

Abstracts

Christa Hämmerle

Traditions, Trends and Perspectives: Women's and Gender History on the First World War in Austria

The article takes as its starting point the theoretical necessity and intrinsic value of research into the women's and gender history of the First World War in Austria (the western half of Austria-Hungary or Cisleithania). It asks if, and how, this long neglected and only sporadically researched field has developed in recent years, before assessing how far women's and gender history has been incorporated into the mainstream of World War One studies in Austria. The author concludes that the question of 'women in war' is, on the one hand, included in studies of World War One. On the other hand, however, this nearly always occurs in the form of separate chapters, which stand isolated within texts that otherwise do not integrate women's and gender historical approaches into their analysis of other aspects of the war. At the same time, a return of 'male master narratives' can clearly be observed in this field of historiography. Following these critical observations, the main part of the article assesses the published literature on the women's and gender history of World War One in Austria – a literature which swelled substantially in the one hundredth anniversary year, 2014. In doing so, the author is concerned to elaborate the still existing gaps in research in many areas.

Ingrid E. Sharp

Gender History and the First World War in Germany: Developments and Perspectives

This article offers an overview of existing research from the last two decades into the German experience of the First World War from a gender perspective. It argues that the history of the war has previously privileged the experience of male combatants and that there is ground to make up in offering a differentiated account of German women's wartime activities and responses. The article shows how the concept of heroism, although problematic in the German context, can offer an insight into changing attitudes to military masculinity, and how alternatives to an anachronistic vision of military heroism have been used by anti-war campaigners to challenge hegemonic masculinities. It is argued that, while the inclusion of a gender perspective has become mainstream in recent publications, there is still a tendency to present women's wartime experiences as more homogenous than that of men. Within military history, masculinity is often still viewed as a natural rather than a constructed

category, suggesting that the mainstreaming of a gender perspective still has some way to go.

Bruna Bianchi

Living in Wartime. Women in Italian Historiography (1980–2014)

In the first part of this article, the author considers the scant attention paid to the case of Italy in the international historiography and the lack of space accorded to the situation of Italian women in both histories of World War One and general gender histories. The main part of the article reviews and comments on the results and trends in historical research with regard to a number of themes: women's work (in factories, in the fields, in urban centres, at the front, and behind the lines); forms of protest; living conditions among female refugees and internees, as well as those who remained in the occupied zones; and women's experience of violence and trauma. The last section is devoted to women's engagement in civic and patriotic mobilization, and in the interventionist and pacifist movements. In looking at the various themes, the author makes constant reference to the international historiography. Finally, the author evaluates the historiographical gains made in the last thirty years and identifies a number of possible areas for new research, such as demographic changes, the situation of women in southern Italy and the islands, and the immediate post-war years.

Matteo Ermacora

Woman in War: The Example of Friuli (1915–1917)

The article reconstructs the impact of the Great War on working-class women in Friuli, the north-eastern region of Italy close to the front. The author recounts the mobilization of women in the agricultural sector and in military construction work behind the front. These forms of employment possessed varying relevance from a propagandistic point of view: while peasant women were exalted as “heroines in the fields” and the “guardians” of farms, the dangerous work near the front was subject to censorship. The new tasks carried out by women and the military presence in communities behind the lines temporarily upset established gender hierarchies and gave women growing visibility, which raised fears among social observers. Following women's experience of being refugees and living under German and Austro-Hungarian occupation (1917/18), public discourse in the post-war years saw the emphasis on women's mobilization being replaced by the more reassuring image of the *mater dolorosa*, the grieving mother of the fallen soldier.

Nicola Fontana

Military workers and the deployment of women in fortress construction on the southwestern front in Trentino

Immediately after the outbreak of World War One, women in Trentino, who were now charged with the responsibility of maintaining their families, found a ready source of sustenance in the military installations on the Tyrolean frontier with the Kingdom of Italy, where a solid defensive line was being constructed. Taken on initially as normal labourers, from the summer of 1915 onwards they were organized into militarized units finding employment as workers and porters, including in locations exposed to Italian artillery fire. The news of this deployment of a small army of ‘women-soldiers’ was soon exploited by Italian propaganda as proof of the Habsburg army’s lack of humanity. In Trentino, as elsewhere, there were protests from the clergy, who saw in women’s living alongside soldiers and workers a source of scandals and moral decline.

Gunda Barth-Scalmani/Gertrud Margesin

Women in Agriculture during the First World War: A Regional Perspective on a Blind Spot in World War One Historiography

The everyday life of women in the countryside has barely been dealt with by the historical literature on World War One. Yet, around 1910, the majority of women in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy lived and worked in agrarian contexts. Research about their war experiences is particularly important, as men were called up from the summer of 1914 onwards. In consequence, women had to bear the responsibility for the farm’s output. Alongside women, there worked children, old people, and – from 1915 onwards – also prisoners-of-war. Documents that help to reconstruct women’s war experiences in urban spaces – such as documents from women’s associations or ego-documents – do not exist for the countryside. An initial approach to reconstructing the everyday life of women in the years 1914–1918 is thus provided by analysing the various discourses about women in the regional press, with this article taking the western Austrian province of Tyrol as a case study.