

Female Saints: Submissive or Rebellious? Feminists in Disguise?

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The representation of female saints through the centuries offers an opportunity to observe cultural and historical changes in what is considered suitable images of gender. Although the usual trite perspectives present saints, particularly female saints, as submissive and unquestioning of authority, a careful reading of their lives and autobiographical writings reveals patterns of both resistance and accommodation to Church authorities. Accommodation was sometimes a matter of life and death.

The present work focuses on some questions seldom asked about the lives of women saints. How do the images of these saints demonstrate perceptions of gender and sexuality in different socio-historical contexts? How do these images suit the political and social climate in which they were developed? How do the images change over time to reflect changing views of gender? How did the church and the culture at large conceive of appropriate gender representations and transgressions through the centuries?

In the early 1990s, when I started teaching Women's Studies full time, I started remembering the saints of my childhood and wondering about the meaning of my favorite saints' lives. I became interested in recovering the rich and complex legacy of these women as foremothers. Women's Studies scholarship recovered the stories of women's lives in history, literature, and anthropology. Feminist psychologists theorized women's emotional experiences and psychological conflicts as healthy reactions to oppression rather than pathological responses to individual mental health challenges. My exploration is thus not only my personal quest, but also a point of convergence in my academic career. Moreover, my fascination with saints is not unique.

Many women raised on their stories share similar fantasies evoked by these legendary figures. Indeed, some feminist scholars have been involved in recovering and reconstructing the meaning of women saints and their legends.¹

Most of the narratives about saints, presented to little girls as role models, portray them as compliant, obedient, self-sacrificing, faithful to the dictates of authority, neglecting or denying the fact that their behavior frequently challenged the norms and expectations placed on them as women. One of the puzzles one encounters when studying women saints is how the story of their lives presents a perplexing mixture of compliance with stereotypes coupled with an ability to use or twist those same stereotypes to serve their own needs. In one form or another, all women saints transgressed the established norms of female virtue. By definition, had they not transgressed those established norms, they would have never been known by those who would make them the object of their devotion. Paradoxically, their hagiographers characterized them as examples of prescribed womanhood to encourage other women to follow the established norms obediently, making them seem more acceptable to the hierarchy and imitable by the faithful. But obedience is not the hallmark of their actual behavior. The content of their disobedience is less important than the subliminal message we can derive from their behavior.²

As I searched these women's lives and writings, I found multiple examples of their indomitable resolve to achieve what they believed was important. It didn't seem to matter that they had rebelled against authority figures because they wanted to become cloistered nuns or self-mutilating fiends. Their rebellion was a way to get what they wanted rather than what others dictated, no matter how misguided I now might perceive them to be. And once I grasped and understood their lives through the lenses of their historical and cultural contexts, these women's stories made even more sense. Indeed, their ability to resist while still fitting into culturally acceptable norms of behavior, ostensibly accepting those norms wholeheartedly, is one of their most notable achievements.

1 E.g., Mooney (1999); Morgan (1998); Petroff (1994).

2 Even little, quiet, unassuming Thérèse of Lisieux – the most popular female saint in the Catholic church – had spoken to the Pope in public after a specific injunction to remain silent in his presence; she never hid her ardent desire to become a priest even though she was female. Rosa of Lima played her confessors against each other and pitted them against her own mother to be able to increase her bodily mortification against their will.

As a psychologist, while I am interested in the developmental vicissitudes and experiences that shaped these women's lives, I am also aware that the association between pathology or immaturity and religious beliefs has been paramount in the field of psychology. But, instead, I found that my psychology training facilitated my understanding them from a developmental perspective that helped to explain some of their decisions and the twists in their lives which might have looked rather puzzling without the lens provided by psychology. My appreciation of who these women were developed in a new feminist light.

Let me now give you a few concrete examples of saints' lives and writings.

Joan of Arc (ca. 1412-1431)

What we can learn from Joan of Arc is not martyrdom among flames, but her feisty attitude and her strong belief that she had a mission to accomplish. She exemplifies defiance, and courage to risk all for well-defined ideals. Joan of Arc and Catherine of Siena show that it is possible for women to have political influence despite the discriminatory practices that may still be prevalent.

Joan's adoption of masculine attire has lent itself to multiple interpretations. Indeed, it was her refusal to renounce her male attire that eventually cost her her life. Her decision to dress as a man – which according to her, followed a command from God – obviously provided protection against sexual assault in an environment where she was constantly surrounded by men. But refusing to dress as a woman was considered the ultimate proof of Joan's evil by her judges.

In the centuries after her death, as she was acknowledged as a saintly heroine rather than a heretic witch in the eyes of Church and country, her attire continued to be a problematic issue. Representations of Joan in female apparel abound in paintings. She may be holding a sword, but she is wearing a coquettish hat and feminine clothes. Skirts and long hair were incorporated in her depictions to make her behavior acceptable and in conformity with prevalent Church teachings. Representing her as a compliant female served to deny her challenging of authorities concerning the appropriate dress and role for women.

Teresa de Jesús (of Ávila, 1515-1582)

Perhaps no other female saint has been so important for me and for other women as Teresa of Ávila (or *Teresa de Jesús*, as she called herself). She has been studied by scholars from different disciplines, countries, and languages. Her autobiography and her poetry are models of the Golden Age of Spanish literature. I had always admired her strength and resolve. Thus, it made sense that I started my search for new perspectives on women saints in the 1990s by reading the writings of Teresa of Avila again with a different eye.

Teresa struggled all her life with male authorities who believed that as a woman she did not have the right to teach. Later on, Teresa was “masculinized” in a different way than Joan. In her case, followers and supporters presented her as less female to elevate her status and foster the cause of her canonization. Not being diminished by all the weaknesses that characterize women, she could be pictured as a saint whose mystical experiences were models for others to follow.

The widespread belief that it is nearly impossible for women to be saints has its roots in the association of women to sin and temptation. Therefore, those women who achieve sainthood do so because their behavior is not really a woman’s behavior. The idea behind this conceptualization is the same as referring to any woman capable of intelligent thinking as someone who “thinks like a man”. This form of “masculinization” was not only applied to Teresa. It has also been used by many male authors in relation to other female saints. To mention just one example, St. Augustine uses this strategy in describing Perpetua, and in the narrative that is supposedly Perpetua’s own, she appears as imagining herself as transformed into a male.

A mystic, a reformer, and a political figure, the writer of the first autobiography in Spanish by a woman, Teresa of Ávila has been the object of literary and historical scholarly studies, art, film and a variety of other cultural productions. In her life time she was both revered as a saint and scrutinized by the Inquisition for possible heresy. King Philip II and other members of the Spanish nobility supported her and sought her advice. Her political influence and authority were significant during her life and, according to herself, a direct effect of her love for God. Indeed, Teresa died on the road, on her way to Alba de Tormes, because the Duchess of Alba wanted her to be present when her daughter-in-law birthed an heir for the powerful Spanish noble family. Bernini made her the subject of a well-known sculpture in which he represents Teresa in the throes of

an orgasm provoked by her intense love for God and the presence of an angel piercing her heart. While some people described her as hysterical on account of her visions, in recent years a number of feminist scholars have devoted serious studies to her.³ A descendant of Spanish Jewish *conversos*, Teresa entered a convent in her youth, without too much interest in living a very spiritual life, but progressively she understood prayer and intimacy with God as powerful tools to change the world. She became convinced that she had to reform the Carmelite religious order of which she was a member to facilitate the possibility of women supporting rather than competing with each other. She wanted to make it possible for women to love and support each other's spiritual development in secluded spaces. She did not view this as a private enterprise, but rather a way in which women could have an effect on society, a way in which they could be warriors for the common good, since no other avenues were open to them at the time. For Teresa, as for other women mystics, the love of God became the source of her power and authority. Using her sense of authority, she struggled to create spaces of togetherness and opportunities for women, liberating them from family constraints. Friendship and supportive love were fostered by convents with only small groups of nuns who knew each other well and shared the same food and tasks rather than convents with large numbers of nuns who took personal advantage of money and family privileges.

Although it would be anachronistic to say that Teresa was a "feminist", her sharp understanding and critical interpretation of the constraints of women's circumstances remain relevant today. Teresa was not an obedient nun, but rather a woman of stature in early modern Europe, tenaciously struggling against Church authorities to fulfill what she believed to be the message of God. The importance she attributed to women's togetherness, their love for each other, and their spiritual strengths is as relevant today as it was in the sixteenth century. She challenged male authority and supported women, using a rhetoric of humility and femininity that allowed her to assert her thoughts without losing her life at the hands of the Inquisition. The examples are innumerable. They are in her writings – some of which were crossed out by censors or impounded by the Inquisition – and in her actions, such as supporting a young woman from the nobility against paternal intent to marry her off or prescribing the best of care and gentle understanding for nuns who might have been mentally ill.

3 E.g., Ahlgren (1996).

Some of the apparent renunciations of human comforts that Teresa imposed on herself and prescribed for her nuns were, in fact, a strategy for self-preservation. Sexuality of the sort encountered in marriage gave most of their women contemporaries very little fulfillment. It had to do more with the husband's desires than with the woman's. Moreover, the consequence of sexuality was one pregnancy after another in rapid succession, often leading to death from childbirth at a very early age. Teresa's mother died in childbirth at the age of 36, after having had nine children, when Teresa was not yet an adolescent. She makes explicit comments on the topic of marriage and women's relationship to their husbands in some of her writings.

Other women saints expressed similar views of marriage in their writings or acted on the basis of this premise in their lives. Catherine of Siena, for example, made her vow of virginity in childhood, immediately after one of her older sisters died in childbirth. Teresa was canonized as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church in 1622. She was the first woman declared Doctor of the Church in 1970. This declaration means that what she wrote about women and about prayer and other subjects can now be considered official doctrine of the Church. Therefore, her thinking continues to influence people. There is a lot more to say about Teresa, particularly concerning her mysticism, its relationship to the position of women in sixteenth century Spain and its almost unavoidable association with heresy and illumination. But other authors have explored these themes in relation to Teresa and women mystics. There are innumerable historical and literary works about Teresa of Ávila and Joan of Arc that look at their lives from many different angles. Her rhetorical style of self-presentation as a poor little woman, while simultaneously using this humble façade as a platform to expand on her ideas has also been studied. Therefore, I would like to dedicate the rest of this article to two women saints who are less well-known.

Before presenting Rose of Lima and Edith Stein, however, I would like to note that both Joan and Teresa have been and are still being used for political purposes. For example, Spain's Francisco Franco always travelled with a relic of Teresa's finger, to emphasize his special relationship with her, implying her special protection over whatever he decided. Joan has been the darling of conservative French politicians, from monarchic factions in the nineteenth century to, most recently, conservative presidential candidate Le Pen, claiming that like Joan he believed, France should be only for the French, thus justifying the rejection of immigrants.

Rose of Lima (1586-1617)

Born barely 50 years after the Spanish conquest of Perú, Isabel Flores de Oliva, known to the world as Saint Rose of Lima was the first canonized saint of the Americas. Rosa's ancestry was partly Indian, although in the social hierarchy of colonial Lima, she was considered "Spanish". During her short life people believed she had effected many miracles. She was particularly revered for her care of the sick and poor and for miraculous cures of Indians and African slaves as well as for her protecting the city of Lima from earthquakes and the attack of pirates through the power of her prayers. True or not, the populace of Lima considered her a saint during her lifetime. The Catholic Church confirmed the popular beliefs by canonizing her as a saint in 1671.

Her contemporaries – and later the Church – thought that the extreme penances she had performed since childhood pointed to her holiness. She slept on a bed of broken glass, pieces of metal and rocks; walked around the garden every day carrying a heavy wooden cross; hung herself from her hair; wore a crown of nails under her veil and a locked iron chain around her waist ... Her inventiveness for physical self-destructive behaviors seemed inexhaustible, much to the chagrin of her mother and her confessors.

Rosa's life is a study in contradictions. Her parents, living under serious economic constraints, were intent on marrying Rosa to some rich man to capitalize on her beauty. Instead, she refused marriage adamantly, although she never became a nun. She became a Dominican Tertiary like her most admired Catherine of Siena, remaining in the world as a lay person. She surrounded herself with a group of women who devoted their lives to God and she worked embroidering and cultivating flowers to help support her family. That she opted for virginity outside of the convent was a paradox; it challenged the expectations of her social context. Rosa's refusal of both marriage and the convent, opting to become a *beata*, a woman living her spiritual calling to prayer and virginity in her family's home, gave her a special status in colonial Lima. Although financial problems may have prevented her family from providing Rosa with the dowry needed to enter a convent, she defended her decision not to join a convent on the basis of divine intervention. She declared that the image of the Virgin of the Rosary in the Dominican church she had visited in Lima on her way to entering a convent would not allow her to rise from a kneeling position. Instead, the baby Jesus in the Virgin's arms asked her to be his wife and miraculously gave her a ring that said, "*Rosa de*

mi corazón, se tú mi esposa (“Rose of my heart, be my wife”). By “marrying God”, despite apparent restrictions on her sexuality, she provided herself with the freedom to do what she wanted.

Rosa appeared as virtuous and obedient while actively disobeying the authority of parents and confessors and acting as an independent agent. She rationalized her behavior as following the will of God. Considering the limited options available to her, she created relatively independent strategies in her self-styled search for sanctity. Rosa had eleven confessors at some point in her life and played the opinions of some against others, particularly against the opinions of her mother who begged her to discontinue her extreme self-mutilation.

But, regardless of how bizarre the behavior of Rosa or other self-mutilating medieval saints may seem to us today, the reality is that their behavior is not so foreign to modern women who frequently resort to controlling their bodies through dieting, plastic surgery or other means. These practices also produce physical suffering, while sustaining an illusion of control over their lives. Research on the etiology of eating disorders and self-mutilations clearly links these practices to more or less desperate attempts to control one’s life. Women “control” their bodies when they feel deprived of control in other areas of life.⁴ In the case of medieval and early modern women saints, such as Rosa, the theological interpretations of the value of expiatory prayer and self-immolation, particularly applied to ideals of virtue and sainthood for women, provided the intellectual foundation and rationale for their behavior.⁵ In our post-modern world, women self-sacrifice and self-torture in the name of physical attractiveness or health. Many women today engage in behaviors for the sake of aestheticism in ways similar to what women in earlier centuries did for the sake of asceticism.⁶

Then, as now, the search for perfection through the body is, for any woman, entangled with and influenced by the vicissitudes of her individual history combined with sociohistorical circumstances. Even though conscious motivations may be different in different socio-historical contexts, privatized behaviors may serve a social purpose. Rosa’s behavior was motivated by personal as well as public understandings and experiences, as one would argue about some paradoxical self-destructive behaviors in contemporary women.⁷

4 Cf. Brumberg (1988); Vanderycken/van Deth (1994).

5 E.g., Brumberg (1988); Maitland (1987); Vanderycken/van Deth (1994).

6 Cf. Vanderycken/van Deth (1994).

7 E.g., Davis (1997). – Then or now, this alternative is not unproblematic. Indeed, Rosa’s penitential ex-

There is a long Christian tradition of considering women's bodies as sinful, impure, and imperfect. It is not surprising that sanctification for women was equated with controlling and reducing the body. And although negativity about the body and sexuality is also present in the lives of male saints, men had other avenues for sanctification such as religious office, teaching or preaching which were closed to women. Women who aspired to sainthood showed the power of their spirit through the mutilation or even annihilation of their bodies. Such control was the best demonstration of the strength of a woman's soul. By exercising control of their bodies they subverted their "natural destiny" as women and thus became almost "non-female", almost male, pure spirit (i.e., holy). Indeed, the starved and sleep deprived body stops menstruating (i.e., becomes de-feminized) and is prone to cognitive distortions that can be described as visions. "The female body, denied the sensual gratification of a healthy diet, adequate sleep, or sexual relations, becomes itself a religious text".⁸

Medieval historian Carolyn Bynum presents an alternative perspective to female saints' extreme self-starvation. Bynum is convinced that "real medieval women – unlike the unreal women portrayed by the male authors of the hagiographic romances – found a new way of dealing with body". Bynum thinks that even the most bizarre women mystics "were not rebelling against or torturing their flesh out of guilt [or helplessness or inability to engage in other activities, O.M.E.] so much as using the possibilities of [their bodies', O.M.E.] full sensual and affective range to soar ever closer to God".⁹ In fact, they "saw in their own female bodies not only a symbol of the humanness of both genders but also a symbol of – and a means of approach to – the humanity of God".¹⁰ It is possible that Rosa, whose spirituality was deeply influenced by the medieval piety prevalent among the Spanish conquerors and missionaries, may have experienced her bodily penances in this way.

In a sociohistorical context in which female virtue was equated with maternity or vir-

cesses were seen as pathological even by her contemporaries. Some of Rosa's confessors believed that her supposed mystical experiences may have been due to "*flaqueza*" ("weakness"), "*desvanecimientos*" ("dizzy spells"), and "*melancholia*" ("melancholy") or "*vahidos de cabeza, de vapores melancólicos*" ("fainting due to melancholic vapors") rather than to virtue. Nonetheless, "Rose of Lima can be an exemplar of heroic sanctity only within a context in which her practices [...] are perceived as holy and meaningful rather than as aberrations". Graziano (2004), 8.

8 Morgan (1998), 11.

9 Bynum (1987), 295.

10 Bynum (1987), 295.

ginity that, above all, demanded invisibility, “the ‘visibility’ of the female saint [was] dangerous”.¹¹ “Beauty [in particular] [...] is a dangerous quality for a saint”.¹² Rosa, who is reputed to have been a beautiful young woman, actively struggled against the dangers of her own beauty by cutting her hair, burning her hands, putting garlic in her eyes, and other similar activities. The danger was sometimes rather concrete: accusations of demonic intervention raised the possibility of being burnt at the stake, as was the case for Joan of Arc. Some of Rosa’s female associates landed in the Inquisition jails shortly after her death.¹³ Rosa herself was examined by a tribunal of Lima’s Holy Inquisition to ascertain the orthodoxy of her beliefs. Yet, she was successful in using these self-mutilation gestures to mark her body as sacred, saintly.

For centuries, Church authorities claimed the Apostle Paul’s injunctions denied Christian women the right to teach others. Learning and teaching became dangerous activities for women. Deprived of

their ability to serve God and the Church via their words or evangelistic excursions, pious women expressed their faith by means of that which they could (to some degree) control, namely their bodies. [The saint’s] body rather than her words [constitutes] the locus of spiritual authority and exemplarity.¹⁴

For women aspiring to sainthood, “the body, specifically the female body” is both instrument of sanctification and problem.¹⁵

Considering that our knowledge of Rosa comes from interpretations of men writing what some authors call “hagiographic romances”, it is next to impossible to determine what the real motivations for her extreme self-destruction were.¹⁶ But what is certain is that she took it upon herself to control the destiny of her body, including inviting death, rather than leaving that control in the hands of others. She did so in the only and rather contorted way available to her in her specific cultural and religious context. In this endeavor, she presumed to have a life, an identity apart from male authority and from cultural definitions of what should constitute femininity. Her efforts at fooling parents and confessors alike into allowing her to perform ever more extreme penances, although

11 Petroff (1994), 163.

12 Petroff (1994), 164.

13 Cf. Iwasaki (1993).

14 Morgan (1998), 11.

15 Petroff (1994), 163.

16 E.g., Mooney (1999); Petroff (1994).

baffling to us, show her self-determination to pursue her own goals, perceived by her and others as God's will. And, although it is important to problematize this behavior¹⁷ as a manifestation of the negative messages and limited options available to women, it is important to not simply pathologize her behavior by looking at it from our perspective, several centuries later.

Rosa was what Kathleen Norris calls a "fierce holy little girl"¹⁸ intent on reaching God in her own way, even in the face of the opposition of her family and the norms for women in her own society. In doing so, she challenged authority. At the same time, through her extreme behaviors, she re-inscribed the all-encompassing equation of woman with body. Because she focused on her body as the instrument of her sanctification, she underscored the importance and problematic nature of women's bodies. As was to be expected, she shared her contemporaries' constructions of women's bodies and sanctity. And, as it is true for women today, this isn't an either/or situation but rather both/and: self-mutilation and self-starvation are both an effort to control personal fate, within the context of accepted cultural values, in the face of relative powerlessness *and* an effort to escape that lack of control that may end up backfiring. These behaviors become pathological expressions of the social expectations imposed on women as they intertwine with individual women's life stories. The damaging consequences of cultural norms that inspire self-destructive behaviors in women should not remain unproblematized.

One of Rosa's recent biographers believes that her inability to express in any other way her solidarity with the suffering of the *indígenas* (the Indians), which she must have witnessed repeatedly, led to her extreme self-mutilation and self-torture.¹⁹ He sees Rosa's extreme penances as an embodied protest against injustice – albeit the helpless protest of a woman deprived of other means of expression – rather than some psychological deficiency or tendency to masochism inherent in her as an individual. Yet any acknowledgement of Rosa's social conscience by 17th century hagiographers would have clashed with the Spanish crown's interests and thus hindered Rosa's canonization as a saint.

There is yet another unexplored possibility that may or may not be applicable to her or to any other ascetic woman. I hesitate to speculate about this because of the

17 E.g., Maitland (1987).

18 Norris (1996), 203.

19 Alvarez (1992).

danger of ahistoricizing experience. On the other hand, I cannot avoid thinking as a psychologist when confronted with these extreme cases of physical self-destruction. I am referring to the possibility that some of these behaviors may have been a consequence of childhood physical abuse. Researchers have been able to trace adult self-destructive behavior to its traumatic childhood origins.²⁰ Abused children tend to grow up confusing love and pain and believe that one necessarily involves the other. Attempting to control the effect of damaging experiences, they sometimes resort to self-mutilation.²¹

We know from Rosa's history that she received severe physical punishment as a child from both her mother and her grandmother.²² Needless to say, a powerful message about how one deserves to be treated is conveyed to a child who receives multiple beatings every day throughout childhood. Did this experience influence Rosa's extreme physical self-abuse? If yes, are similar experiences responsible for the presumed asceticism of so many other women saints? This may not be such an absurd proposition if we consider how widespread the abuse of girls and women continues to be today. I am not affirming that this unconscious link between abuse and self-destruction was present in Rosa's life or the life of other women saints, I am merely asking a question that, to my knowledge, has never been asked before.

Regardless of Rosa's reasons for her choices, we can see in them the social construction of women's bodies and roles in early colonial Latin America. In addition, Rosa's life provides a graphic example of how communities construct their saints and how saints contribute to the creation of communities. Her canonization was the first successful attempt at acknowledging the possibility of holiness in the New World. The effervescence of sanctity in Perú became the best testimony of the value of the task of evangelization that the Spanish Crown was carrying out in the Americas. Rosa became proof of the benefits of the Spanish conquest of America.²³ Being used by

20 E.g., Van der Kolk/Perry/Herman (1991).

21 Cf. e.g., Favazza (1996); Wegscheider Hyman (1999); Strong (1998); Walsh/Rosen (1988); Walsh (2006).

22 Baptized as Isabel, the name of her grandmother, her mother and an Indian servant took to calling her Rosa because her beauty resembled the beauty of roses. During her childhood, every time she responded when called Rosa, her grandmother beat her up, and every time she responded to the name Isabel, her mother did the same. Since they called her by one or another name multiple times during a given day, she was beaten by one or another of these two women every time she obediently responded to a call.

23 The *Archivo de Indias* in Seville holds a stack of documents about the festivities ordered by Queen Mariana of Austria, then Regent of the Spanish throne, to celebrate Rosa's canonization in the territories of

others for their own purposes is the unavoidable destiny of anyone who becomes famous, particularly famous members of powerless groups. Aside from whatever manipulative intent on the part of the Crown and the Church – Rosa was a symbol for the populace of Lima. Through Rosa, all *limeños* had a direct line to heaven and Lima was represented in the heavenly court. The first saint of the Americas was a *criolla* – a person of Spanish descent born on Spanish-American soil and thus *criollos* had received a seal of approval from God.

Let me now turn to another canonized saint, almost our contemporary, completely different in her presentation and understanding of spirituality.

Edith Stein (Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, 1891-1942)

Edith Stein, perhaps one of the most controversial women to be canonized as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church, was born in Breslau (then Germany, now Poland). She was put to death in Auschwitz, August 9, 1942.

In 1987, Pope John Paul II beatified Stein as a martyr and a confessor of the Catholic Church. He canonized her in 1998. The appellation “confessor” was based upon her exemplary life, her philosophical work on Thomas Aquinas, and her activities on behalf of Catholic women in German-speaking countries during the 1920s and 1930s. She was deemed a martyr because her death, like her companions’ in the August 9 transport, was an act of Nazi retaliation, precipitated by the actions of the Catholic bishops of The Netherlands on behalf of Jews in their country.

Edith Stein’s beatification and, later, her canonization, have stirred considerable controversy amongst Jews and perplexed many Catholics. If she was murdered because she was Jewish, how can she be a martyr of the Catholic Church? Her feminist posture, which she demonstrates in her writings on women, adds to the confusion. Why did John Paul II, with few feminist sympathies, consider her an exemplary model – a “confessor” of Catholic faith? In fact, he bestowed upon her a unique distinction: she

the Spanish Empire. Two allegorical paintings depict Rosa holding the Eucharist in a monstrance above her head. Standing to her right is the King of Spain whom Rosa is assisting in defending the Eucharist from the Moors standing to her left. I am sure Rosa never saw a Moor in her life but the allegory is about siding with the Spanish Crown against the only “enemies of the faith” that the unknown painter could imagine.

is the only person ever to be beatified and later canonized as both a martyr and a confessor. “When she was canonized in 1998 she was the first Jewish-born Christian since the days of the early church to be added to the roster of the saints”.²⁴

My personal interest in her emanates from my more than forty-year interest in self-education, Jewish history and the Shoah/Holocaust in particular. Additionally, her views on women were highly influential for a segment of German-speaking women and men in the first part of the 20th century, anticipating the feminist theology insights of the late 20th century. These two factors fuel my interest in her life and writings.²⁵

Edith Stein was the seventh and youngest child of a lumber merchant family. Her father died suddenly of sunstroke when Edith was two. At that time, her mother assumed charge of the family lumber business. The business prospered until the Nazi era. Thus, from a very early age, Edith had been accustomed to seeing her mother as both breadwinner and loving parent. This seems to have convinced young Edith that women could practice all professions without losing their femininity. More importantly, she later interpreted her mother’s competency as a sign: God wanted women to participate in all walks of life, a conviction that would become part of her life and teaching in later years. While still living at home, Stein entered the University of Breslau in 1911, only 10 years after women won admission to German universities. As we shall see later, she used her experience as a woman in academia to the benefit of many other women. After a year studying Psychology, she decided this discipline did not offer the method for discovering the truth she wanted to find. While at the University of Breslau, she had begun reading the works of Edmund Husserl. In 1913 she decided to go to Göttingen to study phenomenology with Husserl and in 1916, she graduated *summa cum laude* with a thesis on the phenomenon of empathy. Stein was the second woman to receive a degree in philosophy from a German university.

24 Sullivan (2004), 18.

25 Several years ago, I set out to follow some of Stein’s steps: I went to Poland to visit Wroclaw (Breslau), where she was born and Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she was murdered. I visited the Cologne Carmel, where I spent an afternoon looking at Stein’s manuscripts – including the page she was writing when she was arrested – and talked at length with Mother Amata Neyer, the curator of Stein’s manuscripts, with Fr. John Sullivan, a Carmelite priest, as our interpreter. Earlier that summer, in Rome, I had read the documents of her beatification at the General House of the Discalced Carmelites. Fr. John Landy, who had facilitated my access to these documents, learning that I was about to teach a course on women saints that would include Stein, kindly offered to get passes for me and the students to attend the canonization ceremony. So, on October 11, 1998, I was sitting on seventh row at St. Peter’s square to witness and participate in Edith Stein’s canonization ceremony with a group of students from San Diego.

After graduation, Stein became Husserl's assistant. This was an unheard of position for a woman. Assisting Husserl, however, was not a glamorous job. In what she called her "philosophical kindergarten", she prepared incoming students for his lectures. She also deciphered and prepared his manuscripts, which were written in a confusing and disorganized manner, for publication. She tolerated his mood changes and arbitrary commands.

After a frustrating year and a half, in which Husserl paid little attention to her reviews and comments on his manuscripts, while she accomplished little of her own work, she decided to apply for *habilitation*. Husserl refused to recommend her. When he finally wrote a letter of recommendation full of praise for her, it was too late. The male faculty in other German universities were not inclined to accept women in their midst and many were reluctant to welcome another Jew. The thesis she had written to apply for *habilitation* was returned unread.

Stein protested formally against this action, even though she realized her protest would not make any difference in her case. Several months later, the Minister ruled that "belonging to the female sex may not be seen as any hindrance to obtaining *habilitation*".²⁶ In a 1987 article written to commemorate *Fifty Years of Habilitation of Women in Germany*, Stein is given credit for initiating the challenge to the exclusionary rules with her protest. Stein's courage as a pioneer woman in academia determined the fate of many other women who benefited from the official changes initiated as a consequence of her action.²⁷

In the summer of 1921, she found herself at a significant spiritual crossroads. She had, by chance, picked up Teresa of Ávila's autobiography from a friend's library shelf. After reading it through the night, she became convinced that this was "the truth". Significantly, Teresa's Jewish background was unknown until several years after Stein's death. But I wonder if it was not the tone of Teresa's writing, as a woman of Jewish ancestry, which touched a deep chord in Stein's heart in ways that other, purely intellectual arguments could not.

26 Koeppel (1990), 63.

27 Cf. Boedeker/Meyer-Platt (1974).

Edith Stein was baptized and officially became Catholic on January 1, 1922. Some Jewish women authors think, as I do, that “it seems hardly a coincidence that the book that decisively turned Stein toward faith was written by a woman”.²⁸

After her conversion, Stein had continued her job search. Unable to find a position as a philosopher at a university, she took employment at a Catholic girls’ high school and teachers’ college in Speyer, teaching German literature. During her eight years at Speyer, Stein became very interested in the education of women. She began writing and lecturing on women’s issues and developed a reputation as a prominent Catholic feminist. Her writings about women date from these years. Stein’s feminist writing and her theorizing concerning the education of girls and the importance of women in national life have been given little attention in the controversy surrounding her canonization. Many of her writings actively contradicted the Nazi government policies concerning women. They also challenge some present day teachings of the Catholic Church, including the ban on the ordination of women as priests.

Stein had been an active feminist, concerned with women’s suffrage and rights in her youth. As a university student, she was a member of the Prussian Society for Women’s Right to Vote. She obviously believed that women were capable of intellectual achievement and deserved equal rights, as demonstrated by her writings, life, and actions. Although later in her life she did not apply the label “feminist” to herself as readily as she had done in her youth, her behavior and her writing demonstrate a deep commitment to feminist ideals all through her life.

Her perspective on women predates and echoes many late 20th century feminist psychological theories. Today, her views may be considered too conservative, particularly because of her strong essentialism. She believed women had innate characteristics that enabled them to perform specific spiritual tasks. However, if we take into consideration the language of the times and her philosophical background I find that her perspectives are not that different from those of some present day feminists.²⁹

For Stein, essential differences between men and women are never to be construed as proof of women’s inferiority but rather as a sign of women’s unique value and of

28 Fuchs-Kreimer (1998), 162.

29 Similar perspectives are represented in psychology by the works of the Stone Center for Developmental Studies at Wellesley College in Massachusetts and other feminist psychologists who, like Stein, believe that women are more capable of intimacy and caring than men: e.g., Jordan/Kaplan/Miller/Stiver/Surrey (1991).

their God-given role as educators of humankind. Stein presents this morally superior position of women as a statement of women's responsibility to use these capabilities to combat evil. She firmly believed "that woman has a mission in society as well as in the home".³⁰ Nonetheless, she rejected all idealizations of women, particularly those that could be used to exclude women from active participation in their chosen profession or from involvement in national political life.

In a discussion that contains a very current feminist tone, Stein supports this argument while recognizing the differentiation within the sexes. She asks the rhetorical question:

Should certain positions be reserved for only men, others for only women, and perhaps a few open for both? I believe that this question also must be answered negatively. [...] Many women have masculine characteristics just as many men share feminine ones. Consequently, every so-called "masculine" occupation may be exercised by many women as well as many "feminine" occupations by certain men.³¹

She strongly supported this conviction on a broader scale, in that "no legal barriers of any kind should exist" which would prevent a "natural choice of vocation"³² for either women or men³³ and decried idealizations that can have destructive consequences for women.

Sporadically, there are Romanticists who idealize women, painting them in delicate colors against a gold background, who would like to shield woman as much as they could from the hard facts of life. Curiously, this romantic view is connected to that brutal attitude which considers woman merely from the biological point of view; indeed, *this is the attitude that characterizes the political group now in power. Gains won during the last decades are being wiped out because of*

30 Oben (1988), 55.

31 Stein (1996), 81.

32 Stein (1996), 81.

33 The following quotes from the many lectures on women's issues she presented in the 1920s-30s serve to illustrate her positions. Many of these statements have a contemporary "ring" to them: "Until a few decades ago, public opinion concurred that woman belongs in the home and is of no value for anything else; consequently, it was at the cost of a weary and difficult struggle that woman's too narrow sphere of activity could be expanded [...]. There is still a multitude of thoughtless people satisfied with expressions concerning the weaker sex or even the fair sex. They are incapable of speaking about this weaker sex without a sympathetic or often a cynical smile as well. They do this without ever reflecting more profoundly on the nature of the working woman or trying to become familiar with already existing feminine achievements." Stein (1996), 144.

*this Romanticist ideology, the use of women to bear babies of Aryan stock, and the present economic situation.*³⁴

Positions that emphasized biologism were abhorrent to her. From her perspective, “[v]iolence is being done to the spirit by a biological misinterpretation and by today’s economic trend”.³⁵ It is important that we appreciate her assertions actively contradicted the doctrines of the rising Nazi party on women and their exclusive biological/reproductive mission. This statement was part of one of her last public lectures on the relationship of women to national life and to international politics during a time of intense Nazi propaganda designed to keep women at home and away from public life. Coming from a woman of Jewish descent in those perilous times, her statements impress as doubly courageous. Stein presented her views publicly, intending to address directly the Nazi positions to prevent Catholics from being seduced by these doctrines that threatened the achievements of the women’s movement.³⁶

Stein was adamant about the importance of education; she suggests that one way to counter the beliefs imposed by the Nazi party was through giving girls the necessary skills. An uninspired, traditional life would not have to be their only option.³⁷

34 Stein (1996), 144. Emphasis mine. The essay dates from 1932.

35 Stein (1996), 144.

36 According to Stein, the political trends in Germany could be dangerous for the incipient women’s movement. Because the movement could be threatening to the increasingly powerful Nazi party, the hard-won changes could be lost before being given a chance to solidify. She warned in 1932 that even though “we have today such an extensive system of vocational training [for women] and of professional life that we can scarcely imagine retrenchment, [...] we must realize that we are at the beginning of a great cultural upheaval; at this early stage we must expect to suffer what we might call ‘childhood diseases’ and make every effort to overcome them. There is still essentially basic work to be done“. At this historical junction, Stein asserts, “Women need basic political and social preparation for civic responsibilities; however, this is true not only for women but for the entire German nation which entered into a democratic form of government while still immature and unfitted for it. And we need special methods to prepare for government service in posts open to women. All this would come about if we had years of peaceful development before us. Naturally, we cannot foresee how conditions will be formed after a forcible break with the organic development“. Stein (1996), 139f and 147.

37 An “essential part of the educational process is the activation of one’s practical and creative capacities. And practical abilities in life are required of the majority of women. Only if we allowed them to already act during the time of schooling will we rear practical, able, energetic, determined, self-sacrificing women“. Her use of the word “act” emphasizes the practical involvement necessary in the education of girls. Stein encouraged women to “an intensified participation [...] in girls’ education on the principle that authentic women can be formed only by women“. Because “only women and, indeed, only adequately prepared women are able to educate young girls, which requires theoretical foundation as well as practical application, this is specifically a feminine responsibility“. Stein (1996), 137, 155 and 172 [1932].

When Stein turned her attention to the role of women in the Catholic Church, her opinion was equally forceful. Although she accepted the authority of the Church's traditions concerning women, she differentiates "between the attitude expressed in dogma, in canon law, and by the hierarchy of the Church and that taken by Our Lord Himself." She asserts that although some people "interpret certain remarks of priests concerning women's vocation as binding dogma of the church", this is not so because "we do not have a precisely defined dogma *ex cathedra* on the vocation of woman and her place in the Church".³⁸

Stein continued to differentiate between dogma, patriarchal interpretations, and the actual text of the Bible. For example, she gives an interpretation of the story of creation in Genesis, refuting the traditional reading that has historically been used to justify the subservient position of women. She uses this text of the Bible to explore the assumptions made so readily about the superiority of man, made in the image of God, and the inferiority of woman as the punished temptress. She points out that they were *both* created in the same light, given mutual responsibility *together*. Indeed, Stein believes that we must *all* follow in the footsteps of Christ and in his image: "Whether man or woman, whether consecrated or not, each one is called to the imitation of Christ".³⁹ She believes that the Church needs womanpower, and strongly asserts that the call to work for the transformation of the world was issued to both man and woman.⁴⁰ These interpretations echo the work of feminist theologians both past and present.

Yet, Stein's writing can often be viewed as a negotiation between her own feminist beliefs and the teachings of the Church. Most often she takes a strong stance, as in her insistence that there is no theological reason that women should not become priests, or in her convictions about women's education. At other times her ambiguous or almost contradictory statements become confusing. Perhaps, the balance between her beliefs became difficult to maintain. Or perhaps she uses seemingly contradictory

38 Stein (1996), 147 [1932]. – "no doubt there have been utterances in the patriarchal vein stating that woman's activity outside of the home is out of the question and the man's tutelage of woman is necessary in all domains. Although there are still advocates of this opinion, it is by no means universally true. And, on the other hand, we must emphasize that straightforward, farsighted theologians were part of the very first group who set out to examine impartially the claims of the liberal feminist movement; they evaluated its compatibility with the entire Catholic philosophy of life; and, in doing so, many of them became the pioneers of the Catholic Women's Movement". Stein (1987), 148. This essay dates from 1932, too.

39 Stein (1996), 84.

40 Cf. Oben (1988), 56.

statements as a way of presenting her position without appearing to oppose Church teachings. Stein recognizes that,

in present canon law, equality between man and woman is doubtlessly out of the question inasmuch as she is excluded from all liturgical functions (that require ordination). The legal status of women in the Church and their present position have deteriorated in comparison to the early years when women had official duties as consecrated deaconesses. *The fact that a gradual change took place indicates the possibility of development in an opposite direction.*⁴¹

Her faith in the possibility of change in the Church and in society reflects the basic feminist tenet of the possibility of social change. Stein's feminism is evident in her struggle to understand and shape the place of women in the Church as well as in the larger society. She could not see any theological reason why women should not be ordained to the priesthood in the future since she believed the status of women in the Catholic Church could be transformed.⁴²

Some of Stein's Catholic biographers⁴³ have some difficulty explaining away her insistence that there is no theological reason against the ordination of women as priests. And it is puzzling that during her beatification and canonization processes the Vatican authorities chose to ignore her statements about women's ordination at almost the same time they were forbidding discussion on this topic in the Church at large because they considered dogmatic the exclusion of women from ordination and, therefore, closed. Stein remained in her teaching position at St. Magdalena College in Speyer until 1932 when she was offered a new position at the Institute for Scientific Pedagogy in Münster – a teacher training and higher education institution. While she was working at this institution, on an evening in early 1933, a casual acquaintance, unaware of her Jewish ancestry, talked about the anti-Jewish measures instituted by the Third Reich after Hitler's election as Chancellor. Years later, as she was about to flee Germany for Holland, Stein recalled this significant life moment:

41 Stein (1987), 148 [1932]. Emphasis mine.

42 For Stein, the "goals of the Catholic Women's Movement have much in common with the non-Catholic feminist movement and are indebted to it for valuable preparatory work: the opening up of educational opportunities and gainful employment in the economic field for women; the establishment of jobs in the legal, political and social fields; also in the value placed on marriage and motherhood, the Catholic Women's Movement is in agreement with the moderate elements of the feminist movement". Stein (1996), 159 [1932].

43 E.g., Graef (1955).

I had indeed already heard of severe measures being taken against the Jews. But now on a sudden it was luminously clear to me that once again God's hand lay heavy on His people, and the destiny of this people was my own.⁴⁴

Shortly after, she was asked by the Director of the Pedagogical Institute to stop lecturing because she was a Jew. In one of her many statements of identification with the Jewish people, she wrote in reaction to this news: "I was almost relieved to find myself now involved in the common fate of my people, but I had of course to consider what I was to do."⁴⁵

After her dismissal she decided that the time had come to honor her greatest desire, born after reading the autobiography of Teresa of Ávila and her conversion to Catholicism twelve years earlier: enter a Carmelite monastery.

Many in Stein's family were actively seeking emigration to escape Nazi persecution. All of them agonized over the situation, anticipating the worst possible fate. They could not understand her decision to join the Carmelites at that explosive juncture. Her entry into a convent must have felt like an act of treachery.⁴⁶

By 1938, the persecution of the Jews was intensifying. Stein's continued presence in Germany became dangerous both to her own safety as well as for the other nuns in the convent. Her superiors decided to send her to the Carmel in Echt, Holland in December of that year. Like other German Jews who crossed the border into the

44 Stein (1938), *The Road to Carmel*, cited in Poselt (1952), 117. – Compelled to action, she requested an audience with Pope Pius XI. She hoped she could convince him to condemn Nazism. After all, she was well known amongst Catholics for her translations and interpretation of St. Thomas Aquinas' philosophy and her participation in the Catholic Women's Movement. Because of her prominence she had expected that her request would be accepted. It was, but not for a private audience. She could have participated in a semi-private audience with several others. She was disappointed, as a semi-private audience would not provide her with the opportunity to present her views in adequate detail. She rejected the offer and decided instead to send a sealed letter to the Pope in Summer 1933. In her words, "through my inquiries in Rome I ascertained that, because of the tremendous crowds, I would have no chance for a private audience. At best I might be admitted to a 'semi-private audience', i.e. an audience in a small group. That did not serve my purpose. I abandoned my travel plans and instead presented my request in writing." Cited in Batzdorff (1990), 17. Abbot Walzer, Superior of the Benedictines in Germany, and Stein's spiritual director, hand-delivered the letter. The Pope sent her his spiritual blessing rather than respond to the content of the letter.

45 Stein (1938), *The Road to Carmel*, cited in Poselt (1952), 117.

46 It deepened the wound she had inflicted with her conversion and baptism. Her niece, Susanne (Biberstein) Batzdorff, who was 12 at the time of Stein's entry in the convent, remembers asking her aunt, "Why are you doing this now?" To which her Tante Edith answered, "What I am doing does not mean that I want to leave my people and my family ... And don't think that my being in a convent is going to keep me immune from what is happening in the world". Batzdorff (1994), 37. Prophetic words.

Netherlands (i.e., Anne Frank and her family), Stein hoped for safety. But this move was not to protect her like she had expected because the Nazis were to cross that border themselves to invade the Netherlands in a few years.

Shortly after the Germans invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the Nazi authorities offered the Dutch churches a bargain: if Church authorities agreed to keep silent about the deportation of Jews they would guarantee the protection and exemption from deportation for converted Jews. The bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, however, refused to comply. On Sunday, July 26, 1942, priests read in all Catholic churches a pastoral letter from the bishops condemning the deportation of the Jews.⁴⁷

The Nazi authorities in the Netherlands were outraged at what they saw as audacity on the part of the Catholic bishops. In retaliation, euphemistically, they “refused to guarantee the safety of Catholic Jews”.⁴⁸ On August 2, all ‘non-Aryan’ members of religious communities were arrested. Edith Stein and her sister Rosa were among them. They were first taken to Amesfoort Camp; then they were transferred to Westerbork and later to Auschwitz, arriving there on August 9 where they were gassed upon arrival.

One of the primary paradoxes surrounding Edith Stein, one of the places where she stands at the crossroad of established lines, was her death. She was murdered as a direct consequence of one of the few official actions of the Catholic hierarchy to protect the Jews from Nazi persecution.⁴⁹

47 A part of the letter reads as follows: “All of us are living through a period of great distress, both from a spiritual and from a material standpoint. But there are two sets of people whose distress is deeper than that of others, the distress of the Jews and the distress of those who are deported to work abroad. Such distress is the concern of us all; and it is the purpose of this pastoral to bring it before your minds [...]”. The following telegram in favor of the Jews and others was dispatched on Saturday the 11th of July: “The undersigned religious organizations of the Netherlands, deeply shaken by the measures against the Jews which have excluded them from the normal life of the people, have learnt with terror of the later regulations by which men, women, children and whole families are to be deported to the territory of the German Reich. The suffering which has been imposed on thousands of people, the awareness that these regulations offend the deepest moral convictions of the Netherlands people, and above all, the denial in these regulations of God’s precepts of justice and mercy, forces the undersigned religious organizations to request most urgently that these regulations shall not be carried out”. Cited in Poselt (1952), 203.

48 Poselt (1952), 204.

49 I am not “heroizing” this action of the Dutch bishops, particularly in light of its tragic, unanticipated consequences. My intention is to highlight that this small act of resistance of the Church hierarchy provoked the Nazis into deadly retaliation and Stein’s life was lost. It is possible that her murder was unavoidable since the Nazis were bent on Jewish destruction. However, historical evidence tells us that while many Dutch Jews who had converted to Lutheranism (approximately 9,000) were not deported, practically all

Edith Stein converted out of conviction rather than convenience. Perhaps that is why she never rejected her Jewish roots.⁵⁰ During her stay in Breslau in the summer of 1933, immediately before her entry into the Carmel, Stein began writing her autobiography, *Life in a Jewish Family (Aus dem Leben einer jüdischen Familie)*. She continued writing during her years in the convent. As she stated in the foreword, the book constitutes a response to “the horrendous caricature” of Jews that emerged from “the programmed writings and speeches of the new dictators”. Her purpose in writing this book is to counteract “the battle on Judaism” launched by the Nazis.⁵¹

She left the unfinished manuscript in Germany when she crossed the border into The Netherlands because its discovery would have endangered her safe passage. A few months later a volunteer transported it to her new place of living. In Holland, she continued developing her manuscript and finished the last chapter during the last months of her life.⁵² Interestingly enough, her autobiography omits all references to Stein’s subsequent conversion and vocation as a nun, but rather ends with her doctoral dissertation and makes no reference to the circumstances of her later life. In a footnote, Stein places her autobiographical undertaking in the context of the memoirs of other

Catholic Jews in the Netherlands lost their lives, including many nuns and priests.

50 In the words of Shoah/Holocaust scholar Rachel Felhay Brenner, It “appears that Stein’s Jewishness played a crucial role in her Christian life. Her determination to assert her Jewish identity at the time of the Nazi terror emerges, paradoxically, as the validation of the vision of redemption that she strove to find in the Church. Stein’s *Weltanschauung* thus denotes a convergence of religious identities, rather than the conversion from one identity into another: she seems to find no contradiction claiming her part in Jesus, and at the same time, asserting her ties to the Jewish people”. Brenner (1994), 258.

51 In her introduction to this book she tells us, “Repeatedly, in these past months, I have had to recall a discussion I had several years ago with a priest [...]. In that discussion I was urged to write down what I, child of a Jewish family, had learned about the Jewish people since such knowledge is so rarely found in outsiders. [...] Last March, when our [government] opened the battle on Judaism in Germany, I was again reminded of it. [There are] persons, [who] having associated with Jewish families as employees, neighbors or fellow students, have found in them such goodness of heart, understanding, warm empathy, and so consistently helpful an attitude that, now, their sense of justice is outraged by the condemnation of this people to a pariah’s existence. But many others lack this kind of experience. The opportunity to attain it has been denied primarily to the young who, these days, are being reared in racial hatred from earliest childhood. To all who have been thus deprived, *we who grew up in Judaism have an obligation to give our testimony*“ Stein (1986), 23. Emphasis mine.

52 At this time, she was also writing a study on the theology on St. John of the Cross – Stein (1994) – that was interrupted by her arrest. In her years in the convent Stein had also continued writing philosophy. Her most important book, *Finite and Eternal Being (Endliches und Ewiges Sein)*, was not published during her lifetime because of the Nazi prohibition against publications by Jewish authors and her refusal to publish under a false non-Jewish name.

Jewish women such as Glückel von Hameln and Pauline Wengeroff, rather than refer to the many Christian women autobiographers who had preceded her, most notably her fellow Carmelites Thérèse of Lisieux and Teresa of Ávila, whose autobiography had played such a significant role in Stein's final decision to convert to Catholicism. Some biographers believe that the manuscript was interrupted and left incomplete by her arrest (i.e., Koeppel who is the translator of this document into English).⁵³ Others, however, believe that the omission was done consciously. These scholars believe the silence about her later life was motivated by "an awareness that under the circumstances of Nazi anti-Jewish persecution the story of a conversion would not help to promote the cause of racial tolerance".⁵⁴ I tend to agree with this latter view because even if she did not have time to write about her later life, she could have made reference to her adult activities and convictions while writing of her earlier life. In fact, many autobiographies rewrite the events of early life in light of future events. But there is nothing of the sort in Stein's *Life in a Jewish Family*.⁵⁵

53 Koeppel in her introduction to Stein (1986).

54 Brenner (1994), 264.

55 I concur with Brenner that this self-imposed silence was most probably a conscious choice. "Her decision to write about her Jewish life at that particular historical moment communicates a moral attitude which, at the time of moral disintegration dismisses not only religious differences, but also the risk of personal danger". Brenner (1994), 89. The circumstances surrounding Stein's arrest were the basis for her beatification as a martyr. The Church has never issued a dogmatic definition of martyrdom. However, there is a yardstick of what is recognized as martyrdom. A martyr is an innocent person who dies at the hands of a tyrant in defense of his or her faith. It is the martyr's fidelity to his or her faith that "provokes the tyrant" into executing him or her. Cf. Woodward (1996), 129. – Stein did not herself "provoke the tyrant", but her arrest and death were a consequence of the action of the Dutch bishops. Martyrdom has been historically a political act because it involves a refusal to bow to the authority of the tyrant. Usually, the "tyrants" were non-Christians who persecuted Christians for their faith. Earlier Christian saints were martyrs of the Roman Empire. The Nazis, with their pretense of Christianity, as well as, say, the death squads in El Salvador or Guatemala, uniquely challenge the Church's definition of who is a tyrant and who is a martyr. The Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints, encouraged by Pope John Paul II's decision to beatify and canonize Stein and others, extended the concept of martyrdom to include right-wing dictators who hide under a pretense of Christianity under the definition of "tyrants". In addition to Stein several canonizations have been test cases for this new understanding: Titus Brandsma, a Carmelite from Holland, killed in Dachau for encouraging the Dutch Catholic Press to resist Nazi propaganda; Maximilian Kolbe, the Polish Franciscan who died in Auschwitz after offering his life for the life of another prisoner who had been condemned to starve to death; Rupert Mayer, a Jesuit from Munich, and others. Among them, Stein is the only woman and the only Jew. In the process of their beatifications and canonizations, the Pope made an important point about the definitions of tyrants and martyrdom, and opened the door for the future canonization of others in which he may have been less interested, such as Archbishop Romero and the six Jesuit priests and their housekeepers, all murdered by Salvadoran right-wing death squads. Clearly, John Paul "used" the lives of those he beatified and canonized to make

Stein's sense of commitment to her people was unshaken by Christian prejudices. As a psychologist, I can only guess at her pain and internal conflict as she struggled with her two identities and loyalties and lived with the negative reactions and suspicion of both Jews and Catholics who surrounded her. To feel Jewish and yet feel Catholic, at her particular junction in history, was by no means an easy task.⁵⁶

In addition to the implications of her canonization for Catholics' understanding of the Shoah/Holocaust, if Stein's writings on women became known amongst Catholics, her thinking exercised a significant influence on the role of women in the Church. Her words now carry the authority of a canonized saint ... and no canonized saint has ever been so explicit about sexism in and outside of the Church or has openly defined herself as a feminist.

Let me now return to the premise of this paper on the basis of the few examples discussed: Women saints constructed and modeled their own lives and identity after culturally available interpretations of women's roles, influenced by their own personal histories and psychological makeup. Rosa constructed her life on the basis of understandings about women's bodies and women's sanctity available to her. In so doing, though, she constructed herself as different from other women contemporaries. She challenged her confessors, family, and even her hagiographers to interpret her life in ways that both fit and subverted acceptable interpretations of women's lives. Which forces in her own individual history made her uniqueness possible? The real Rosa

deliberate theological statements as well as statements about world history and politics.

56 Catholic theological perspectives on Judaism during Stein's life were rather anti-Semitic. Not only did they foster negative stereotypes (cf. Ruether (1981) and (1982)) but definitely lacked insight into the special vocation of the Jewish people later developed by Vatican Council II in the 1960s. There is no doubt that anti-Semitic theological perspectives were to blame for the success of the Nazi anti-Semitic policies. Stein's theological perspectives on Jews and Judaism did not benefit from the Council's later understandings. In *Nostra aetate*, the 1965 Vatican Council's Declaration concerning non-Christian religions, the spiritual connections of the Catholic Church with Judaism and the Jewish people are presented in a new light. Both *Nostra aetate*, and the more recent document from the Pontifical Biblical Commission (2002), *The Jewish people and their sacred scriptures in the Christian bible*, insist on the continuity of Israel's covenant and the debt of Christians to Jewish scripture and traditions. The natural consequence of this acknowledgment should be a new form of Catholic-Jewish relationships as well as a new Catholic understanding of Christian scriptures and traditions (See, for example, Palikowski (2007)). It may be interesting to note that readings of the Mass of Stein's canonization were from Ch. 4 in the book of Esther, when she pleads with God to give her the strength to save her people and from Ch. 4 of John's gospel, in which Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that "salvation comes from the Jews".

and her motivations remain a mystery to us. However, the fact is that she resisted the life that had been planned for her. Despite her own bizarre means of self-assertion, her lack of conformity and her independent decision-making conspire against the hagiographers' efforts to make her appear only as an accommodating and submissive woman. Her story suggest that women, though constrained by difficult circumstances and having limited resources, may resort to bold, even destructive measures, to assert their own capacity for action and resist being just passive victims. In this way their lives are lived paradoxically against the grain of societal scripts ... while limited in their choice of possibilities by those same scripts. The crux, for each woman, is in the specific intersection of subjectivity and social power; in "dissecting how [oppressive] regimes compel submission on the level of [her] subjectivity".⁵⁷

For me, personally, Rosa's story creates more questions and paradoxes than it solves. I know that, as a child, watching movies and reading books about Rosa and other women saints, offered a vision of alternatives heroism and possibilities for my life as a woman. I liked that they played an active role in their own lives. But as I look at Rosa through a feminist lens, I am mostly disgusted and horrified at the price she paid for her elevation to the altars. And, as a therapist, I have been witness to how our modern society also destroys women's lives and bodies in the name of beauty or love.

Edith Stein, on the other hand, closer to us in history and in her thinking, provides us with another – explicitly feminist – perspective about women's lives. In particular, I see her as a model of personal integrity and, no less important, as a model of intellectual woman.

As a feminist deeply touched by liberation theologies, I believe in the importance of resisting oppression. I am conscious that each one of us has a limited repertory to do so. I think that Rosa, Edith, Teresa and Joan and many other women saints, like us, were both conformists and resisters. I have come to realize that the resistance narrative embedded in their stories and efforts at understanding the meanings and possibilities of women's lives are present in one form or another in all women's lives, including mine. To this day, Teresa of Ávila and Edith Stein show me the value and power of writing and intellectual pursuit. Rose of Lima, Mariana Paredes of Quito, and Teresa of Los Andes present alternative ways to be Latin American despite racial tensions, social injustice and political upheaval and point out the pitfalls of relying on individual, per-

57 Bergner (2005), 17.

sonal spiritual approaches in the face of our unique mixture of historical circumstances. Rosa's and Mariana's influence on the construction of a Latin American identity in their respective cities in early colonial times persists to this day.

Because I am a psychologist, I see human behavior through the lens provided by developmental, social, and clinical psychologies. Because I am a feminist, I read all historical information about these women with a certain "hermeneutical suspicion" that helps me see important information in the interstices, in what is not said by them as well as by others writing about them. Because I live in these historical times, I have access to understandings of gender and women's lives that were not prevalent before the twentieth century. Although the human developmental journey is widely different in different historical and cultural settings, saints are like us – down to earth. Their gritty resistance to authority and sometimes stubborn conformity, their personal limitations and successes, can illumine our own lives' struggles.

Looking at these women, I hope that I have learned some lessons along the way. And above all, I hope I can transmit those lessons to other women to encourage them to make their lives all they can be without resorting to self-destruction.

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Innsbrucker Gender Lectures I

Für Erna Appelt

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Zuvor

Im Sommer 2005 wurde an der Universität Innsbruck der Forschungsschwerpunkt „Geschlechterforschung“ ins Leben gerufen. Erna Appelt war eine der InitiatorInnen und nach seiner Konstituierung auch Sprecherin dieses fakultätsübergreifenden und damit inter- und multidisziplinären Zusammenschlusses von WissenschaftlerInnen und Wissenschaftlern. Der Forschungsschwerpunkt „Geschlechterforschung“ hatte zum Ziel, die Aktivitäten an der Universität – seit nahezu drei Jahrzehnten war im Bereich der Frauen- und kritischen Geschlechterforschung intensiv geforscht und gelehrt worden – zu bündeln. Damit sollten auf der inhaltlichen Ebene Synergien möglich, sollte auf der forschungspolitischen Ebene die „Geschlechterforschung“ innerhalb der universitären Strukturen gestärkt und die Außenwirkung der Universität Innsbruck in dieser Hinsicht weiter profiliert werden. Das dürfte – nicht zuletzt dank des Einsatzes und der Umsicht Erna Appelts – geglückt sein, denn mit 1. Jänner 2008 wurde der Forschungsschwerpunkt „Geschlechterforschung“ von der Universität zur Interfakultären Forschungsplattform „Geschlechterforschung: Identitäten – Diskurse – Transformationen“ aufgewertet, zu deren Leiterin Erna Appelt gewählt wurde. So souverän wie uneitel bemüht sie sich auf verschiedenen Ebenen um praktizierte Demokratie. Die regelmäßig tagende „Steuerungsgruppe“ diskutiert und plant inhaltliche und strategische Wege, gegebenenfalls wird eine Vollversammlung einberufen. Mitglieder der Forschungsplattform sind in selbständig geleiteten Forschungsgruppen organisiert, zu denen Erna Appelt die Anschubenergie gab und an deren Aktivitäten sie sich beteiligt. „Körpertheorien – Theorizing the Body“ ist von einem Lesekreis zu einer Forschungsgruppe geworden, der Forschungsgruppe „Gender, Care and Justice“ hat Erna Appelt 2008/2009 auch als Sprecherin gedient, die Forschungsgruppe „Auto/Biographie – De/Rekonstruktionen“ wurde im Jahr 2010 von ihr initiiert. Schon in den 1980er Jahren arbeitete Erna Appelt in den Bereichen der feministischen Geschichtswissenschaft und Politikwissenschaft, 1989-2005 war sie Mitherausgeberin

der Zeitschrift für feministische Geschichtswissenschaft *L'Homme*. Seit 1989 am Institut für Politikwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck tätig, setzte sie sich in diversen Kommissionen kontinuierlich für die feministische Lehre ein. Neben eigenen Arbeiten im Bereich der Geschlechterdemokratie gab sie etliche wichtige Sammelbände (mit) heraus, u.a. zur *Feministischen Politikwissenschaft* (1994, gemeinsam mit Gerda Neyer), zum Wissenschaftsbetrieb: *Karrierenschiere. Geschlechterverhältnisse im österreichischen Wissenschaftsbetrieb* (2004) und zur *Gleichstellungspolitik in Österreich* (2009). Sie leitet Forschungsprojekte und ist Gutachterin und Mitglied diverser Kommissionen und Jurys auch außerhalb der Universität Innsbruck. Dass sie Diplomarbeiten und Dissertationen begleitet, muss kaum eigens mitgeteilt werden, wie hier auch nur einige und spezifische Initiativen und Arbeiten erwähnt werden können. Die Einrichtung des inter fakultären Masterstudiums „Gender, Culture and Social Change“ an der Fakultät für Politikwissenschaft und Soziologie der Universität Innsbruck mit Wintersemester 2010/11, vorbereitet und koordiniert von Elisabeth Grabner-Niel, gehört zu den Erfolgen der Forschungsplattform, die dieses Studium trägt. Erna Appelt ist Vorsitzende der ambitionierten Arbeitsgruppe zur Entwicklung des Curriculums gewesen.

Die INNSBRUCKER GENDER LECTURES wurden im Juni 2008 aus der Taufe gehoben und sind seit März 2009 fester Bestandteil der zahlreichen Aktivitäten der Forschungsplattform. Ihr Anliegen ist es, das breite Spektrum und die Aktualität feministischer Forschung zu vermitteln. Das Format der Vortragsreihe ist Resultat der Zusammenarbeit von Erna Appelt und Andrea Ellmeier, Koordinatorin der Forschungsplattform von Februar 2008 bis Mai 2009. Erna Appelt ist für das Programm der INNSBRUCKER GENDER LECTURES verantwortlich und betreut die Veranstaltungen inzwischen gemeinsam mit Marion Jarosch, Koordinatorin der Plattform seit Juni 2009.

Die Mitglieder der Forschungsplattform vertreten Fachgebiete von 9 Fakultäten der Universität Innsbruck (Politikwissenschaft, Soziologie, Betriebswirtschaft, Volkswirtschaft, Rechtswissenschaft, Geschichtswissenschaft, Ethnologie, Kunstgeschichte, deutsch- und fremdsprachige Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik, Bildungswissenschaft, Psychologie und Theologie), Forschungsinstitute an der Universität (Forschungsinstitut Brenner-Archiv, Institut für Gebirgsforschung der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften) sowie das Büro für Gleichstellung und Gender Studies und das Management-Center Innsbruck. Zu ihnen gehören aber

auch freie WissenschaftlerInnen. Sie bündeln ihr Wissen und gleichen Methoden ab, zum Gewinn der Forschung und im Sinne einer Forschungsperspektive, die mit oben genannten Aktivitäten deren Etablierung unterstützt oder fördert. Dass fachliche, methodische und persönliche Vielfalt koordiniert statt reduziert wird, ist Erna Appelts Kommunikation und Engagement zu verdanken.

Als Zeichen der Wertschätzung und Dankbarkeit sei dieser Band zu ihrem 60. Geburtstag Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Erna Appelt gewidmet, der Sprecherin, Leiterin, Anstifterin, Begleiterin, Kritikerin, Reflexions- und Diskussionspartnerin, Förderin, Kollegin.

Alles Gute, liebe Erna, und *ad multos annos!*

Die Mitglieder der Interfakultären Forschungsplattform „Geschlechterforschung: Identitäten – Diskurse – Transformationen“:

Christina Antenhofer, Manfred Auer, Kristin Balassa, Gunda Barth-Scalmani, Christine Baur, Anneliese Bechter, Laurie R. Cohen, Elisabeth Dietrich-Daum, Veronika Eberharter, Doris Eibl, Andrea Ellmeier, Anni Findl-Ludescher, Eva Fleischer, Margarethe Flora, Ellinor Forster, Margret Friedrich, Michael Ganner, Sabine Gatt, Lisa Gensluckner, Elisabeth Grabner-Niel, Flavia Guerrini, Oliver Haid, Kornelia Hauser, Maria Heidegger, Sandra Heinsch, Marina Hilber, Marion Jarosch, Barbara Juen, Monika Jarosch, Manfred Kienpointner, Christine Klapeer, Sieglinde Klettenhammer, Bernhard Koch, Regine Kramer, Hermann Kuprian, Gertraud Ladner, Daniela Leitner, Elisabeth Mairhofer, Ulrike Marx, Wolfgang Meixner, Birgit Mertz-Baumgartner, Agnes Neumayr, Jutta Obertegger, Elke Pale-Langhammer, Beatrice Partel, Elfriede Pöder, Claudia Posch, Julia Prager, Max Preglau, Heike Raab, Michaela Ralsler, Annemarie Rettenwander, Silvia Rief, Mathilde Schmitt, Kordula Schnegg, Ursula Schneider, Sabine Schrader, Stephanie Schumacher, Heidi Siller, Annette Steinsiek, Itta Tenschert, Erika Thurner, Irene Tischler, Helga Treichl, Miriam Trojer, Alois Unterkircher, Caroline Voithofer, Alexandra Weiss, Heike Welte, Maria Wolf.



Einleitung

Die INNSBRUCKER GENDER LECTURES verstehen sich als Diskussions- und Austauschforum, das es den Mitgliedern der Interfakultären Forschungsplattform „Geschlechterforschung: Identitäten – Diskurse – Transformationen“ und GenderforscherInnen aus dem In- und Ausland ermöglicht, brisante Themen in den Blick zu nehmen, unter geschlechterkritischer Perspektive zu diskutieren und sich über theoretische Grundlagen der inter- und multidisziplinären Geschlechterforschung auszutauschen. Dass die an die Vorträge anschließenden fachkundigen Kommentare einer Kollegin oder eines Kollegen die vorgestellten Thesen gewissermaßen abrunden oder den Vorträgen eine alternative Sichtweise auf die jeweilige Thematik gegenüberstellen, trägt wesentlich zu einer programmatischen Dialogizität bei, auf die die inter-fakultäre Forschungsplattform besonderen Wert legt.

Das Ziel der Vortragsreihe ist es nicht allein, die Wissensvernetzung innerhalb der Forschungsplattform und mit in- und ausländischen GenderforscherInnen zu fördern, sondern darüber hinaus auch einem interessierten Publikum Einblick in die geschlechterkritische Forschung unterschiedlicher Disziplinen zu bieten. Um möglichst vielen Menschen die Gelegenheit zu geben, von den INNSBRUCKER GENDER LECTURES zu profitieren, werden die Vorträge auf der Homepage der Forschungsplattform Geschlechterforschung zum Nachlesen archiviert. Zusätzlich werden sie aufgezeichnet und jeweils zwei Wochen nach dem Vortragstermin in Kooperation mit Freirad (Freies Radio Innsbruck) ausgestrahlt.

Dieses Format ist überzeugend – so überzeugend, dass der vorgelegte Sammelband nicht übersehen darf, auf was er verzichten muss: unter anderem eben auf die Kommentare, auf deren VerfasserInnen nur hingewiesen werden soll. Und doch will er versuchen, zu Dialog und Diskussion die Dauer zu stellen und die *lectures* auf eine Weise greifbar zu machen, die noch weiteres Publikum zu gewinnen hofft. Dies war zunächst nicht geplant, und so waren die Vortragenden nicht darauf vorbereitet,

die Beiträge in einem Sammelband zu publizieren. Daher sind manche inzwischen an anderer Stelle publiziert worden (in diesem Fall waren Eingriffe auf das Nötigste zu beschränken; entsprechende Mitteilungen finden sich in den Fußnoten), und einigen Beiträgen ist in ihrer Rhetorik und Anlage durchaus noch der Vortrag abzu hören. Nicht immer ist es allerdings gut, wenn die Vortragenden von Anfang an wissen, dass die Beiträge gedruckt werden, schnell gehen damit Unmittelbarkeit wie Diskussionsbereitschaft einer *lecture* verloren. Der Entschluss zu dieser Publikation wurde erst im Frühjahr dieses Jahres gefasst, nicht ohne dass Erna Appelt schon seit längerem auch Überlegungen in diese Richtung geäußert hatte. Dass sie mit der Umsetzung (wenn auch aus dem selbstverschuldeten Anlass ihres 60. Geburtstages) nun vor Tatsachen gestellt ist, ist unser Risiko. Dass die Zukunft immer Modifikationen möglich macht, die Chance.

Mit Ende des Sommersemesters 2011 kann die Forschungsplattform auf 19 INNSBRUCKER GENDER LECTURES zurückblicken, die in ihrer fachlichen und thematischen Diversität die Aktualität und gesellschaftliche Dringlichkeit der Geschlechterforschung unterstreichen. Der vorliegende Sammelband verzichtet auf eine Einteilung in Kapitel, die Beiträge sind entsprechend der Reihenfolge der *lectures* angeordnet.

Manfred Auer und **Heike Welte** (30.6.2008: „Soziale Positionierung von GleichstellungsakteurInnen in Österreich“, Titel des Beitrags: „Betriebliche Gleichstellungspolitik – top oder flop?“) gehen der Frage nach, welchen Einfluss Organisationen durch ihre Managementstrategien und ihre Personalpolitik auf die Chancengleichheit der Geschlechter haben oder nehmen. Eine wichtige, aber bisher kaum untersuchte Rolle für die organisationale Gender-Praxis kommt dabei jenen AkteurInnen zu, die sich in ihren Organisationen aktiv mit Gleichstellungspolitik beschäftigen. Es handelt sich vor allem um Gleichbehandlungsbeauftragte im öffentlichen Bereich, BetriebsrätInnen bzw. Personalvertretungen sowie PersonalleiterInnen. Der Beitrag bemüht sich um eine Analyse der Situation von GleichstellungsakteurInnen im österreichischen Kontext und zeigt deren Einflussmöglichkeiten auf vergeschlechtlichte Organisationsstrukturen und organisationale Praktiken. Die Fragestellung richtete sich auf das Funktions- bzw. Rollenverständnis dieser GleichstellungsakteurInnen, ihre subjektive Einschätzung der Gender-Problematik in der Organisation, in der sie tätig sind, ihre sozialen Beziehungen innerhalb dieser Organisation sowie die von ihnen eingesetzten Ressourcen und Strategien, um die Gleichstellung der Geschlechter zu fördern.

Gudrun-Axeli Knapp (10.3.2009: „Trans-Begriffe‘, ‚Paradoxie‘ und ‚Intersektionalität‘. Notizen zu Veränderungen im Vokabular der Gesellschaftsanalyse“, Kommentar: Erna Appelt, Institut für Politikwissenschaft, Univ. Innsbruck) wirft einen Blick auf Konzepte, mit denen Gegenwartsdiagnostik oder zeitgenössische Gesellschaftsanalyse betrieben werden. Dies ist für das Verständnis gesellschaftlicher Veränderungen, aber auch für die feministische Gesellschafts- und Kulturanalyse relevant. Deren Terminologie hat sich in den letzten Jahren merklich verändert: Auffallend ist die Konjunktur von Komposita mit der Vorsilbe „trans“ (transnational, translokal, Transfergeschichte etc.), die auf eine verstärkte Auseinandersetzung mit tradierten Formen der Grenzziehung hindeutet. Die Rede von „Paradoxien“ scheint in den Sozialwissenschaften früher gebräuchliche Begriffe, etwa den des Widerspruchs, allmählich zu ersetzen. „Intersektionalität“ ist zu einem Kürzel für perspektivische Erweiterungen in der feministischen Theorie und Forschung geworden. Der Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit den Fragen, wofür diese Verschiebungen stehen, was sie sichtbar machen und was durch sie verdeckt wird.

Jürgen Budde (16.6.2009: „Sind Buben Bildungsverlierer? Männlichkeit als Bildungsblockade“, Kommentar: Maria Wolf, Institut für Erziehungswissenschaft, Univ. Innsbruck; Titel des Beitrags: „Bildungs(miss)erfolge – Habitus – Interaktionen. Männlichkeiten im schulischen Feld“) legt in seinen Ausführungen dar, dass seit einiger Zeit die Diskussion über Jungen als in der Schule „benachteiligtes Geschlecht“ zunimmt, und erörtert die Frage, inwieweit schulischer Misserfolg von Jungen mit der Orientierung an Männlichkeitsstereotypen zu tun haben könnte. Es werden zum einen die Interaktionen zwischen Jungen untereinander analysiert, zum anderen wird aber auch ein Blick auf die Haltungen der Lehrkräfte und die entsprechenden Interaktionen mit den Schülern gerichtet. Bei beiden Interaktionen werden männliche Stereotype (re-)produziert, die – so die These – hemmend auf den Bildungserfolg von Jungen wirken, was der Beitrag mit konkreten Beispielen belegt.

Den historischen Beitrag von Friedensaktivistinnen und Kriegsgegnerinnen zwischen 1914 und 1939 untersucht **Laurie R. Cohen** in einem internationalen und vergleichenden Kontext (27.10.2009: „Freche Frauen. Fallbeispiele von Friedensaktivistinnen und Weltbürgerinnen im transatlantischen Vergleich (1914-1939)“, Kommentar: Brigitte Rath, Institut für Geschichte, Univ. Wien). Ihr Beitrag stellt ihre in Arbeit befindliche Habilitationsschrift vor. Die *citizen activists* – aus Europa (Österreich bzw. Österreich-Ungarn, Deutschland und Russland bzw. UdSSR) und den Vereinigten

Staaten – waren Mitglieder verschiedener Organisationen (etwa nationaler und internationaler Frauenvereinigungen sowie Friedensbewegungen, sozialistischer Parteien, anarchistischer Gruppen). Ihre Initiativen und ihre Errungenschaften sind unverdient in Vergessenheit geraten und werden von Cohen anhand von zeitgenössischen Dokumenten rekonstruiert.

Um die epochentypischen Nervenkrankheiten der Zeit um 1900 – Hysterien, Neurasthenien und traumatische Neurosen – kreisen die Überlegungen von **Michaela Ralsler** (Lecture 19.1.2010: „Die Klage des Subjekts“, Kommentar: Maria Heidegger, Institut für Geschichte u. Ethnologie, Univ. Innsbruck). Diese Nervenkrankheiten zeichneten sich durch ihr epidemisches und periodisches Auftreten aus. Als sogenannte „Transient Mental Illnesses“ (Ian Hacking) kommt ihnen an der Wende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert mehrfache Bedeutung zu. Sie erlangten in kurzer Zeit eine Publizität, die es rechtfertigt, sie als erste mediale Krankheiten der Geschichte zu bezeichnen. Sie bestimmten die zeitgenössische Diskussion über die Ordnung der Geschlechter und die Geschlechterbeziehungen, dienten als Argumente in der Krisen-debatte der Moderne und flankierten die Auseinandersetzungen um die soziale Frage nachhaltig.

Oliva M. Espín (18.3.2010: „Female Saints: Submissive or Rebellious? Feminists in Disguise?“, Kommentar: Laurie R. Cohen, Institut für Politikwissenschaft, Univ. Innsbruck) wendet sich den weiblichen Heiligen zu, die, so stellt sie fest, üblicherweise als unterwürfig und autoritätshörig dargestellt werden. Eine vorurteilsfreie Lektüre ihrer Lebensgeschichten zeigt allerdings spezielle Muster des Widerstands. Bilder von weiblichen Heiligen geben Auskunft über Geschlechter- und Sexualitätsvorstellungen in verschiedenen sozio-historischen Kontexten. Diese Bilder bedienen das politische und soziale Klima, das sie hervorbringt. Mit der Zeit verändern sie sich, um die Vorstellungen von Geschlecht adäquat repräsentieren zu können. Kirche und Gesellschaft haben im Lauf der Jahrhunderte Konzepte von Weiblichkeit generiert und mittels der Heiligenbilder propagiert. Die Viten heiliger Frauen waren ideale Exemplifizierungen, ihr Einfluss reicht bis in gegenwärtige Erwartungen an Weiblichkeit hinein.

Martin Dannecker (13.4.2010: „Geschlechtsidentität und Geschlechtsidentitätsstörung“, Kommentar: Erna Appelt, Institut für Politikwissenschaft, Univ. Innsbruck) beschäftigt sich mit der Problematik, dass aus psychotherapeutischer Sicht die Geschlechtsidentität eines Menschen eindeutig und in sich konsistent sein soll-

te. Den Menschen wird dabei ein elementares Bedürfnis unterstellt, sich fraglos einem der beiden Geschlechter zugehörig zu fühlen. Immer mehr Menschen haben sich jedoch, aus welchen Gründen auch immer, entschlossen, jenseits eines binären Geschlechterverhältnisses zu leben. Diese Lebensentwürfe werden klinisch als „Geschlechtsidentitätsstörung“ diagnostiziert und pathologisiert. Damit werden auch sexuelle Entwicklungsphasen, die mit nicht geschlechtskonformem Verhalten einhergehen, als „Identitätsstörung“ eingestuft (und etwa prähomosexuelle Jungen bereits diskriminiert). Der Beitrag diskutiert die Frage, ob das Konzept einer in sich konsistenten Geschlechtsidentität nicht systematisch die Brüche und Konflikte ausblendet, die mit jedweder Geschlechtsidentität einhergehen.

Albrecht Becker und **Ulrike Marx** (11.5.2010: „Gender & Accounting. Gender Budgeting Konstruktionen“, Kommentar: Manfred Auer, Institut für Organisation und Lernen, Univ. Innsbruck; Titel des Beitrags: „Gender Budgeting: Quantifizierungen und Lippenbekenntnisse“) erschließen den Bereich des Rechnungswesens und stellen fest, dass Forschungen zu genderrelevanten Aspekten von Controlling und Rechnungswesen in der deutschsprachigen betriebswirtschaftlichen Literatur so gut wie nicht zu finden sind. Allerdings gibt es praxisorientierte Konzepte und Vorschläge zur systematischen Überwachung von gleichstellungs- und genderrelevanten Steuerungsgrößen in Unternehmen und anderen Organisationen; damit sind insbesondere die Konzepte des Gleichstellungscontrollings und des Gender Budgeting gemeint. In Österreich ist die Implementierung von Gender Budgeting durch die mit 1.1.2009 in Kraft getretene Verfassungsnovelle (BGBl. I Nr. 1/2008) verpflichtend für Bund, Länder, Gemeinden – und auch für die Universitäten. Da allerdings weitgehend unklar ist, was Gender Budgeting eigentlich meint, wie es umgesetzt werden und welche Auswirkungen es haben kann, bedarf es für die konkrete Umsetzung einer umfassenden Übersetzungsleistung, d.h. es gilt, das Konzept für die Praxis brauchbar zu machen.

Elisabeth Holzleithner (15.6.2010: „Recht, Geschlecht und Gerechtigkeit“, Kommentar: Caroline Voithofer, Institut für Zivilrecht, Univ. Innsbruck) geht der Frage nach Recht und/oder Gerechtigkeit im Geschlechterverhältnis auf den Grund. Eine Voraussetzung für die juristische Auseinandersetzung ist die Klärung und Diskussion von Konzepten zu Ungleichheit oder Gleichheit der Geschlechter und zur Beziehung zwischen den Geschlechtern. Diese betreffen die Organisation sowohl des privaten

als auch des öffentlichen Lebens. Holzleithner referiert verschiedene feministische Theorien zu Gleichheit bzw. Ungleichheit im Geschlechterverhältnis, darunter auch neuere Ansätze, die die Geschlechterdifferenz als solche in Frage stellen. Vor diesem Hintergrund wird ausgeführt, welche Rolle dem Recht bei der Herstellung von Geschlechtergerechtigkeit zukommen kann.

Brigitte Aulenbacher (7.12.2010: „Geschlechterungleichheit in der unternehmerischen Gesellschaft: Herausforderungen und Wege feministischer Forschung“, Kommentar: Erna Appelt, Institut für Politikwissenschaft, Univ. Innsbruck) befasst sich mit dem neoliberalen Umbau der Gesellschaft, der in den OECD-Ländern mit Verwerfungen in den Geschlechterverhältnissen einhergeht. Der Bedeutungsverlust von Geschlecht für die gesellschaftliche Stellung von Menschen ist ebenso festzustellen wie die Kurzsichtigkeit derer, die mit der Betonung dieser Beobachtung unverkennbare Geschlechterungleichheiten verdecken. Der Beitrag diskutiert die Frage, in welcher Weise sich die unternehmerische Gesellschaft mit dem Diskurs über Geschlechtergleichheit und -ungleichheit verbindet und wie dies die feministische Gesellschaftsanalyse herausfordert. Exemplarisch wird Bezug auf Erkenntnisse zum Wandel von Arbeitsteilungen und Gerechtigkeitsvorstellungen im öffentlichen Sektor und der privaten Daseinsfürsorge genommen.

Sigrid Schmitz (17.1.2011: „Neuro-Gender: eine Auseinandersetzung mit Geschlecht in der modernen Neurokultur“, Kommentar: Heike Raab, Institut für Erziehungswissenschaft, Univ. Innsbruck; Titel des Beitrags: „Gehirnoptimierung – (k)ein geschlechtsloses Feld?“) stellt fest, dass sich unter dem Stichwort „Neuro-“ aktuell enge Verflechtungen der modernen Hirnforschung mit verschiedenen Wissenschaftsdisziplinen entwickeln. Im Zuge dieser Amalgamierung von Biologie, Technik und Sozialität wird der Mensch auf sein Gehirn reduziert, zum „cerebralen Subjekt“. Geschlechterzuschreibungen und Geschlechterideologien wirken auch in den Theorien zum „cerebralen Subjekt“ und den zugehörigen Anwendungstechnologien. Der Beitrag analysiert das Spannungsfeld zwischen einem zugleich determiniert und modulierbar gedachten Gehirn sowie seiner Nutzung und Anpassung im Rahmen gesellschaftlicher Optimierungsdiskurse und Normierungsstrategien.

Heinz-Jürgen Voß (15.3.2011: „‚Natürlich‘ gibt es kein Geschlecht. Von Theorien der Differenz und Gleichheit zweier Geschlechter hin zu vielen Geschlechtern“, Kommentar: Heike Raab, Institut für Erziehungswissenschaft, Univ. Innsbruck) ruft in

Erinnerung, dass in den letzten Jahren die biologisch-medizinischen Wissenschaften Frau und Mann als radikal-different postulierten. Das war nicht immer so: Mit den um 1800 aufkommenden entwicklungsgeschichtlichen Denkweisen wurde ein (nahezu) gleicher Zeugungsbeitrag von Frau und Mann angenommen, Beschreibungen weitreichender Ähnlichkeiten des Genitaltraktes und weiterer Merkmale schlossen sich an. Die Genetik ist seit langem erfolglos auf der Suche nach dem geschlechtsdeterminierenden Faktor. Doch zeigen, so Voß, aktuelle Erkenntnisse, dass viele Faktoren an der geschlechtlichen Entwicklung beteiligt sind, und dass die geschlechtliche Entwicklung sich nicht mehr in das ideologische Korsett einer „typisch weiblichen“ oder einer „typisch männlichen“ Entwicklung pressen lässt.

Renate Syed (12.4.2011: „Nicht Mann, nicht Frau“. Hijras: Indiens drittes Geschlecht und seine dritte Kultur“, Kommentar: Michaela Ralser, Institut für Erziehungswissenschaft, Univ. Innsbruck) verweist auf die Tatsache, dass in Indien seit Sommer 2009 Menschen, die sich weder als Männer noch als Frauen verstehen, in offiziellen Papieren die Kategorie „other(s)“ wählen können. Nach der im Jahr 1949 entstandenen Verfassung, die das westliche Zwei-Geschlechter-Modell übernommen hat, kehrt Indien damit zu seiner Tradition zurück. Mindestens 1,2 Millionen „Drittgeschlechtler“, die sich selbst Hijras nennen und eine eigene Kultur entwickelt haben, leben heute in Indien. Die Hijra-Gemeinschaft ist kein offener Freiraum für Individualisten, sondern ein Jahrtausende alter kultureller „dritter Raum“ mit strikten Riten und Regeln und somit Heimat und Ghetto zugleich, denn Hijras werden geduldet, aber auch gefürchtet und verachtet. Die Hijras definieren sich 1. als „Nicht Mann, nicht Frau“, 2. als „weibliche Seele in männlichem Leib“ und 3. als eigene Geschlechtskategorie, als „Drittes Geschlecht“. Angesichts dessen stellt Syed die Frage, ob oder inwieweit die Hijras und ihre Kultur mit westlichen Definitionen überhaupt erfasst werden, ob sie diese bereichern können.

Mathilde Schmitt (7.6.2011: „Frauen und Mädchen in (post)ruralen Räumen. Ein Plädoyer für die Integration von ‚Lokalität‘ in die Intersektionalitätsdebatte“, Kommentar: Theresia Oedl-Wieser, Bundesanstalt für Bergbauernfragen, Wien) stellt die Frage, ob es heute noch Sinn macht, Frauen und Mädchen aus ländlichen Gebieten als eigenständige Gruppe zu thematisieren. Hat sich ihr Leben durch die gestiegene Mobilität, Internet und Fernsehen nicht dem der Stadtfrauen angeglichen? Unterscheidet sich die geschlechterdemokratische Entwicklung zwischen

Stadt und Land? Wie ernst zu nehmen sind die Phänomene einer Feminisierung der Landwirtschaft und des Landlebens? Entlang dieser Fragen bemüht sich Schmitt um eine Erweiterung des feministischen Blicks. Voraussetzung dafür ist, so die Autorin, dass die ländliche Bevölkerung nicht pauschal als randständig oder konservativ wahrgenommen und die (post)moderne Gesellschaft nicht länger nur als eine urbane Gesellschaft verstanden wird.

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