the All-German Union, which fought for the accession of German Austria to the German Empire, took the next intellectual step towards creating a German/woman binary. In his 1906 speech held in the House of Representatives of the Reichsrat Schönerer regarded the expansion of the civil right to vote to every adult male citizen as German self-surrender, as self-castration (*Selbstentmannung*) and degradation to the level of Germans' political enemies, i.e., Jews, calling the Jewish "scum" "international castrates and eunuchs". One could argue that in Schönerer's speech real Germans were differentiated from their Jewish enemies on the basis of their masculinity so that if Germans became feminine, they would find themselves in the ranks of their enemies. In his work Schönerer transformed the originally racial categories into gender categories, that is, he gendered the relation of the German *Volk* and its enemies in so far as he used tropes that made the supposed German/Jewish political opposition more concrete and blatant by reframing them within the logic of man/woman distinction.

The transformation of women into distinct political enemies was complete in the 1909 writing of Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, who launched the magazine *Ostara* as a medium to publish theories of male hegemony and anti-Semitism. Relying heavily on and moving beyond the work of Otto Weininger, Liebenfels talked about an actual alliance against the German Vaterland between women and all inferior races, which in his terminology included women's "Mediterranean accomplices", "friends in the stock exchange and product exchange", "yellow beasts", and "Negroes and Mongols".

It seems from works such as those of Weininger, Schönerer, and Liebenfels that the convergence of misogynist ideology with racism resulted in that on the discursive level women were considered not only politically incapable, hence "naturally" deprived of their political rights, but even acting as active agents of another hostile community.

Kádár's Daughters

While Geró's book starting point was that at the turn of the century, three ideologies with similar structures left a great impact on the intellectual map of Europe, namely the ideologies of misogyny, anti-Semitism and Marxism, he addresses only the first two of these ideologies. In order to be able to discuss the third, Marxism (Bolshevism), I will now turn to the work of an archivist at the National Archives of Hungary, Eszter Zsófia Tóth, *Kádár leányai. Nők a szocialista korszakban* [Kádár's Daughters. Women in the Socialist Era], which takes us to Hungary in the second half of the twentieth century (Tóth 2010). In the earlier stages of Marxist thought the emphasis remained on the on-going class conflicts, with gender equality being left in the background. However, as communist parties had come into power in Central and Eastern Europe at the middle of the twentieth century Marxism-Leninism could not afford to continue to be a theory of revolution-making created within sterile experimental conditions and Bolshevik ideology had to relate in some way or other to and provide an explanation of everything; hence it also had to elaborate on its position regarding women's place in society from within the perspective of communist politics. By discussing Tóth's work, I will argue that the communist attempt to fit gender categories into the political discourses of socialist systems revolving around the notion of "class" had similar consequences as the intertwining of discourses of misogyny and race at the turn of the century, namely the position of women within the political community was questioned even if communist party leaders, unlike Viennese misogynists, applied a seemingly emancipatory rhetoric.

Tóth's work provides scenes from everyday experiences of women in socialist Hungary through the analyses of contemporary texts (especially media discourse), films and interviews she conducted. Thus, in contrast to Geró, Tóth does not approach the history of

gender relations from male created “high” literature, but from the everyday experiences of women, hence the pioneering significance of her book for Hungarian research on the communist era. According to Tóth’s main argument, although the communist party and its state apparatus seemed to be committed to achieving women’s equality, that is, the official discourse was emancipatory, in reality male hegemony continued to be reproduced and women remained palpably oppressed in the Stalinist era as well as in the following Kádár era, with the oppression of women decreasing only to some extent in the last decades of the regime.

The scope of this paper only allows for a brief review of the three most relevant chapters of Tóth’s volume. She starts with analyzing the stories of village girls who moved to urban areas after the Second World War and were typically employed first as servants then as industrial workers. She concludes that not only those media under the influence of the state were critical of the girls’ new life situation, but also that the rural community these girls left behind, their families and even the girls themselves had ambivalent feelings towards their new life. While the migration was seen by the state as the proof of modern socialist progress, and the girls themselves saw it as an opportunity to build a career, find a husband and earn money, nevertheless the fact that these girls were no longer under male supervision evoked great concern in all parties involved.

Tóth continues with a discussion of various narratives about the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. She argues that even though the memory of the 1956 Revolution produced a few female hero figures, revolution-making essentially remained a male activity and during the overthrow of the party’s reign, women’s role was limited to strengthen and solidify the reign of men. Moreover, during the retaliatory trials directly following the Revolution the state also differentiated between male and female revolutionists, as it looked for direct political motivation behind men’s actions, while the participation of women were typically explained away by their (sexual) morality.

A third topic Tóth deals with is the unequal gender relations in the labor market under the communist regime in Hungary, including issues of women working in masculine jobs. In the Rákosi era the party was a strong advocate for eliminating gender-based stereotypes associated with certain professions, so women were encouraged to work in jobs that earlier had been typically associated with men. The party’s effort, however, led to some undesired consequences such as the birth of the notorious grotesque figure of the “trucker girl” [in Hungarian: “traktoristalány”], who immediately became the object of public ridicule and whose sexual morality was the first to be questioned simply because of the fact that she was working in such a job. Later, in the Kádár era, as this public perception of the “trucker girls” became prevalent also in official circles, and even the political elite started to view this policy of placing women in men’s jobs as one of the Rákosi era’s characteristic exaggerations. Despite the party’s ideological support for women’s employment, women’s prospects at building a professional career remained modest during the entire period and the concept of equal pay for equal labor was never even remotely achieved.

Although Tóth’s argument about the persistence of unequal gender relations in Hungary during the socialist regime is definitely sound, she fails to demonstrate why these unequal gender relations would be specifically socialist because as the proletarian revolution striving at the overthrow of capitalism did not automatically mean the concomitant fall of male hegemony, no matter how strongly the system propagated that it abolished unequal gender relations, and that women’s oppression also prevailed in the Western world notwithstanding the democratic emancipatory slogans. In the following, therefore, I shall argue that the position of women during the communist regime in Hungary was indeed special not because despite the official emancipatory discourse male hegemony was reproduced, but because the citizens of the socialist states reinterpreted the discourse of male hegemony in the

language provided by the communist party, that is, they spoke about male hegemony “in Bolshevik”, to use Stephen Kotkin’s term (Kotkin 1995, 198–237). In other words, unequal relations were reproduced within a Bolshevik discursive framework resulting in that those women who were perceived to be a threat to traditional male hegemony were regarded as class enemies, i.e., enemies of the political community.

In my opinion, therefore, Tóth’s argumentation is incomplete in so far as it lacks a more exhaustive analysis of the political language of the era, as has already been pointed out by one Hungarian critic of her work (György 2011). Such an analysis would clarify that the position of women in socialism was defined not only by social conceptions of the two genders, but rather it came about at the intersection of two political discourses, class and gender, the former being unquestionably the far more significant of the two. In other words, the fact that the notion of “woman” was absent from Bolshevik vocabulary and that within communist political discourse only the concept of “woman worker” was comprehensible meant that communists did not want to emancipate women in general but only those women who were seen by the party as workers (see Szabó 2008). That is, the Hungarian Bolshevik class- and gender discourses were not similar in their content to the case of Jews and women in Vienna, stereotypes did not circulate about similarities between women and the exploiter or exploited, but rather class discourse intersected gender discourse, dividing “women” on the basis of their class into “good” working women who belonged to the political community, and hostile non-worker women, who were excluded.

Let me demonstrate how communist political discourse dividing women (too) on the basis of class into the category of “political enemy” and that of ‘us’ could reproduce male hegemony. During the Stalinist era the class situation of Hungarian citizens was subject to constant change, with Communist class discourse producing a distinct social space by intersecting the gender discourse of the era, just as if in Vienna the “Aryan woman” and “non-Aryan (Jewish) woman” had been opposed to one another. Certain women were praised by the Communist regime, while others came to be its deadly enemy. However, the difference between conceptions of women in Vienna and in Communist Hungary lies in that while the racial categories of “Aryan” and “Jew” were identity categories that one could not change, women’s class identity, for both theoretical and practical reasons, was subject to change. That is, on the one hand according to Communist ideology, “woman worker”, as the “worker” generally, represented the future, the direction of historical progress, the very ideal for every woman and the category that every woman is expected to join, while on the other hand, in practice, workers, including women workers as well, were under continuous threat of losing their status as workers and of being revealed as class traitors. Therefore, during the Stalinist era, the class identity of citizens was constantly redefined by the state-party in Hungary.

Then what determined whether or not a woman could be included in the category of “woman worker”? According to orthodox Marxist tenets, class situation was determined by someone’s relation to the means of production. However, after the nationalizations and agricultural collectivization of the 1950s, categorization of both women and men on the basis of relation to the means of production became impossible in Hungary because people no longer could live off of their properties but only from their labor. Therefore, men were categorized as members or enemies of the community on the basis of their class situation prior to the victory of the proletariat (Fitzpatrick 2000, 28–29; Bolgár 2010, 159). Women, however, had been so radically excluded from the labor market and capital before the communist era that the majority of them could not be categorized on the basis of their prior class situation. Thus, the concept of “woman worker” remained an empty concept, as its actual meaning was hardly deducible from party ideology in any actual procedure of identification, leaving the citizens free to determine women’s class situation.

Then with what could this empty concept of “woman worker” was filled in everyday discourse? My answer is rather simplistic: people were using this free discursive space for reproducing male hegemony. As I demonstrated in one of my earlier papers, women were frequently categorized according to the male relatives’ (husband, father) ascribed class (see Bolgár 2008, 84), which made even woman workers’ emancipation impossible simply because as far as their social status was concerned they continued to be simple accessories to men. Nevertheless, the question arises that what defined the class situation of those women, who, like the majority of women in Tóth’s volume, lacked familial relations for some reason and thus could not be categorized on the basis of their male relatives’ class? Re-reading the stories in Tóth’s book from this perspective, we find that the status of an honorable woman worker in these narratives depended on whether her behavior was in line with the moral expectations of traditional patriarchy, that is, whether she appeared in public space in the right time, with the right company, wearing the right clothing, and in general whether she was under male supervision, which terms for determining whether a woman had (sexual) morality obviously remained the same since before the Second World War. In as much as these terms were not met, the woman in question was considered to be a whore, a victim of her own sexual frailty. All in all, women outside paternalistic bonds could still belong to the category of “woman worker” provided they had internalized male hegemony. Otherwise, if women violated the rules of male hegemony, that is, if they did not fit into the prescribed patriarchal frame, they inevitably became class enemies.

During the Stalinist era in the 1950s, by creating an ambiguous concept of “woman worker” the party provided an opportunity for citizens to retell traditional hierarchical gender differences within the Bolshevik framework. However, that it became possible to “speak Bolshevik” about male dominance meant serious consequences for women, because within the new discursive framework of communism replacing that of the old-fashioned male hegemony, those who violated the (old) moral rules automatically became class enemies. That is, before the Second World War, if a woman’s personal morality was seen as corrupted she was “only” labeled as “whore”, but under communism she was considered to be following the standards of either “rotten Western capitalism” or of the old corrupted gentry world, becoming a class enemy and committing an open act of defiance against the party state. Thus, since (sexual) morality was the defining characteristic of a woman’s class situation, leading a libertine life became political offense and being a woman became politically dangerous. That is, even though women were not considered generally to be enemies during the Stalinist era, they were just as well excluded from the political community of the workers if they found guilty, as Weininger would put it, of wanton pursuit of coitus, as those women, who were excluded from the German Volk by the Viennese misogynists.

Finally, let me turn to the question of how then, in such a context, could male hegemony finally soften with time in the Kádár era? In the last decades of the communist regime, class discourse, the “superego” of every other discourse went through a significant transformation. Class struggle was already considered to be over and won by the party, thus the concept of “working people” started to include all citizens as its binary other gradually disappeared, as János Kádár put it in 1975, in a party congress: “today there are only allied working classes” (Kádár 1978, 314). Thus, women became freed from the constant class struggle, that is, from the political scrutiny of their sexual morality and their gender identity became less dangerous in political sense. Maybe this is the reason behind women’s increasingly defiant rebellion against the still – as Tóth’s work demonstrates – considerably traditional public opinion in the second half of the Kádár-era.

Conclusion

In the above I have argued that in the Central Europe of the twentieth century the convergence of gender discourse and such ideologies as racism and Bolshevism prone to create enemies resulted in that the political community became radically gendered in so far as it became uncertain whether women were still part of the, up to that point, simply implicitly masculine construction of political community. We have seen, on the one hand, in the case of turn-of-the-century Vienna how discourses of anti-Semitism and gender met, and on the other, how the ideology of class struggle intersected with gender discourse in the second half of the twentieth century in Hungary. On the basis of these two examples, one have to conclude, therefore, that while the Viennese *völkisch* anti-Semites were explicitly misogynists and while the communist rhetoric was only superficially emancipatorical, women in both cases were at political risk simply due to their gender identity.

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