
Book Reviews

An Unconventional Wife: The Life of Julia Sorell Arnold

Mary Hoban

Scribe, 2019; Hardback; 320 pages; RRP AU\$39.99; ISBN 9781925713442.

Were it not for a brief anecdote in a memoir, the life of the determined, intractable, and passionate Julia Sorell Arnold would have been another case of an ordinary woman being consigned to the historical scrapheap. When reading the memoirs of Julia's grandson, Sir Julian Sorell Huxley, the first director-general of UNESCO, author Mary Hoban was struck by the story of Julia marching to the Catholic Church in Hobart in 1856 and throwing stones through the window in protest at her husband's conversion to Catholicism. From a time in history when most women were expected to put their husband's wishes above all else, this striking anecdote shows us a woman who would refuse to be defined by anything other than her own beliefs. Hoban was so taken by this snippet about Julia that she was determined to find out more and she set about using her own training in biography to uncover more of Julia's life. Though worried that women like Julia are not often immortalised in the history books – often due to a lack of understanding of their importance but also due to the fact that such figures rarely leave extensive records behind – Hoban has skilfully uncovered Julia from within the documents of her friends and family, and *An Unconventional Wife* is a masterpiece of biography.

Julia Sorell was born in Tasmania in 1826, the granddaughter of two prominent early Tasmanians. Her life was characterised by conflict and pain, beginning when her mother Elizabeth, planning to run away with her lover Major George Deare of the 21st Fusiliers, took Julia and her siblings to Brussels in 1839 to effect her escape. Torn from the land she loved and the father she adored, then abandoned later by her mother, Julia was miserable in Brussels. For Protestant Julia, this misery was embodied in the staunch Catholicism of her school. Surrounded by Catholics but feeling an outsider due to her own beliefs and her language, Julia internalised a deep hatred for the religion that would endure throughout her life and be the cause of conflict and tension until her death.

She would later return to Van Diemen's Land as a young woman, where she was the subject of gossip and repeated romantic scandals, until she met her future husband at a chance encounter in a drawing room in 1850. Julia was taken at first sight by Tom Arnold. Son of Dr Thomas Arnold, a fierce proponent of Protestantism, Tom was quiet and shy, a beacon for Julia who could never resist her desire to help people. They

were engaged within a month of meeting, and married in five months on 13 June 1850. It was not to be a happy marriage.

Financial difficulties plagued their married life, with Tom falling into debt through bad decisions. Had this been their only difficulty, they might still have been a happy couple, for their letters throughout their marriage demonstrate their deep love and passion for one another – as do the nine children Julia gave birth to. The underlying cause for their continued unhappiness came instead from a foundational flaw in their relationship: Julia's refusal to submit to her husband's wishes in all things and Tom's refusal to understand his wife as anything but his inferior. This schism in their own individual beliefs of what made a good wife became the defining characteristic of their lives together, a problem that was brought to the fore when Tom converted to Catholicism after the birth of their second child. Julia's ardent hatred of Catholicism made her unable to reconcile herself to Tom's decision, and his stubborn belief that she should submit to him in all things made Tom unable to understand her point of view. Close to leaving him, Julia decided to remain for the sake of their children, but this rift would never be resolved. By the 1880s, Julia and Tom were no longer living together, he in Dublin working at the Catholic University, and Julia in Oxford in rapidly declining health.

After Julia's death, Tom married Josephine Benison, a devout Catholic, and found the compliant wife that he had believed Julia ought to have been. Julia's determination to be her own woman was a legacy that would continue in her daughters; her two eldest, Polly and Judy, were fervent supporters of women's education, while her youngest, Ethel, joined the women's suffrage movement and built a career as a literary critic, essayist, and lecturer.

Julia's story is expertly told by Hoban. Despite the difficulties in writing about an 'ordinary' woman who did not leave many of her own records behind, Hoban uncovers Julia's story in the archives of those around her. Through this biography, Hoban challenges the conventional narrative of Julia's life that positions her as the difficult wife of the sophisticated and scholarly Tom Arnold. She has provided readers with another side to the story, where Julia's own thoughts and feelings become the focus, and thus reveal a far more complicated picture of their marriage and herself than biographies of Arnold deliver. In doing so, Hoban has skilfully reminded us of the importance of looking for the forgotten women who do not leave an archive of their own. History is written based on what we can find, but sometimes there is more for us to find than we immediately see, and this is a timely reminder to push ourselves to go deeper to uncover the stories of those who might otherwise be neglected. Since the mid-twentieth century, historians have admirably placed greater emphasis on stories that do not fit the mould of the great, white man. This is a brilliant example of what can be found when people continue to take up that challenge.

An Unconventional Wife is clearly well-researched. As a biographer, Hoban does not engage with extensive secondary literature, but she does provide excellent context through the documents of Julia's contemporaries. By using the stories of people who lived, worked, and loved in similar worlds to Julia's, Hoban shows where Julia's life

both converged with and diverged from those around her. The bulk of Hoban's book, however, is primarily built on extensive archival research into those directly connected with Julia, and finding Julia in their collections. Consequently, this is categorically Julia's story, as her voice comes through clearly from letters she sent, conversations she had, and decisions she made. Hoban's writing is engaging. She expertly draws the reader in to Julia's story and, rather than a dry catalogue of facts, the reader is presented with a page-turning account of an incredible woman. For this reason, this book will be perfectly at home in the hands of general readers, but its extensive research and excellent contextualisation also make *An Unconventional Wife* an excellent source for scholars considering women's lives in the late nineteenth century. It does not offer an extensive survey of the heterogeneity of women's lives in the 1800s, but as a biography of one woman, it does not set out to. Instead, *An Unconventional Wife* presents a window into the life of one ordinary and yet extraordinary woman, and thus illustrates the importance of uncovering those stories which the archives do not easily give up.

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War and Political Theory

Brian Orend

Polity, 2019; Paperback; 211 pages; RRP AU\$33.95; ISBN 9781509524976.

Brian Orend's *War and Political Theory* aims to craft "an excellent, detached understanding of the pros and cons of the most important" theories of war: pacifism, realism, and 'just war' theory (JWT) (p. 2). While Orend's summary offers the reader an engaging introduction to contemporary applications of these theories, the selection of practical examples, the paucity of political and historical context, and the protracted attention that JWT receives leaves little doubt where the author's allegiances lie. Orend has made a substantial contribution to JWT literature in the past, including the advancement of Kantian support,¹ the development of *jus post bellum* ('Justice after War') theories,² and various other contributions.³ *War and Political Theory* is released through Polity, which publishes introductory works in the social sciences and humanities for both scholars and a general readership.

After a brief introduction exploring the ontology of war (Ch. 1), Orend surveys realism (Ch. 2) and pacifism (Ch. 3), before devoting three chapters to JWT (Chs 4–6). He ends the book with a focus on emerging military technologies, cyber advancements, and the future of warfare (Ch. 7). The prominence afforded to JWT is rationalised by its complex nature, which the reader is primed to conceptualise as being the sensible centre that balances the extremes of realism and pacifism. It is in the investigation of JWT that Orend is most animated, and as such, it is readers looking for an introduction to these theories who will benefit most from *War and Political Theory*. In collating his past writings on JWT into three consecutive chapters, Orend offers the reader a lucid compendium with which to explore the theory further. He has a knack for prose that is light on its feet, and his nimble composition often makes for persuasive reading, affording him the agility to bounce from anecdotes to philosophical principles, from real-world examples to speculative hypotheticals.

War and Political Theory presents itself as a sober discussion of JWT. Orend makes clear that he will "refer to 'the history of ideas' only when helpful", and has as his focus "contemporary applications" (p. 81). The reader is offered definitional boundaries of the key terms of JWT, at which point real-world examples are advanced in support of these ideas in practice. This has the benefit of allowing the reader to cohesively grasp the ideas of JWT, while also allowing Orend to address its modern-day implications

¹ Brian Orend, "Kant's Just War Theory," *The Journal of the History of Philosophy* 37, no. 2 (1999): 323–53.

² Brian Orend, "Jus Post Bellum," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 31, no.1 (2000): 117–37; "Justice after War: Towards a New Geneva Convention Applied to Jus Post Bellum," *Raisons Politiques* 1 (2012): 163–86.

³ Brian Orend, "Walzer's General Theory of Justice," *Social Theory and Practice* 27, no. 2 (2001): 207–29; "Just Wars and Cosmopolitan Hope," *Theoria* 104 (2004): 128–49; *The Morality of War*, 2nd ed. (Peterborough, ON; Buffalo, NY: Broadview Press, 2006).

for war, politics, and international relations. The book offers up its most vibrant writing when exploring the concept of *jus post bellum* ('justice after war'). Orend is one of the key intellectuals behind this relatively new third pillar of JWT, which traditionally has concerned itself with *jus ad bellum* ('right to war') and *jus in bello* ('conduct in war').

Orend's development of *jus post bellum* reveals a "sincere vision of justice" (p. 164). That same vision is reflected in his positive hopes regarding the possibilities of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) – a UN political commitment that contends that a government's sovereignty is predicated on protecting their citizens against human rights violations. The fact that the nations most ready to complicate the idea of political sovereignty are the same nations whose sovereignty is unquestionably assured (through asymmetrical hard power) does not seem to faze Orend. Further, in acknowledging the criticisms of R2P's authorisation of military force in Libya, Orend makes no mention of the backlash from the international community following NATO's implementation of unsanctioned regime change. A more objective analysis of R2P would benefit from a critical look at the world in which it was born: one of a unipolar hegemonic moment in which the liberal international order is advanced under the belief that individual autonomy underpins a universal moral framework. Western hegemony – operating under such universal moral conceptions – often finds it all too easy to contend that non-liberal governments are, as the realist theorist John Mearsheimer puts it, always "in a state of aggression against their own people".⁴ It is here that Orend's neglect of the 'history of ideas' has its drawbacks, and deprives the reader of an understanding of JWT as situated within a Western political context.

Orend offers an insightful introduction to JWT and outlines its tenets through engaging prose. Readers looking for such an introduction will find *War and Political Theory* a substantial achievement, one which highlights the congruity of the seemingly differing opinions within JWT literature. However, readers who are drawn to realism and pacifism will be left wanting. Oona A. Hathaway and Scott J. Shapiro's *The Internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Remade the World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017) is an innovative legal defense of pacifism, not just in the abstract, but in the real world. As advocates of the largely forgotten 1928 Paris Peace Pact, they advance an ambitious argument that war has already been outlawed. While their conclusion is controversial, it is certainly unique, and well worth a read. Readers hungry for a meatier encapsulation of a realist's take on the modern world would enjoy John Mearsheimer's *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018). Mearsheimer's plague on both Democrats and Republicans harmonises with the times, but this is nothing new for Mearsheimer, and his always intriguing insights are often persuasive. Finally, I would recommend readers look to Michael Ruse's *The Problem of War: Darwinism, Christianity, and their Battle to Understand Human*

⁴ Anurag Sinha, "John J. Mearsheimer on "Liberal Ideals and International Realities,"" *Yale MacMillan Center*, November 30, 2017, <https://macmillan.yale.edu/news/john-j-mearsheimer-liberal-ideals-and-international-realities>.

Conflict (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) as a companion piece to Orend's writings on JWT. Although Ruse concurs with many of Orend's conclusions, by including a critique of the socio-political and religious contexts that give rise to JWT, the reader is offered a more critical vision of the present environment, one which fosters (what some might deem an unhealthy amount of) cohesion between those declaring war, and the scholars who devise moral frameworks for its declaration, and increasingly, its continuation.

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Political Theology: A Critical Introduction

Saul Newman

Polity, 2019; Paperback; 198 pages; RRP AU\$35.95; ISBN 9781509528400.

The first three sentences of *Political Theology: A Critical Introduction* by noted political theorist and Professor of Political Theory, Saul Newman, set the tone for the rest of the book. Newman points out that the wave of nationalism and authoritarianism across the modern world challenges, and indeed threatens to destroy the very foundations of liberal democratic societies. As governments and leaders openly seek to constrain conceptions of human rights, such as the ability to engage in civil debate and protest, at the same time as espousing the values of religion and sovereignty, Newman seeks to understand what he calls a 'crisis of power', power which is embodied in conceptions of sovereignty and power but which is also conversely located in spaces where religious power once existed. Newman therefore seeks to understand how religion and power intersect and how political theology and political philosophy impact upon narrative constructions of political language, such as power, democracy, and freedom.

In the "Introduction", Newman points out that political theology has evolved over time, from an "...interpenetration of religion and politics" (p. 4), conceptualised first in Christian antiquity as a way of delineating civil and religious thought and society, to Carl Schmitt's conception of political theology as secularised theological concepts. In this sense, the book explores throughout the question of whether God perhaps found in religion or realised as the divine can be found within conceptions of sovereignty and power – and if it can, what does this say about the growing sense of secularism in modern society? Newman's argument that political theology is a modern construction which can be interpreted and deconstructed as a way of understanding nationhood and power is similar to the arguments deployed in his 2010 book *The Politics of Postanarchism* where post-anarchism is offered as a specific way of interrogating the powerplay central to political authority. With political theology a burgeoning area of theological interest, as seen in Elizabeth Phillips' 2012 *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Newman narrows in on philosophers and political theorists to further an understanding of the relationship between power, politics, and religion.

The first two chapters, called "The Politico-Theological Problem" and "Max Stirner and the Ghosts of the Secular Modern", lead the reader on a journey around interpretative political theology and discuss how secularism has arguably been "... haunted by the specters of religion it had believed itself to be rid of" (p. 44). Newman's interrogation of the concepts of faith, revelation, and obedience advanced by noted philosophers and political theorists such as Carl Schmitt, Mikhail Bakunin, and Max Stirner leads to new insights into political action (or inaction) and to an intertwining of theology and political theory.

In Chapter Three, the book further explores the notion of secularism, taking as its cue Jacques Lacan's formula for atheism, where God is viewed as unconscious, and

discusses the idea of religious illusion. Of course, any discussion on power, illusion, and religion would be remiss without reference to Freud, whom Newman expertly navigates for the reader, providing examples from works such as *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism* to illustrate the intertwining of religious and political authority. In this chapter Newman also writes about freedom and how the lens of freedom is different in today's liberal democracies, where the seemingly endless tangle of laws and regulations governing society lends itself to a 'new unfreedom', impacted upon by authority but also tolerated by the very people who are restricted by being regulated and controlled.

After illustrating concepts of secularism and showing how religion, and religious conceptions of power, have influenced thinking about power within society, Newman turns his discussion to sovereignty and the various layers of authority that can exist within it. In order to understand the influence the concept of sovereignty has had on political narrative and construction, Newman dissects the views of Thomas Hobbes, E.H. Kantorowicz, and Walter Benjamin in innovative ways, pointing to a 'spiritual anarchism' which is picked up in Chapter Five's discussion on Michel Foucault and political theology entitled "Pastoral Power and Political Spirituality".

Newman's analysis of Foucault's idea of *detheologising* power (p. 113) as opposed to Schmitt's conception of the sovereign's absolute right to determine power is interesting when understanding the role of religion and theological origins in governmental institutions; yet there are parts where further exploration of themes would have illuminated the link between a contemporary understanding of the shift of power and the sentiments of Foucault. An example provided is of the role of the confessional in what is viewed as the construction of power. Newman's casual linking of the impact of computing algorithms which can inform or restrict a user's ability to engage in political choice and the evolving concept of the internet and algorithms as a new technological confessional could have been explored in more depth.

Newman's sixth chapter, "Economic Theology", circles back to the themes he introduced at the start of the book, that is, the crisis of power, but in this chapter it is presented as the impact of global capitalism, and the rise of economic self-interest is likened to a new priesthood (p. 134). Newman dissects Walter Benjamin, Marx, Nietzsche, and Weber's observations of capitalism as religion and also manages to discuss the prevalence of social media addiction as an impetus to reflect critically on and perhaps offer new ways of thinking about political theology due to the shift in contemporary society, which has steadily moved towards worshipping a more artificial and technologically driven conception of the divine.

Political Theology: A Critical Introduction concludes with Newman asserting that political theology is a response to secularisation and fills the space where more formal conceptions of religion once sat. This hurtling of humankind towards a crisis of power is systematically worked through by Newman so that his discussion turns to how this very conception of power, if re-evaluated and recalibrated through understanding theology and theological approaches, may enable a freer philosophical vantage point

from which to understand both modern conceptions of power and our own place within the world.

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Languages of Power in Italy (1300–1600)

Daniel Bornstein, Laura Gaffuri, and Brian Jeffrey Maxson (eds)

Brepols, 2017; Hardback; 243 pages; RRP €75; ISBN: 9782503540382.

Languages of Power presents a diverse set of discussions on the artistic, symbolic, and ritual manifestations of power in later medieval Italy. Based around the papers presented during the ‘Languages of Power in Italy’ panel during the 2010 Renaissance Society of America meeting, the volume has been fleshed out by editors Bornstein, Gaffuri, and Maxson with additional essays exploring well-studied centres of power, such as Florence, Milan, and Venice, but also other cities which, while under the control of the latter, exerted their own agency. Pisa, Siena, Genoa, and Savoy are discussed with an attention little seen in scholarship in English. One of the strengths of the volume, therefore, is the presentation of Italian scholars’ work – in excellent translation – of these oft-times ignored ‘smaller’ centres.

The fifteen articles are divided into three sections: the power of words, the display of civic values, and the relationship of religion, power, and the state. While the connections between papers can be somewhat tenuous, the volume overall is thoughtful and compelling. The mixture of shorter and longer essays is refreshing, and offers readers a written conference, complete with sessions and keynotes.

This review seeks to highlight some of the more ‘stand-out’ points in the volume’s many excellent essays. Raviola’s micro-review of the literature on the concept of the state and the waning debate on what criteria constitute a state, for example, gives readers a helpful understanding of the complexity of historians’ understanding of statehood. She highlights the theory that assigning political significance to an area should depend on its possession of a court – and a capital – as this criterion allows for more small principalities to fall into the realm of ‘state’, and may explain the fragmentation – and unification – of Northern Italy, in particular, and Italy in general. Her own focus, however, is on how the governing elite envisioned themselves, with her paper examining the use of ‘stato’ and ‘italiano’ in seventeenth-century letters from the House of Malaspina to the *Magistrato straordinario* of Milan. They are proof of not only a medieval Italian identity, but also how contemporaries acknowledged political power and possession. She concludes with a discussion of boundaries and their role in the formation of statehood, an interesting addition, but one which begs for further discussion.

Following Raviola is Horodowich’s essay on the use of oral political discourse and gossip to frame and define Venetian political power and scope, an interesting juxtaposition to the previous paper on written political discourse. Horodowich uses Marin Sanudo’s extensive diaries, which are rich with near-daily conversations of politicians and citizens, to showcase the significance of vernacular writing during the sixteenth century: it was through the vernacular, Sanudo noted, that wider readership could be achieved, and along with that, a greater appreciation of the political machine

that was Venice. A refreshing addition to vernacular studies, Horodowich's paper presents an essential source for understanding Venetian social and political history.

Ottaviani continues the discussion on the power of words through an examination of various Italian noblewomen's letters. Of interest to this reviewer was the debate surrounding the use of the term 'patronage' in relation to noblewomen's benefactor-client relationships, and its counterpart, matronage. The paper does not, however, introduce many 'new' noblewomen or sources: the strength of Ottaviani's paper is in her references, which bring the works of various Italian scholars to the attention of English-speaking readers.

The first section ends as it began: using the words of contemporary writers to define a past and current trend – the privatisation of land. The strength of Taviani's work is his focused case study on Giustiniani's *Dialogo nominato Corsica* and Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine*. Taviani's essay highlights his archival research and offers a detailed and thoughtful comparison of two texts which – to this reviewer's knowledge – have not been brought together before. His work is thus an important addition to Genoese and corporate history and opens doors to further research on Italian privatisation.

Part two of the volume, on the articulation and display of civic values, begins with two papers on the use of iconography to promote power. Cariboni's essay demonstrates how the Visconti legitimised their power in Milan not only through holding positions within the Church, but also through art depicting Ottone's feats, and the metamorphoses of the city's patron saint, Ambrose, into a military icon reflective of past Visconti military leaders. Conrad's essay, on the other hand, focuses on Siena's use of *Maestàs* to portray political power. Conrad's comparison of the *Maestàs* of Duccio and Martini presents a fresh and compelling argument for Martini's subtle yet effective depiction of the 'power behind the throne' through the reduction of the Virgin's 'power' and the amplification of the commune within the frescoes. His essay will be of interest to historians of iconographic history.

Evangelisti's thorough chapter offers evidence of Bernardino da Feltre's articulation of six core themes, as identified by historians, in Italian political thought. This fresh analysis of Feltre's sermons is a new 'addition' to the volume. Of interest to political historians, will be his – at times subtle – analysis of Hans Baron's understanding of medieval and humanist thought, a highlight of the chapter. Evangelisti's critical eye to Baron's theories opens doors to potential research directions continuing and expanding Baron's work, particularly the place and influence of Franciscan texts in relation to republicanism and civic virtue.

Cengarle brings the reader back to the Visconti and the introduction of the *signorile* regimes and citizens' dwindling legislative autonomy, offering new depth of understanding to Milanese legislating. Maxson, meanwhile, returns to Florence to investigate the delicate nature of diplomatic missions, through a case study of diplomats sent to Jacopo Piccinino. Maxon's essay offers glimpses into currently unpublished missives, and is an excellent source for understanding the complexity and skill of Renaissance negotiation.

The volume ends with six chapters on religion, power, and the state. Wieben and Iannella delve into cult creation and worship, while Gaffuri and Cozzo turn their attention to Savoy, and the exegetical influence on politics and the importance and influence of sacred spaces, respectively. Of particular note is Iannella's appendix, a critical edition of excerpts in Latin, with English translations, from her primary source, *Cronica di Pisa*. Cozzo's paper is also of note as he contributes to the expanding field of Sabaudian studies, in particular by addressing the presence of sacrality in the court, a topic ignored until recently in studies of Savoy. Baker and Motta offer a theological ending to the volume with essays on the use of religious language and its impact on law. Baker brings new insight to the oft-discussed legacy of Savonarola by delving into the preacher's influence on the language of a post-Medician Florence. Motta investigates papal moral judgement through sixteenth- and seventeenth-century treatises on the pope as the 'judge of controversies'. His discussion raises an important aspect of language, which other scholars in the volume touch on: the permeability of language. His conclusion focuses on the malleability of papal language as it flows into political discourse, infusing the political sphere with an air of the sacred. It serves as an important reminder of the need to consider concepts within their broader social context.

This volume adds to current scholarship by offering a broad understanding of the complexity and force of language in its various forms: spoken, written, and visual. It testifies to the importance of comprehensive, interdisciplinary research. Various scholars also highlight the need to continually question past research and seminal theories, as our understanding of the medieval and Renaissance period constantly changes with access to new sources. The volume also contributes to bringing awareness to these new sources. While the collection does at times suffer from a lack of clear transitions or links between papers, and, as noted in Hester Schadee's review, the translations of Latin in both Wieben and Motta suffer from some errors, the volume is well edited. It is most certainly recommended reading for Italian historians seeking new perceptions into previously studied figures and a nuanced understanding of the political and religious interplay in fourteenth- to seventeenth-century Italy.

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Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History, 1880–1945

Clayton J. Whisnant

Harrington Park Press, 2016; eBook; 400 pages; RRP US\$19.99; ISBN 9781939594105.

The impression Clayton J. Whisnant gives of the homosexual political advocacy movement in his book *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History, 1880-1945* is not quite the 'We're here! We're queer! Get used to it!' of the late twentieth century. Nevertheless, the book offers a noteworthy observation of a homosexual reality before Stonewall. *Queer Identities* is a solid and worthwhile addition to the scholarship, as Whisnant presents a survey of the literature regarding the emerging homosexual "scene" in Germany from the late nineteenth through to the early twentieth century (p. 11). Given the context of Whisnant's continuing focus on West Germany in his research, *Queer Identities* is arguably his attempt to emphasise Germany's position in the queer chronology, especially in the post-Stonewall context where the fight for queer rights tends to be viewed by the general public as beginning with the uprising in New York City in 1969. Whisnant's acknowledgment of the age and possible overuse of James Steakley's *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany* as a general history of a similar period to the one covered in *Queer Identities* may also indicate a hope to replace it as the touchstone within the genre.

As Angelika von Wahl points out in her own review of *Queer Identities*, theoretical approaches to identity formation and the politics of homosexual men and women are large fields in their own right, with their own broad literatures. Therefore, no amount of real depth on the topics can realistically be achieved in one book.¹ Whisnant's stated intention is to make the book accessible to a general audience by avoiding over-complicated jargon and theory, offering an "easy reference" for the average reader, or a starting point for those wanting to take the topic further (p. 9). The first chapter begins with an evaluation of how homosexual advocacy emerged as a movement in the late nineteenth century. Whisnant examines the growing field of sexology as a scientific interpretation of lived realities, and the impact which this field had on identity formation and the increasingly vocal queer rights movement. Magnus Hirschfeld emerges as the key figure in this period, though Whisnant also looks at the masculinist movement under Adolf Brand. Discussing historiographical trends in understandings of these figures and their related movements, Whisnant references Glenn Ramsey's important article "The Rites of *Artgenossen*: Contesting Homosexual Political Culture in Weimar Germany" and argues for a movement away from ideas of a binary approach to homosexual political advocacy groups, towards a more nuanced view of their often overlapping and complicated relationships and identities. Erik Jensen in his own review states that Whisnant threads this theme throughout the whole book

¹ Angelika von Wahl, "Clayton J. Whisnant, *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History 1880-1945*," *Germany Politics and Society* 35, no. 4 (2017): 136.

“masterfully” using the “intra-movement divisions and ongoing scientific debates about the cause of same-sex attraction as a leitmotif throughout the book”.²

Whisnant attempts to even the gender divide in the existing scholarship by focusing on some rarely discussed female historical actors, such as Johanna Elberskirchen. He explores the alliances built between Magnus Hirschfeld’s political group, the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee* (*Scientific-Humanitarian Committee*), and existing women’s rights groups. In the third chapter, Whisnant gives a solid overview of how both homosexual women and men formed their own scenes in bars and restaurants, alongside friendship groups and a relatively thriving publishing industry. Whisnant argues against the scholarly tendency to interpret the flourishing homosexual scenes of the Weimar period in terms of a growing public tolerance of sexual diversity, pointing to the largely unstudied rise of conviction rates of homosexual men on a national scale.

Whisnant’s book has earned the many good reviews it has received. It does fail, however, to avoid one of the major pitfalls of the existing literature, which is the sidelining of trans history. In *Queer Identities* Whisnant makes only a few passing references to Magnus Hirschfeld’s work on transvestites and does not engage in any depth with the existing secondary literature on the topic of gender variance outside of its connections with same-sex attraction. ‘Transvestite’ as a term was coined by Magnus Hirschfeld and encompassed both ideas of cross-gender dress and full gender transition. As Heike Bauer argues, ‘transgender’, as a relatively new term, can still be used to refer to people who cross-dress if its use indicates a “shared realm of experience”.³ Whisnant’s use of the term, however, refers to more than just a commonality of experience. Referring to people of the period who identified as transvestites simply as people “whom today we would identify as transgender”, without any acknowledgment of the variations in forms of identity and expression exhibited by trans-people in this period, is problematic (p. 12). The labelling of a fledgling and widely diverse group of people with such a modern (and arguably specific) term conflates those identities in a manner that is entirely silencing.

Despite some reservations, I would argue that it is a worthwhile book for the general reader, undergraduate students, or people needing a starting point for further reference, especially for English-readers accessing largely untranslated sources for the first time. Whisnant’s main theoretical reference is to Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality*, though largely to criticise the over-emphasis that has placed on medicalised and scientific viewings of sexual identity formation in the scholarship. Whisnant’s use of primary sources is strongest in his chapter on the growth of urban gay scenes where he uses first person accounts to give a vivid and compelling understanding of a flourishing queer subculture. His work often prioritises privileged

² Erik Jensen, "Clayton J. Whisnant, *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History, 1880-1945*," *The American Historical Review* 122, no. 3 (2017): 945.

³ Heike Bauer, *The Hirschfeld Archives: Violence, Death, and Modern Queer Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017), 84.

voices from leading scientists or the culturally elite, though that is likely due to a dearth of other sources available from the period. Still, a more thorough analysis of how contemporary class dynamics has shaped the availability of sources would have been helpful. Largely though, *Queer Identities* is a comprehensive and thorough investigation of the dominant sources and issues in the field. Whisnant states that he does not want to give answers to the questions he raises within *Queer Identities*, presenting a survey of the literature and not a monograph. However, the questions he raises are incredibly important ones that I look forward to seeing explored in the coming years.

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