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# GENDER FORUM

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## Powerful Women

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## About

*Gender forum* is an online, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the discussion of gender issues. As an electronic journal, *gender forum* offers a free-of-charge platform for the discussion of gender-related topics in the fields of literary and cultural production, media and the arts as well as politics, the natural sciences, medicine, the law, religion and philosophy. Inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier in 2002, the quarterly issues of the journal have focused on a multitude of questions from different theoretical perspectives of feminist criticism, queer theory, and masculinity studies. *gender forum* also includes reviews and occasionally interviews, fictional pieces and poetry with a gender studies angle.

Opinions expressed in articles published in *gender forum* are those of individual authors and not necessarily endorsed by the editors of *gender forum*.

## Submissions

Target articles should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition) and should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length. Please make sure to number your paragraphs and include a bio-blurb and an abstract of roughly 300 words. Files should be sent as email attachments in Word format. Please send your manuscripts to [gender-forum@uni-koeln.de](mailto:gender-forum@uni-koeln.de).

We always welcome reviews on recent releases in Gender Studies! Submitted reviews should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition), have numbered paragraphs, and should be between 750 and 1,000 words in length. Please note that the reviewed releases ought to be no older than 24 months. In most cases, we are able to secure a review copy for contributors.

## Article Publishing

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There are no submission or page charges, and no colour charges.

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## Editorial

1 In light of recent political developments on a global scale a thematic focus on women and power proves to be disturbingly topical. The massive backlash against gender equality and diversity, particularly in the United States and in Europe with a long history of women's movements, threatens to undo the achievements of past decades with regard to human rights for all.

2 Instead of Hillary Clinton's election as successor to Barack Obama as the first female after the first African American president in the U.S., Donald Trump, a declared opponent of past endeavors towards a more open and inclusive society as well as a livable planetary future carried the day. Hailed by European right-wing movements with a similar reactionary agenda, the new president's inauguration speech and his first days in office evoke frightening expectations, but have also provoked an impressive counter-movement signaled by the Women's March one day after the inauguration on a national and international level.

3 To address these current political, social and cultural developments from different disciplines we invite contributions to be published independently from the planned gender forum issues.

4 This gender forum issue assembles a number of essays on women in power from different angles: The contributions of Leah Hutton Blumenfeld and Yuwei Ge focus on the role of women and the notion of the family in American politics past and present, probing into the gendered relation between the public and the private spheres. This resonates with Anneke Ribberink's essay on the biographies of two outstanding Scandinavian feminist politicians, faced with the question of balancing career and family within a still patriarchal social framework. Marta Kelleher complements the focus on power in the political arena with her analysis of the gender bias in the public media response to transgender punk woman Laura Jane Grace.

5 **Leah Hutton Blumenfeld** traces the concept of republican womanhood as wife and mother in the United States and its impact on the role of women in public and political life from its beginnings to the present day. While this concept historically served to justify a political role for women as cultivators of republican values within the family, the persistence of this concept today testifies to the ongoing limitations of professional women in the political arena. Blumenfeld's historical analysis of the importance of the concept of family and its gendered role patterns can explain the gendered implications of contemporary American (party) politics, as her references to politicians from Hillary Clinton to Sarah Palin show.

6        The impact of the gendered distinction between the public and private spheres on contemporary women in politics is taken up, albeit differently, in **Yuwei Ge's** essay on Hillary Clinton's autobiography *Living History*. Foregrounding the foundation of Clinton's feminist politics in the notion of the Private as the Political, Yuwei Ge links Clinton's deliberate use of gendered metaphors to indicators of a specific alternative leadership style. Counteracting critical feminist engagements with Clinton's life, Yuwei Ge reads her autobiography as an example of and inspiration for women's empowerment on a global scale.

7        The exploration of the private and the public spheres in the European context is the subject of **Anneke Ribberink's** essay on the lives of two Scandinavian Feminist Politicians before and after the Second Women's Movement, the Swedish representative and cabinet minister Alva Myrdal (1966-73) and the first Norwegian woman Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (1981, 1986-9, 1990-6). Ribberink analyses the difficulties in working towards a gender-equal work-life balance as a political goal for the benefit of the country and the realization of this goal in the life of a woman politician. Set in the second half of the twentieth century in two Scandinavian countries, arguably among the most advanced in terms of gender equality, Ribberink's article highlights the ongoing topicality of the issues at stake.

8        The persistence of and the necessary resistance to gender stereotypes recurs in **Marta Kelleher's** discussion of the media response to punk rock musician Laura Jane Grace's transition in interviews as well as in the Emmy-nominated non-scripted web-series *True Trans*. This apparent difficulty to embrace uncertainties, ambiguities, and inbetweenness discussed in Kelleher's essay, seems to be at the core of the current backlash against all forms of diversity. This testifies to the ongoing need to relentlessly resist the simplifications and exclusions implicit in seemingly clear-cut boundaries and hierarchically organized binaries on the way towards a more inclusive and diverse social fabric.

# **Republican Womanhood: Then and Now**

By Leah Hutton Blumenfeld, PhD, Barry University, USA

## **Abstract:**

This paper explores the development of the conception of the republican mother within Enlightenment thought and the Classical Liberal tradition, and how conceptions of the appropriate relationship for women to the state developed in pre-and post-revolutionary America. It then examines the role women have played in political parties and participation in the United States up through the 20th century and today. Many of the same ideas about appropriate public and private activities for the sexes remain, particularly those surrounding family, children, and running for or serving in office. Contemporary women in politics face similar criticisms and backlash about their appearance and femininity as their earlier counterparts, while women themselves have attempted to fuse the public and private innovative ways. To that end, the paper asks whether the basic idea of the republican woman has changed significantly by the 21st century. How much of this same hostility are women in politics subjected to today? Do women in the United States see their relationship to the state as equal to men's, or as something separate and different? Does one of the major political parties represent that view more than the other?

## **Introduction**

1 In the history of western thought the relationship of women to the state has not frequently been a central topic of discussion. Apart from its early consideration in Plato's *Republic*, one of the first major works devoted entirely to this topic is Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies* in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Her intent was to argue in defense of women as the keepers of a society's virtue and morals who pass them on to their children. This idea is further developed later by a number of Enlightenment thinkers in England and Scotland, as well as in pre- and post-revolutionary America. It culminated first in the model of the republican wife and then the republican mother whose role was to nurture the civic virtue of husband and children at home, but not to play any direct role in the public world of politics (Lewis 721). Scholar Linda K. Kerber argues that the concept of republican motherhood has been widely accepted and readily used in the United States as justification for women's often limited political activity well into the 20th century.

2 This essay will explore the development of the concept of the republican wife and mother and discuss whether this idea of the republican woman has changed significantly in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. While women in the United States today may see their relationship to the state as equal to men's, women in politics are still subject to specific forms of criticism and hostility today.

## **Republican Motherhood: Origins and Development of a Concept**

3 Republican ideology, in its general rather than partisan form, has historically been concerned with men and not with a political community of both sexes. Political ideas, especially those inherited from Aristotle such as the good life in the public arena, have been applied primarily to men relegating women to a lesser and non-public way of service to the polis. “Having learned from Aristotle that politics was the affair of men, Americans continued to discuss political affairs in terms that largely excluded women” (Kerber, *Women of the Republic* 7). Considering this ideological and philosophical heritage it is not surprising that Enlightenment thought despite its potentially gender-neutral stance also excluded women.

4 The Enlightenment era was one of great change with regard to concepts of the state and the nature of citizenship (Leonard and Tronto 33). It was a time for “great questions of political liberty and civic freedom, of the relationship between law and liberty” and of whether or not “women were also to recognize themselves as responsible beings,” capable of being enlightened and of upholding the same responsibilities to the state as men (Kerber, “The Republican Mother” 187). Although some thinkers explicitly addressed the question of women, for the most part women remained on the fringes. Kerber’s extensive evaluation of the main texts of the Enlightenment “reveals that the nature of the relationship between women and the state remained largely unexamined” (“The Republican Mother” 188). According to Leonard and Tronto this era and the resulting ideology of republicanism is part of “a long history of disdain for ‘femininity’ in politics” (33). The ideals around which the United States were formed, especially the notion of the individual with God-given rights and the obligations between citizen and state, were not applied to women.

5 Much of the thought of this period relied on the concept of the ‘state of nature’ to derive and explain political relationships, and based a woman’s purpose on her “natural and proper role” within the family (Lewis 691). It followed that women naturally existed in a private domestic sphere, while men were free to lead lives in the public realm. If a woman’s primary role was a domestic one, then her political capacity was one that only appeared in limited circumstances (Kerber, “The Republican Mother” 188). These assumptions did not go unchallenged. Several thinkers of the English and Scottish Enlightenment, such as Benjamin Rush, made some mention of women in their discussions of the ideals that were to eventually produce a new state in the Americas with the promise of freedom and equality for all. Abigail

Adams is well known for the concerns she addressed in her correspondence with her husband during the 1770s (110). While John Stuart Mill addressed the legal rights of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he did not necessarily seek to change their relationship to the public sphere. Change in the public realm did not have to mean change in the private, a comfort in a time of conflict and upheaval. In a rapidly changing 21<sup>st</sup> century, perhaps it has been equally comforting to conservative men to have conservative women like the late Phyllis Schlafly and Sarah Palin reinforcing this tradition.

6        The founders of the United States envisioned a government based on the rule of many for the public good – a polity or republic. The stability and competence of that republic depends on its citizens who must be literate and politically savvy (Kerber, “The Republican Mother and the Woman Citizen” 147). Whether women were citizens and a part of that republic remained unclear, though the American Revolution had helped to “speed the integration of women into the civil polity” (Kerber, *Women of the Republic* 8). The late 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period of significant economic and political change that fostered new participation in the state by men of all classes (Leonard and Tronto 35). It was a time that also raised questions about what form female patriotism might take, whether it could be public and visible, and about the connections between family and polity (Kerber, *Women of the Republic* 9; Lewis 691).

7        It was up to “postrevolutionary ideology in America to justify and popularize a political role for women” (Kerber, “The Republican Mother” 199). Reformers, essayists, and educators began to conceive of a new role for women during this time (Lewis 691-692). This did not happen immediately and came in the form of “an ironic compromise” (Kerber, “The Republican Mother” 199). They “began to construct a rationale that would permit women to attend to political matters without abandoning their domestic responsibilities” (Kerber, *Women of the Republic* 83-84). The rationale and the resulting models were conveyed to the public consciousness in part via popular literature with a consistent moral message (Lewis 692). The republican woman was first a wife and then a mother. The republican wife was virtuous with “unaffected beauty” so as not to distract her husband from his civic interests or to corrupt his morals (Lewis 705). She was “capable of enormous moral authority over her husband” and she represented a “real and important role” in the family and the state (Lewis 720). She was a partner in marriage but also deferred to her husband; she had no more power than her husband allowed.



So a major area for women to exercise influence was through the education of their more malleable children (Lewis 721).

8 The “political role for women...made use of the classic formulation of the Spartan Mother who raised sons prepared to sacrifice themselves for the good of the *polis*. It provided an apparent integration of domestic and political behavior” (Kerber, “The Republican Mother” 188). Based on that model, “a consensus developed around the idea that a mother, committed to the service of her family and to the state, might serve a political purpose. The Republican Mother was to encourage in her sons civic interest and participation. She was to educate her children and guide them in the paths of morality and virtue” (Kerber, *Women of the Republic* 283). In this expanded discourse of republican motherhood, a woman’s political inclusion was grounded in her responsibility to cultivate the proper republican virtues in her husband and children (Leonard and Tronto 33). This responsibility was manifest within the family, so the model republican woman was inevitably not just a wife but also a mother.

9 The republican wife and mother could serve the state, but only indirectly as “she was not to tell her male relatives for whom to vote. She was a citizen but not really a constituent” (Kerber, *Women of the Republic* 283). Her qualifications were defined as a companion and a helper, relegating her to the role of a secondary actor of lower status (Lewis 697). Indeed, the objective of creating a space for women was “not fundamentally feminist” nor was it meant “primarily to enhance the position of women” (Lewis 698). Rather, the republican wife and mother existed for the benefit of the state. Women today continue to be secondary actors in politics still struggling to gain equal status and representation in the state or equal benefits from it. They are underrepresented in Congress, state legislatures, and many other governing bodies (Center for American Women in Politics; McDonagh 536). Women’s political interests are frequently lumped together as the so-called ‘women’s issues’ of reproductive rights and childcare, and less often associated with other important issues of the state, such as security or the economy.

10 In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, many women understood how the American Revolution challenged the prevailing order and relationship between ruler and ruled in ways that were anti-patriarchal (Kerber, “The Republican Mother and the Woman Citizen” 148; Lewis 699). The revolutionary attack on forms of domination, however, did little to alter other institutions that were clearly contrary to the egalitarian nature and principles of the revolution:

slavery and domestic relations between the sexes. The Constitution contained the 3/5 Compromise but did not specifically mention women. The emerging informal space for women as political beings still relied on their relations to men. Lewis suggests women were partners in a republican marriage, but not as an egalitarian arrangement (708), because the importance of women's status was largely restricted to the private sphere. Accordingly, men benefitted the most from the revolution and the preservation of traditional practices such as coverture, while any real expansion of women's legal or political power was limited.

11 Women who questioned the system were met with hostility, frequently labeled as masculine and ugly, and denounced as unnatural. From the beginning of the American republic, "to accept [a]...role for women in the public sector was to invite hostility and ridicule" (Kerber, *Women of the Republic* 279). Criticism of women suggested that public involvement turned them into "manly women", willfully giving up their "own rights to 'refined consideration'" (Kerber, "The Republican Mother and the Woman Citizen" 151). This practice of denigrating women who are active in politics or elsewhere in the public sphere has not disappeared. The number of times Hillary Clinton was interrupted by her opponent in the presidential debates of 2016 is a case in point, but not the only one. The same opponent suggested Carly Fiorina was unqualified to run because of her looks. As many candidates, columnists, and bloggers can attest, women in the public sphere are still subjected to high levels of misogyny and vitriol.

12 According to this rhetoric and in keeping with conventional wisdom about men's and women's different natures, a woman's role in the early American republic was predominantly associated with the ability to soften men's worst tendencies, and the power to counteract brutish masculinity with civility (Leonard and Tronto 36; Zagarri 194). She was best suited to conveying the morals, values, and manners needed for her sons to become proper citizens and for her husband to maintain his civic virtue (Bloch 100; Kerber, "The Republican Mother" 203; Lewis 703; Zagarri 195). Some level of education for women was necessary and justified to maintain the republic because "women's duty to their families required them to sort out public information accurately and to take a political position" (Kerber, *Women of the Republic* 84). Thus, female education was central to the republican agenda (Lewis 702). Still, this education was to enhance her ability to teach her children and to be a good companion to her husband. She needed a "proper education" that would develop her reason in order to serve her husband, sons, and

thereby, the state (Lewis 702). Women did not need to leave their traditional sphere to fulfill their duty to the republic.

13 The republican mother chose a virtuous man for a husband, corrected him when he strayed from civic virtue, and influenced their children accordingly (Leonard and Tronto 37). This role as a wife and mother who could influence men's actions allowed her some power and a connection to the realm of politics but did so without sully her femininity. Thus a woman could feel equal as her husband's partner, as her private duties were of at least indirect public importance (Leonard and Tronto 41). Republican motherhood thus signaled conservatism in a time of revolutionary radicalism (Kerber, *Women of the Republic* 283; "The Republican Mother and the Woman Citizen" 152). Following the assumption that women were content with this arrangement, the only major challenge existed for those women who were neither wives nor mothers, and thus without a defined political role. A republican mother was also a republican wife, but there did not appear to be any version of a republican *woman* in her own right. A woman's identity – and her new political agency – were dependent on her relation to husband and male children.

14 Nevertheless the concept of republican motherhood redefined "female political behavior as something valuable rather than abnormal, as a source of strength to the Republic rather than an embarrassment" (Kerber, *Women of the Republic* 284). It allowed her education in the service of the state by way of her family. The republican wife and mother were new identities that fostered the acceptability of education and political knowledge for women, but within limits and without changing the existing order (Kerber, *Women of the Republic* 11; Lewis 718). Women were no longer regarded as pre-political, but were not yet appreciated as fully political either. Thus the Revolution initiated a process we are still involved in today; although women are much more visible in the public arena, their primary association with the domestic and the private sphere continues. The institutions of marriage and family are deeply embedded in the republican ideology that underscores the political system in the United States (Lewis 699). This conservative notion of the family continues to be the central to society in the United States and to exert a decisive influence in politics without much change over time. A look at the two major party platforms will serve to confirm this.

15 Equating women with nature and consequently with their reproductive capabilities has always been at the heart of their exclusion from politics. According to Rousseau, men and

women served different biological functions. With reference to nature women were bound to the domain of home and family. A woman with more education or knowledge than was necessary to fulfill her duty as a republican mother was seen as betraying her feminine nature and becoming masculine. While the concept of the republican mother allowed for a limited modification of that point of view, this attitude continued to be an obstacle for women of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries who wanted to achieve more than to fulfill the role of the mother. The persistence of this view may also be one of the reasons why even today women who are politically involved are labeled as aggressive, masculine, or lesbian. Accordingly, while campaigning for the presidency in both 2012 and 2016, Hillary Rodham Clinton was subjected to harsher criticism for her public actions than her male counterparts. Her appearance was regularly scrutinized by the opposition, with particular reference to her pant suits, her hairstyle, and her no-makeup look. It is also notable that supporters felt the need to highlight her roles as mother and grandmother during the Democratic National Convention, on a par with her education and actual political experience, as evidence of her capabilities as a candidate to lead the country.

### **Republican motherhood and the Republican Party?**

16 We have to remember that at the time the Republican Party first formed, its issue focus aligned with many women's political interests. This seems to be a reversal of the roles played by the parties today when the Democratic Party tends to be identified with the support for so-called women's issues. Parties were central to the political system in the United States by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century: "to be political was to be partisan" (Gustafson 11). This provides the main link between the concept of republican womanhood and the Republican Party for this discussion. What began as a way to justify women's role in politics has now perhaps turned into the embodiment of one party's claim to represent true patriotic womanhood in the contemporary political climate. The concept also serves as a tool for evaluating and judging women in politics today regardless of party.

17 The Republican label was first used in 1854 by those in the Midwest who wanted to create a new party to protest the expansion of slavery within the United States (Gustafson 2). Three women attended the founding meeting in Wisconsin in March of 1854, and women have been involved with the party ever since – whether they could vote or not. The disenfranchisement of women did not mean that they were prevented from participating in or

influencing politics altogether. Their partisan activism was not constrained by the same laws that prevented them from voting, but it was still within the confines of republican motherhood – that is, mostly indirect.

18 While women's partisan participation predates their voting and even property rights in many cases, "women's presence was encouraged by a set of deeply rooted ideas about women as mothers, wives, and daughters who could have influence in the civic world by representing virtue, principles, and civility" (Gustafson 9). Thus the concept of the republican wife and Mother continued in the 19th century and was used by the party organization. The Republican Party as the representative of the anti-slavery stance held itself up as the party of morals and the one with which women's values of family, civility, and virtue aligned.

19 In the early republic, neither of the two major political parties took a consistent position on women (Gustafson 2). Women's voices and interests were incorporated when they served a political purpose and when the male leadership recognized the benefits of appropriating a particular issue or stance. "The distinct roles women played in the Republican Party were influenced by the needs of the party and party leaders" (Gustafson 3). As the party rose to dominance on the national stage, it also "became the focal point of women leaders seeking allies for their causes" (ibid.). The Republican Party was the hope for women interested in expanding their political rights and roles.

20 The Republican Party had precedent for bringing women into its ranks. The Democrats, and the Federalists, had also welcomed women because of their association with private virtue, but according to Gustafson the Republicans felt women's influence extended beyond their own families to the community as a whole (10). The republican woman could be a mother figure to those outside of her immediate family. Women could demonstrate their virtue and principles through their party loyalty and have a positive influence in politics, especially during the latter years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when corruption had become a major concern. This influence was still indirect – women could support the best men for political office but not take office or make any political decisions themselves.

21 The integration of abolitionists and women's rights leaders into the party might make it seem dynamic and even progressive, but considering the larger social context of the mid-19th century, the rewards for women's loyalty were limited. Women did not gain any legal power or autonomy through their activism with the party. After the Civil War, the Republican Party's

support of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments, and its agenda that put black men's rights ahead of women's rights, stoked the women's suffrage movement, and left the party open to challenges from its loyalist women, some of whom "demanded that it was time for [the] party to prove itself to women" (Gustafson 39). Indeed, "Susan B. Anthony believed that the Republican Party would be eternally harmed for not supporting women's pursuit of rights" (Gustafson 40). This statement is likely to resonate with many in connection with today's alleged Republican war on women in the arena of reproductive rights, any number of party members' comments on rape cases, or the misogynistic speech of Hillary Rodham Clinton's Republican opponent in the recent presidential race.

22 In 1872, the Republican Party officially recognized women's concerns as part of its platform, but neither of the two major parties took specific action to advance women's legal or political rights immediately thereafter (Gustafson, 41). Women remained with the Republican Party as the one most in-line with their specific goals related to temperance and corruption. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, thanks in part to the Progressive Movement and women's organizations, "no political party believed it could take women's support for granted...; neither could the parties completely ignore women" (Gustafson 142). Women had been successful at helping push through 'protective legislation' during this era – laws that recognized some rights for women and provided special protections for them from long working hours or hard labor, which were thought to be detrimental to their feminine nature and roles as mothers. The separate spheres for men and women were still very much a part of the discussion.

23 Also by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the discussion turned to "the relationship between women's independent political organizations and political parties and when and how women should hold political office" (Gustafson 142). This was still before the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment but indicates that the party was taking on some leadership to integrate women into the political system as individual citizens approaching full rights. Republican women's clubs and auxiliaries allowed women to nominate candidates and exercise influence. It was through these clubs and organizations that partisanship became "an expected and accepted political identity for women" in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gustafson 153). Women's role in politics was well on its way to being more formal and solidified. If the creation of the concept of republican wife and Mother had been the first step on the path to full political rights, then women's affiliation with political parties was the second.

24 The suffrage movement was seeking the vote for women so they could have a direct and more powerful voice in choosing representatives, but advocates did not yet have the election of women to political office on their agenda or consider that a priority. Women had been appointed to some positions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but they were mostly seen as the exception even by women themselves. It was still regarded as a given that politics was for men and women were not naturally motivated or inclined to seek office, an argument still heard today and one of the reasons organizations like EMILY's List and WISH List exist. The proportion of women in office remains low at all levels of government (Center for American Women in Politics; McDonagh 536). Those who did seek public office in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century gravitated toward positions in schools or somehow connected to the welfare of women and children, based on women's supposed special training and natural abilities in those areas (Gustafson, 153). Even the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1917 promoted the fact that the few women serving in office at the time were all mothers. Again, this still resonates today with Clinton's campaign, which deemed this a necessary part of her portfolio of qualifications to lead.

25 Although for a long time women have recognized that the vote and one's party affiliation were the way to exercise power, and while they eventually won the right to vote, gendered norms about social roles continued to influence where and how that power might be used. Republican motherhood was a concept not exclusively claimed by the Republican Party at its inception. Today, the most traditional aspects of the concept do appear to be more closely aligned with the party as the bastion of conservatism in the United States. The greater involvement of women in public life since the second wave of the feminist movement raises the question of where the republican woman might fit today.

### **Republican or republican womanhood in the new millennium?**

26 What is women's relationship to the republic today? Is it radically different from what it was at its founding, or do we still find traces of the republican wife and mother? If we are, as some may suggest, still living in the Enlightenment era, then a persistent orthodoxy that emphasizes biological differences between men and women continues to inform our evaluations of them as political beings. The suffrage movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the revolutions in gender relations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century advanced the belief in the applicability of Enlightenment

ideals to all human beings. But even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the implementation of this belief is still incomplete.

27 The American Revolution started the process of integrating women into political life, but also raised questions about whether a woman could be an equal citizen. Since the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment women have equal opportunities with regard to political representation, but there are still lingering questions about women's direct political involvement. The failure of the ERA is an example of how women as citizens still have different and fewer rights, and therefore a different relationship to the republic.

28 In many Enlightenment texts, women are described in relational terms as daughters, wives, and mothers, whereas men are conceived of as autonomous beings. This view persisted well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Betty Friedan's analysis of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) exemplifies. Still today women who are neither wives nor mothers are not easily incorporated into our social and political structures. Society is the family writ large, and within the family there exists a hierarchy based on sex (Lewis 699, 713). This is one of the reasons why the debates about definitions of marriage and about abortion rights are highly politicized; they upend long-held conventions about what it means to be a woman. Both issues are addressed in the latest Republican Party platform.

29 In relating the debate about republican motherhood to the present political situation we can foreground links and invite comparative analyses between between women's increasing political consciousness and group organization during the Revolution, and similar processes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus women were a part of the war effort in the 1940s and did not always readily return to the domestic sphere afterward. The post-war period saw the start of another revolution in society and women claiming their rights in the 1960s and thereafter. The American Revolution led the way for the suffrage movement, while WWII fed into the development of the Women's Rights and liberation campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s. Each stage was part of the larger philosophical and ideological framework of its time, and at each stage women worked to assert their voices and secure their place in the discussion. At the same time, and at both stages, there were women whose participation in that discussion preserved tradition and supported conservatism in the face of much radical change. Phyllis Schlafly, conservative activist and former Republican candidate, placed emphasis on traditional gender roles and the family, much like some of the reformers of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries before her. She argued that separating



women from their natural roles as wives and mothers would cause them harm and damage the fabric of society. In the current era, the post-Cold War world of globalization and multiculturalism, many conservative women in the United States are again catering to this idea.

30 Phyllis Schlafly was “America's best-known advocate of the dignity and honor that we as a society owe to the role of fulltime homemaker” (Eagle Forum). She was an educated and politically involved individual but we may view her as a newer version of the republican wife and mother. Phyllis Schlafly was a leader in the defeat of the ERA. While she made her arguments against the ERA primarily on the basis of states’ rights, the rationale went further. Schlafly’s answer to the Women’s Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s is the Positive Woman, a concept that resembles the republican wife and mother and reinforces conventional wisdom about the differences between the sexes. Her reasoning is eerily similar to arguments made by Enlightenment thinkers about the natural roles of and appropriate spheres for men and women. For Schlafly the differences between the sexes and the concomitant gender roles are both innate and immutable; therefore, efforts to change them via ‘social engineering’ or acts of government will and must not succeed, as they would cause major damage to the spiritual values of the citizens and the social fabric of the United States. These arguments were highly influential among many conservatives during her campaign against the ERA in the 1970s, and have a similar resonance today. Schlafly is not the sole representative of this point of view, and recent Republican campaigns and efforts by Republican-controlled state legislatures to restrict abortion or LGBTQ rights and limit definitions of marriage are a case in point.

31 Family continues to be a key issue for conservatives today. Changes to the definition of marriage, as well as women who choose not to be wives or mothers, are seen as challenge to the roots of social and political organization in the United States. The notion of family as the basic unit of society is a hallmark of conservatism, and we often hear about the importance of family values from conservative leaders across the country. Today’s concept of the republican woman is a cultural symbol distinguishing women as a group, and an “emblem of national identity” (McDonagh 547). The republican woman might be defined as conservatively pro-family in a heteronormative understanding of the term with clearly defined roles for female homemaker and male breadwinner. She can be educated and participate in politics as long as she upholds these family values. The republican woman also takes an anti-gay rights (marriage and adoption in particular) as well as an anti-abortion rights stance. This definition of pro-family is the 21<sup>st</sup>

century's measure of the real republican subject and the "real American." And yet even women who identify with this notion are not always comfortable with a conservative orthodoxy making choices for them (Saulny n.p.). The most conservative positions about women, as voiced by Rick Santorum or Rush Limbaugh, and the machismo of Donald Trump, do not always sit well with women who grew up in a context of and are accustomed to their role as individual citizens in the republic.

32 Gustafson notes "the consistent difficulty people had, and still seem to have, with women taking on political roles" which is "rooted in deeply held ideas about womanhood and manhood," and all of which relate to the appropriate public and private functions of men and women (3). The lack of a history of women in prominent political positions means "the public continually observes the political woman as an awkward, illegitimate, or misbegotten phenomenon" (Gustafson 4). Of course, Gustafson wrote this before Nancy Pelosi became Speaker of the House, Sarah Palin was named to the Republican ticket in 2008, and Hillary Rodham Clinton became the first woman to garner the presidential nomination for a major party in 2016. All three are wives and mothers, yet they were and are still subjected to intense public scrutiny and criticism – more often and more severely than male politicians by most accounts. Are they more acceptable as political figures today than Victoria Woodhull in the 1870s or Geraldine Ferraro in the 1980s? Yes, and no. Clinton was poised to become the most powerful woman in the world, but in spite of her experience and qualifications could not win over enough voters in many areas of the country, especially those espousing traditional and conservative views of men, women, and family. Executive political power remains elusive for women in the United States.

33 Enlightenment thinkers – male and female alike – discussed the role of education for women. While this debate has changed, we might still get the sense that a woman's education is not meant for her benefit alone, but also for her husband and children. A young woman is encouraged to have a career – partly for its own sake or her personal fulfillment – but equally so she can provide for her family and preserve a comfortable middle-class lifestyle. Economic realities by the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have altered the picture of the family in the United States (see Shriver, et al.). Even as the dual-income or co-breadwinner family, which has become the norm, places husband and wife on more equal ground, it is still often framed by a traditional patriarchal family structure.

34 Education for women is now a good by itself – it serves the purpose of developing women’s intellectual capacities and her individual interests as well as providing opportunity for independence. These are feminist goals, which were not addressed by the original concept of the republican wife and mother and her need for education (Lewis 702). Today conservatives do support education and a public life for women while still maintaining her role as the caretaker of the family, in much the same way the creators of the republican wife and mother did. We might think of this as reconciling competing conservative and feminist views, if we define feminism as the realization of women’s intellectual and civic capacities while upholding her traditional roles as wife and mother.

35 Phyllis Schlafly called herself an anti-feminist instead, characterizing feminism as the attempt to destroy those traditional roles, which according to her are reserved for women only. Still, conservative women like her might consider themselves feminist based on education and political careers, though neither necessarily indicates liberation from *expected* ties to the domestic and private sphere. Given Schlafly’s personal religious beliefs and background, it is not surprising that she opposed abortion rights and the ERA – or that she maintained the centrality of a separate domestic sphere for women. While this could be seen as an empowering definition for women, it implies that women have no choice but to occupy it and that men are excluded from it. Sarah Palin may be the prime example of republican – and Republican – womanhood in the new millennium, when citizenship for women is constrained by what Leonard and Tronto refer to as “compulsory heterosexuality” (42). The republican woman is now defined by the ability to appropriately balance her education, career, and traditional position as wife and mother. It might appear empowering and actually in line with a feminist agenda, but ties to home and family continue to proscribe a woman’s full involvement as an individual in the political arena. Women thus remain partially disenfranchised, and the republican woman continues to be defined by her relationship to others.

### **Conclusions and areas for further research**

36 Further discussion of this topic could focus on women of both major parties, especially those who have been less visible or sensationalized by the media but are still powerful and influential. These may include elected representatives such as Susan Collins, Kelly Ayotte, Kristen Gillibrand, Lisa Murkowski, or Amy Klobuchar, to name a few. How do these women

reflect the concept of the republican woman in the United States today? Interviewing women in elected office at the national, state, and local levels, as well as women of rank and file or the party in the constituency, and capturing the opinions of young women who identify as conservative but may have very different ideas about their role in the nation than their mothers or grandmothers is essential. This data may have implications for the way the parties organize in the future, and how candidates can appeal to and capture the votes of women across the ideological spectrum, who are now the majority of voters in the country.

37      The concept of the republican woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> century incorporates feminist notions of equality when it comes to expanding women's access to education, career, and participation in the state, but it falls short in that women are still subject to harsh judgement and criticism when they stray from more narrowly defined roles as wives and mothers. Women have created new space for themselves in relation to the state but still have not been accepted as equal players in the world of politics.

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## **Living Women's History:**

### **Female Power and Leadership in *Living History***

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#### **Abstract**

In 1995, Hillary Clinton gave her famous speech at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and stated that “women’s rights are human rights” and that the status of women is of great significance for the democratic development of one country in the coming new millennium. In 2003, her autobiography *Living History* was published and sold more than one million copies, inspiring millions of women around the world. In 2016, Hillary Clinton has become the first woman in American history to be the nominated Democratic candidate for the presidential elections and moves one step closer to break the highest glass ceiling. Influenced by Hillary Clinton and many other female political leaders, this essay will deal with the manifestation and exemplification of female leadership in autobiographies written by American female politicians.

Autobiographies written by female politicians present the female perspective on how female leaders improve the political status of themselves and women in general, and how they strive for political leadership and become role models. The present paper is focused on the development and achievement of female political leadership in Hillary Clinton’s autobiography *Living History*. This essay will focus on *Living History* as document about the empowerment of women and the political leadership, explaining how Clinton has become “a lightning rod for political and ideological battles waged over America’s future and a magnet for feelings, good and bad, about women’s choices and roles” (Clinton vi).

The Chinese have an ancient saying, that women hold up half the sky, but in most of the world, it’s really more than half. Women handle a large share of the responsibility for the welfare of their families. Yet their work often goes unrecognized and unrewarded inside the family or by the formal economy.

- Hillary Clinton, *Living History*

Leadership is an aspect of power, but it is also a separate and vital process in itself.

- James Macgregor Burns, *Leadership*

#### **Introduction**

1 The notion of political leadership is often still understood as referring to “a privileged group of ‘great men’ who [define] power, authority, and knowledge” (Klenke “Women and Leadership” 1). Indeed, *power* proves to be “a gendered concept” (Klenke “Women in Leadership” 51) at the center of hierarchically organized political structure. The “understanding of leadership behavior” has been “shaped” by men throughout Western history (Rosenthal 5). In

the context of the 1960s women's liberation movement Betty Friedan has identified “the problem that has no name,” namely, the successful self-limitation of women who have been made to believe that they “do not want careers, higher education, political rights,” but rather stay in the private sphere considering husband and family as top priorities (1). In addition, various “sources and forms of prejudicial behavior” have created obstacles and “restrictions” for women attempting to “reach[...] leadership levels” (Foley 228). Consequently, the underrepresentation of female politicians in senior political positions has prevented a more balanced and less prejudiced definition to female political leadership. Nevertheless, the gradually growing number of female politicians since the latter half of the twentieth century has led to more diverse interpretations of female leadership, and has provided the opportunity for women to redefine notions of political leadership and power.

2 In 1995, Hillary Clinton gave her famous speech at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, where she emphasized that “women’s rights are human rights” and pointed out the great significance of the status of women for the democratic development in the new millennium. In 2003, her first autobiography *Living History* was published and sold more than one million copies. In 2016—thirteen years after the publication of *Living History*, at the age of 69, Hillary Clinton was the first woman in American history to be the nominated Democratic candidate for the presidential elections. Even though Hillary Clinton has not become the first female president of the United States in 2017, her concession speech, in line with her autobiography *Living History*, is an encouragement and inspiration to women: “never doubt that you are valuable and powerful and deserving of every chance and opportunity in the world to pursue and achieve your own dreams” (Clinton “Read”). This essay will focus on *Living History* as document about the empowerment of women and the political leadership, explaining how Clinton has become “a lightning rod for political and ideological battles waged over America’s future and a magnet for feelings, good and bad, about women’s choices and roles” (vi).

### **American Political Autobiography**

3 Throughout American political history, political autobiography has been “immensely popular” in recording and presenting American lives and connecting the private/personal with the public/political (Abbott 14f.). American political autobiography comprises “a full-scale political tract” as well as “an alternate epistemology in American liberal political thought” (Abbott 16). After early considerations of politics in autobiographical writings by Puritans, political leaders of the United States gradually established the tradition of American political



autobiography. In these texts, American political leaders record their life experiences, their political careers, and their contribution to the political developments and transformations of the United States.

4 Today, political autobiography has become a crucial factor in the studies of American autobiographies. As James M. Cox points out in “Autobiography and America,” Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography can be considered as the first American autobiography<sup>1</sup> (167; cf. Dippel 257). Most early American autobiographies before Benjamin Franklin are more centered on “religion” and “religious confession,” whereas the objective of Franklin’s autobiography is to provide “moral instruction” and to exemplify the significance of the pursuit for happiness “in an open, democratic society for personal improvement and public benefit” (Dippel 257). After the publication of Franklin’s autobiography in 1791, political autobiographies have gradually become popular<sup>2</sup> among American politicians (Dippel 258). Influenced by the tradition created by Franklin’s autobiography, later American political autobiographies have combined “traditional elements” with “modernity” to reflect the integration of “personal political life and public political culture” and “the evolution of American democracy and political culture in America” (Dippel 258-59).

5 Within this context, the functions of American political autobiographies are closely connected with the politicians’ political objectives. Firstly, political leaders can and are willing to utilize their autobiographies to create a platform in the “political system” where they can “directly” communicate with and connect to their readers and voters (Shally-Jensen, Rozell, and Jelen 856). By sharing “first hand”-information of their personal, educational, and professional experiences, politicians present what they have accomplished during their political careers, and explain their political policies and objectives to the readers—for instance, “the decisions that these chief executives were confronted with during their presidency, along with their expectations for why they chose certain courses of action” (Shally-Jensen, Rozell, and Jelen 846). The detailed life experiences presented in political leaders’ autobiographies help to eliminate the distance between the successful and the ordinary, and make them more approachable for the people.

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<sup>1</sup> When the first autobiographical work of Benjamin Franklin was written and published at the end of the eighteenth century, autobiography is still not a legitimate genre (Abbott 14).

<sup>2</sup> According to Dippel, Abraham Lincoln, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, Martin Van Buren, and Ulysses S. Grant have written their autobiographies before, during, or after their presidency (Dippel 258). Besides, political leaders such as James Buchanan, Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, George H. W. Bush, and Barack Obama have also written and published autobiographies before, during, or after their presidency.

6 Secondly, in their autobiographies, politicians present themselves as role models and leave their political and moral legacies to their fellow Americans. As a result, American political autobiographies, as “political reflection,” have created a “didactic” or “sermonic tradition” to highlight the pursuit of the American dream and the values of democracy and equality (Abbott 15f., 186). For example, Franklin not only writes his autobiography with the intention to give “moral instruction” to the readers, but also to present the example of a successful “American life” by highlighting the importance of “an active life in an open, democratic society for personal improvement and public benefit” (Dippel 257). In particular, Franklin shares his personal and political experiences and achievements in his autobiography with the motivation that “posterity will see his life ‘fit to be imitated’” (Abbott 15).

7 Overall, American political autobiographies reflect the “common feeling of representativeness” of the political leaders, since they consider themselves as “legitimate interpreters of the history and politics of their time and of the mood of the nation” and thus as “integral parts of the American experience” (Dippel 266). American political leaders’ autobiographies unveil the “secrecy” of political lives and achievements, construct a foundation to express political ideas, and provide the opportunity for their readers to deepen their knowledge of the American political spirit (Shally-Jensen, Rozell, and Jelen 856).

### **Women and Political Autobiography**

8 Before the twentieth century, women were conventionally connected with the “private sphere” and thus did not have the privilege to “create public documents like autobiographies,” as this would have been seen as a rebellious action that “violates social norms” (Marshall and Mayhead 7). Autobiographies written by female politicians as vivid reflections of women’s progress of independence, testify to women’s efforts of writing themselves into the history of autobiography as well as of politics, and run counter to the conventional view of autobiographers as “unquestionably white, male, and Western” (Smith and Watson 8). In their autobiographies, female politicians record their own life stories “through [their] own lens of bias, prejudice, existential angst, and lived experience, [choosing] to tell the truth, to embellish, or to lie in every line” (Marshall and Mayhead 9). Likewise, autobiographies by female politicians construct their own “form of history” from their own perspectives, and contribute to the inclusion of women’s writings into “the literary canon” of autobiography: “if a woman possesses language or a symbol system, she can tell her own story” (Marshall and Mayhead 9).

9 Thus, in their autobiographies, female politicians “have woven the threads of their identities into a tapestry, declaring their positions on ‘sexuality, race, gender, class’ as well as

‘politics, law, science and communities’” (qtd. Marshall and Mayhead 185). The personal anecdotes and private stories included in these autobiographies conjoin the personal with political and construct a bridge between the autobiographer and the reader. Marshall and Mayhead point out that autobiographies by female political leaders can function as enlightening sites, especially for female readers, to conduct an experiment in “self-discovery” and to “follow in their footsteps”:

Thus, the self-discovery and sense of agency emerging from the reading of these autobiographies potentially leads readers to identify with the writer and to imagine themselves following in her footsteps. [...] The telling of one’s life story exemplifies the human desire to connect with others, provide insight into one’s personal and public choices, give advice to those who may wish to follow in one’s footsteps, contest others’ representations of self, and leave a legacy validating one’s existence. (Marshall and Mayhead 3, 7)

This is emphasized in Madeleine Albright’s autobiography *Madam Secretary*, where she explicitly points out that her intention of writing an autobiography as a female political leader is to “combine the personal with policy and describe not just what happened but also why and how events were influenced by human relationships” (xi). Similarly, in her analysis of *Living History*, Karrin Vasby Anderson states that Hillary Clinton has utilized “personal narratives as a rhetorical strategy” in order to present to the readers “her political ideology,” her professional competence, and the contribution she has made to promote gender equality (132). Thus, women politicians’ autobiographies can work as records of women’s history combining both private and political lives, and can be taken as important inspirations for women readers to construct independent identities, achieve professional competence, and find the power to change the world around them.

### **Hillary Clinton’s *Living History***

10 *Living History* can be considered as one of the most influential American political autobiographies written by a female politician. On the political level, it has provided an opportunity for Hillary Clinton to connect with her supporters, to convince her potential followers that she is capable to lead, and to persuade the public that “a woman [can] assume national leadership” (Smith 4). In *Living History*, the autobiographical ‘I’ stands out as “a convincing political persona” who is “feminist, professional, former First Lady, and duly-elected senator” (Smith 4) at the same time.

### **The Empowerment of Women**

11 Even before the reader opens the book, the cover of *Living History* stands out to visualize the writer as embodiment of female power. According to Sidonie Smith

[...] the front cover projects a singular iconic image of the celebrity. This is a figure sans 'background,' sans relationship. The hair that has often been so unruly is almost perfect coiffed. The eyes sparkle. The mouth smiles. This 'Hillary's' chin rests on her hands in a gesture of assured self-confidence and self-support. The eyes are marked with age lines, enough to project experience, but not too many to foreground aging. The cheeks are marked by smile lines, intimating the ludic break-up of a gendered mask. The cover gives us an iconic figure of a powerful woman, staring directly at the reader, unafraid of public scrutiny. It announces everything: I'm here. I'm together. I'm "like steel tempered in fire." (Smith 21)

In this analysis, on the one hand, the self-confidence and "self-sufficiency" evident in facial expression and gesture present Clinton as a strong and capable female politician (qtd. Smith 21); on the other hand, the **alluded to** amiability brings her closer to her readers not only as a politician, but also as a person/woman. In this sense, this picture not only foregrounds the female power of Clinton in the political context, but also in a more personal way.

12 Within Western history the definition of female power has never been identical with the seemingly gender-neutral definition of power as such. According to Peggy Reeves Sanday's *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origin of Sexual Inequality*, "Females achieve economic and political power or authority when environmental or historical circumstances grant them economic autonomy" (Sanday 114). In the opening passage of *Living History*, Hillary Clinton points out that she has been very lucky to be born at a time when American society has started to provide women with comparatively more chances to thrive in the public sphere:

I was born an American in the middle of the twentieth century, a fortunate time and place. I was free to make choices unavailable to past generations of women in my own country and inconceivable to many women in the world today. I came of age of the crest of tumultuous social change and took part in the political battles fought over the meaning of America and its role in the world. (Clinton 1)

Without equal social circumstances to guarantee women's autonomy through equal educational and professional opportunities, women have little chances to become economically and politically independent, to accumulate professional experiences or develop leadership capabilities.

13 In *Living History*, Clinton exemplifies the significance of a social environment which guarantees gender equality. Firstly, Clinton emphasizes the important role of the family in empowering her to become a self-confident and independent woman. Being valued and respected within the family appears as important factor in the development of the strength nec-

essary to step into the public sphere. Clinton depicts her parents as fully supportive, treating her equally, paying attention to her education, and helping her to develop a confident and independent identity. At the same time Clinton foregrounds how she was introduced to the necessity to fight for herself from an early age onwards. This is highlighted in an anecdote describing the, four-year-old Clinton running home crying after having been bullied by some older boys and girls and “complaining” to her mother (Clinton 12). Rather than just comforting her and intervening in the affair, her mother “stopped” her crying and encouraged her to “[g]o back out there” “to stand up for [herself]” since “there [was] no room for cowards in this house”(Clinton 12). What might seem a harsh treatment, taught Clinton to develop courage to face challenges, rather than to feel inferior and intimidated as a girl who seemingly has to rely on others. Meanwhile, Clinton’s father helped Clinton to gain more confidence by engaging her in their outdoor sport activities. As a result, Clinton developed both physical and psychological strength and “became a serious fan and occasional competitor” in different sport teams at school (Clinton 13).

14 Secondly, a social environment, which promotes and guarantees gender equality, is vital in empowering women. In particular, an equal social environment can provide educational and professional opportunities for women to equip them with professional capabilities to enter the workforce. In the 1960s, it was still quite difficult for women to have equal educational opportunity in American society. Despite “the continuing expansion of women’s education” (McClelland 11) women were “warned against” outstanding achievements at school, because a woman with outstanding academic performance could possibly “[scare] off prospective suitors” (Chafe 180-84). Thus, as described in *Living History*, many of Clinton’s female classmates were forced “to conform to sexist stereotypes”: accordingly, some of them gave up better educational opportunities, while others pretended to be mediocre at school (Clinton 20f.). Moreover, women were often offered with a “distinctively feminine curriculum” since they were expected to do household works or related professions in the future and thus were not encouraged to pursue disciplines, such as law, medicine, science, and engineering in universities (Chafe 180f.). Before she took the LSAT test, Clinton was insulted and threatened by some male participants in the examination room, who asserted that women should not take part in this test, and that Clinton would ruin a man’s life by taking up his place in law school (Clinton, “Humans of New York”). When she “entered Yale Law School in the fall of 1969” as “one of the twenty-seven women out of 235 students to matriculate,” Clinton came to know “how polarized America’s political landscape had become” (Clinton 44) at a time of increasing visibility of women in the public sphere.

15 In the latter half of the 20th century, in many cases, women were still not treated as equal in legal and political professions, which prevented women from reaching for power and leadership positions. When Clinton was working as a lawyer on a rape case, a judge asked her to “leave the courtroom” before he sentenced the defendant, arguing that he could not “talk about these things in front of a lady” (Clinton 73). Clinton appropriately answered: “Judge, [...] don’t think of me as anything but a lawyer” (Clinton 73). Due to her educational and professional experiences, Hillary Clinton became an urgent advocate of equal educational and professional opportunities for women. As emphasized earlier in this essay, she advocated in her speech in the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 that “it is no longer acceptable to discuss women’s rights as separate from human rights” and that all nations should make “efforts to improve educational, health, legal and political opportunities for women” (Clinton 80f., 305). Clinton has always drawn on her own experiences to demonstrate that in order to really achieve real power, “the ability or right to control or influence group decision making, including the assignment of leadership roles beyond the household level” (Sanday 114), two factors have to come together: women have to face challenges and overcome obstacles, and society has to provide an equal environment for women to thrive, to participate, and, finally, to lead.

### **Female Political Leadership in *Living History***

16 In *Living History*, Clinton shares her life experiences chronologically from her childhood to the end of her time as First Lady, connecting the personal to the political with the help of anecdotes. Based on the idea of a gradual accumulation of strength and power over time, this autobiography can be interpreted “as a coming-of-age story of education” as well as “a journey of subjective incorporation as a normative national subject” (Smith 8). On the one hand, *Living History* follows the didactic tradition of American political autobiographies and provides moral and political instructions for the readers; on the other hand, this autobiography exemplifies the realization of American dream and presents the development of Clinton from an ordinary girl to a female role model and national political figure. The personal experiences at every stage of Clinton’s life are indispensable components in the construction of her identity. Her childhood and teenage experiences, such as facing the bully when she was four years old, participating in social work to help women and children, overcoming the feelings of insecurity and loneliness when she first entered Wellesley, and trying her best to use her professional knowledge to make a difference in her legal and political career, have all contributed to the accumulation of professional skills and inner strength which are essential for the devel-

opment of her leadership styles. This development does not only become apparent in the text, but also in the many photographs inserted in the book. Apart from the front-cover portrait of Clinton, there are about 140 pictures printed in this autobiography - mostly black-and-white - displaying Clinton's life to the readers. These photos present Clinton as a little girl with her parents and grandparents, as a teenager involved in high school activities, as a hardworking and confident young woman in Wellesley and Yale, as a young and promising lawyer with colleagues, as a wife and mother with her husband and daughter, and more importantly, as the First Lady during her eight years in the White House. The photos in *Living History*, mostly private ones, are arranged in time order to accompany the written text and to visualize how Clinton gradually turns into a national political figure. Specifically, in those pictures, where Clinton appears as the only women surrounded by a group of male politicians, her role as a female public leader gains immediate visibility and is captured in a strikingly impressive way.

17 In *Living History*, Clinton links her personal experiences as a woman with her political achievements, to develop her own leadership style, which significantly differ from conventional male-oriented leadership styles. It is worth mentioning that in Clinton's earlier book *It Takes a Village* (1996), she has already connected the traditional obligations of women such as "child-rearing" and "housekeeping" to women's roles as political leaders in public office and political issues concerning the welfare of women and children (Christ 255). In each chapter Clinton links political issues with personal anecdotes, in particular with "her own experience as a mother" (Christ 263-65). She thus "moves from the personal to the political or governmental" by "zooming out from the individual mother and family to the national community and its lawmakers" (Christ 263-65). Similarly, in her second autobiography *Hard Choices* (2014), Clinton points out that her identity as a woman plays an important part in her leadership style: "I would guess that many leaders choose to ignore the fact that they're dealing with a woman when they're dealing with me. But I try not to let them get away with that" (50). In *Living History*, Clinton gives various examples of how her political beliefs and leadership styles are influenced by her experiences as a woman, a daughter, and a mother. During and after her pregnancy, Clinton does not only emphasize the importance of the birth of her daughter Chelsea as "the most miraculous and awe-inspiring event in [her] life," but also links this experience to the political issue of women's welfare during and after pregnancy (Clinton 84):

Bill and I both recognized the need for parental leave, preferable paid. We emerged from our experience committed to ensuring that all parents have the option to stay home with their new born children and to have reliable child care when they return to

work. That's why I was so thrilled when the first bill he signed as President was the Family and Medical Leave Act. (Clinton 85)

In her analysis of *Living History* Karrin Vasby Anderson notes that “[r]epeatedly, throughout the book, Rodham Clinton suggests that her views on public policy have been shaped by personal interactions” and “connects her personal experiences with specific policy initiatives” (135).

18 When connecting the personal to the political, Clinton uses distinctly gendered metaphors to explain and describe her political work, indicating a different leadership style. In *Living History*, she chooses the term “Delivery Room” with a double-fold connotation to describe the Health Care program initiated by her and Bill Clinton (Clinton 182). In the political context, “delivery room” refers to the Congress room where the President delivers the Health Care initiative to the Congress members; at the same time the term compares the Health Care program itself to a child waiting to be “delivered” (182, 188). In Clinton's description of the health care project, she tends to consider herself as mother and as carer for those in need:

I spoke to people who temporarily lost their coverage because they switched jobs—which was happening to an average of two million workers each month. I met men and women who discovered they couldn't get insurance if they had a “a preexisting condition” like cancer or diabetes that was already diagnosed and part of their medical history. Some elderly Americans living on fixed incomes told me they were forced to choose between paying the rent or buying prescription drugs. My father's hospitalization taught me that even with the best care and support, losing someone you love is indescribably painful. I couldn't bear thinking how much harder it would be if the loss were avoidable. (Clinton 183)

Since she has the power to change and improve the health care situation for those who are in need of medical support, Clinton takes up responsibility and attempts to raise public awareness on health care issues. At the same time, by referring to the personal experiences of her father's hospitalization, Clinton can appeal to “shared values” with others and emphasize the need of people as top priority (Rosenthal 5).

19 To give a second example, Clinton uses the phrase “kitchen table issues” to metaphorically refer to Democratic Party issues during the presidential campaign in 1996:

I thought about to how present the issues I championed and better relate them to the public's concerns. Countless families, including my own, tend to congregate after school or work to discuss the issues of the day, often sitting around the kitchen table. I began describing Democratic Party issues as “kitchen table issues,” which became a catch-phrase in the campaign. The discussion of kitchen table issues led some Washington pundits to talk derisively about “the feminization of politics,” an attempt to marginalize, even trivialize, policies such as family leave or extended mammogram coverage for older women or adequate hospital stays for mothers after delivering their babies. With that in mind, I coined my own term—“the humanization of politics”—to



publicly advance the idea that kitchen table issues mattered to everybody, not just to women. (Clinton 364)

As Anderson argues, the phrase “the kitchen table issues” integrates “public and private realms” and is “symbolic of women’s experiences” (144). Even though Clinton emphasizes that she coined this phrase to turn the kitchen into a symbolic site of democracy and equality, undermining the traditional binary opposition between the private/domestic and the public/political spheres.

20 Based on the examples in her autobiography, Clinton’s leadership style shows characteristics of “integrative” (Rosenthal 29-30), connective (Lipman-Blumen “Connective Leadership: Managing in a Changing World” 181-83), and “transformational” leadership styles (Rahim 4). Although sharing a similar aim to promote equality, each of these three leadership styles has a distinctively different focus: the integrative style aims to create equal opportunities and share resources; the connective style highlights building networks between different people and platforms; the transformational leadership style focuses on encouraging and inspiring people for change. Firstly, Clinton’s leadership style can be considered as integrative, specifically concerning the welfare of women and those who are in need of help. According to Rosenthal, increasing evidence demonstrates that women’s leadership style can be characterized as “an integrative style,” which is reflected in “sharing power and empowering others, being noncompetitive and inclusive, seeking consensus and mutuality in relationships, and inviting participation rather than imposing dominance” (5). Since they “approach politics with understanding and skills that have been shaped by family, community, volunteerism, and education,” female political leaders often tend to care more about the needs of others and create equal opportunities for people to share information and resources (Rosenthal 161). In both examples referred to in this essay, the “delivery room” as well as the “kitchen table,” Clinton’s leadership style of “[c]aring,” “[b]eing involved,” “[h]elping,” and “[b]eing responsible” thus undermines the unreflected association of leadership with masculine power ( Helgesen 21).

21 Secondly, Clinton also draws on a connective leadership style. The main features of a connective leadership style are to take others’ perspectives into account aiming at the creation of networks and platforms for people, instead of fostering “competitiveness” and “individualism” (Lipman-Blumen 200). According to recent analysis, female political leaders often use “more democratic,” “effective,” and “connective” leadership methods and try their best to be “contributory” by considering “the needs of others above [their] own” (Eagly 9; Lipman-Blumen 200; Eagly and Carli 814). In the case of the delivery room, Clinton focuses on peo-

ple's needs of health care and tries to develop networks and platforms for people to exchange ideas and voice their needs.

22 Thirdly, Clinton's also draws on a transformational leadership style. According to Peter G. Northouse, the transformational leadership "is a process that changes and transforms people" on personal or cultural levels (185-86). The transformational leadership style aims to "stimulate and inspire followers" to reach their goals and discover their own strengths through "idealized influence," "inspirational motivation," "intellectual stimulation," and "individualized consideration" (Bass and Riggio n.p.). According to Burns, this leadership style creates more interactions between people and has a "transforming effect" on both the leader and the followers (Burns 20), thus "[raising] the level of motivation and morality" (Northouse 186). Using a transformational leadership style, the leader often actively engages with the followers, considers the followers' benefits as of great significance, and helps the followers to "reach their fullest potential" (Northouse 186).

23 In both examples discussed, Clinton's leadership style reflects most of the features above, specifically those of inspiring, motivating, and stimulating people. In particular, Clinton's leadership style conveys the transformational message which encourages women to break down the invisible barriers which limit their impact on the public sphere. Clinton's argument that her use of the phrase "kitchen table issues" does not aim at "the feminization" but rather "the humanization of politics" (Clinton 364) highlights her interest in tackling the problem of gender stereotypes in the political field, and encourages women to overcome gender bias in politics. Moreover, by using the term "kitchen table issues" with reference to political issues, Clinton "publicly advance[s]" the idea "kitchen table issues [matter] to everybody, not just to women" (Clinton 364). This echoes the feminist belief that "the Personal is the Political" to advocate a more democratic and equal society (Clinton 364).

## Conclusion

24 In *Living History*, Hillary Clinton utilizes "personal narratives" to connect the personal with the political, and demonstrates her political objective as a female political leader to "[making a] commitment to women's active leadership, to making a difference for all" (Marshall and Mayhead 185f.). By telling the stories of her own empowerment, Clinton not only criticizes the invisible barriers existing in American society, but also points out the necessity of a combined contribution from the private sphere as well as the public sphere to create equal opportunities for women to break through the glass ceiling and become political leaders. Therefore, influenced by her personal experiences concerning women and empowerment,

Clinton's own leadership draws on integrative, connective, and transformational leadership styles. These three leadership styles reflect Clinton's aim at overcoming gender stereotypes and constructing a more equal and democratic social environment, for the benefit not only of women but every citizen. Drawing on the notion of the private as the political Clinton can emphasize the importance of her roles as a woman/daughter/wife/mother for her political agenda, and raise people's awareness of the detrimental effect of gender inequality as well as other forms of inequality for the general social make-up. A short passage from Clinton's concession speech after the 2016 Presidential Election summarizes her belief in female power and leadership, which, in spite of current obstacles and setbacks, will prevail:

Finally, I am so grateful for our country and for all it has given to me. I count my blessings every single day that I am an American. And I still believe as deeply as I ever have that if we stand together and work together with respect for our differences, strength in our convictions and love for this nation, our best days are still ahead of us. Because, you know—you know, I believe we are stronger together and we will go forward together. And you should never, ever regret fighting for that. (Clinton, "Read")

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# **Career or Family? The Fight of Two Prominent Scandinavian Feminist Politicians**

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## **Abstract:**

Internationally, in the twentieth century, women in higher and managerial occupations were confronted with barriers because they had to fight prejudices concerning their ability to maintain themselves in traditionally male occupations. This was the case for instance, with women politicians in the West. More than their male colleagues, women politicians had to prove that they were fit for the job. At the same time they were supposed to have a special responsibility for their private sphere. This was more difficult in the period before the second feminist wave than after, but it became never easy. Even in the Scandinavian countries, seen as triumphs of emancipation, at least from the 1970s, it continued to be a struggle.

This article intends to delve deeper into the situation in two Scandinavian countries, Sweden and Norway. It will deal with two prominent political women leaders from these countries, namely Alva Myrdal (1902-1986) and Gro Harlem Brundtland (1939-). Myrdal was a powerful political intellectual and cabinet minister in Sweden. Brundtland would become the first Norwegian woman Prime Minister. In recent years increasing amounts of literature on female political leadership have appeared, but these are often general overviews from a political or sociological perspective. Such general facts and insights are useful, but there is also a need to explore the lives and careers of individual female political leaders. In this way we can expand the insight into how women attempt to gain admittance to political parties and the field of parliamentary and governmental politics. Both Myrdal and Brundtland have had to deal with the snares inherent in the combination of their public and private lives. Their personal biographies give evidence of this: in both cases we are dealing with feminists who attempted to find solutions for their personal problems and at the same time for those of society as a whole. These are solutions that were implemented in reality in their own countries during the second wave of feminism, and found their resonance in other countries. Nevertheless both politicians came up against the boundaries of the feasibility of their own lives, something that for them, as social-democrats – traditional believers in feasibility – must have come as a blow.

1      How many shelves would be filled with books and articles about what now is called ‘the combination problem’? For a long time Western societies have been wrestling with the problem of women and their relation to the public sphere. During the first wave of feminism (app. 1860-1920) among other things, feminists fought for women’s right to paid labour and the vote. During the second wave of feminism (late 1960s until late 1980s) the focus was on implementing these rights. Until the 1960s, the complimentary model of housewife and husband as breadwinner was so wide-spread that women, whether they had children or not, were expected to dedicate their lives to their home. The second wave of feminism fought against this dominant view.



2 Women in higher and managerial occupations were all the more confronted with barriers because they had to fight prejudices concerning their ability in traditionally male occupations. This was for instance the case with women politicians. They not only had to fight discrimination, but also had to struggle with their own diminishing judgments about their capacities as a consequence of a long socialisation leading women to the private sphere. Moreover, their education often did not equip them with the qualities needed in a traditionally masculine sphere (Lawless and Fox 11). No wonder that for most of the twentieth century political women leaders in the West were a rarity. At the end of the century less than thirty percent of all cabinet ministerial posts in ten important Western and Northern European countries were occupied by women (Henig and Henig 56).<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, from the late 1960s favourable changes started. Factors like better educational opportunities, increasing welfare and the rise of new social movements were important in this respect. The second wave of feminism in particular was directed against the dominant view of female political incompetence.

3 In recent scholarly discussions there is much attention for the *persona* of public authorities (scientists, managers, politicians and so on). Besides aspects of content, factors like gender, race, class, religion, age, appearance, (timephased) norms and values and the question whether one maintains them and the manner of combining public and private affairs also matter; together they constitute the persona (Bosch 33-54). Furthermore, as politicians are concerned, their policies need to meet the expectations of their fellow citizens (Wolffram 3). In order to present a credible persona, more than their male colleagues, women politicians had to prove that they were capable to fulfil the job. They had to prove to be able to distinctly influence parliamentary and governmental politics and (at least partially) meet the expectations of the public. At the same time, they additionally had to maintain their responsibilities to the private sphere by taking care of their families. Such women often were unmarried or had adult children. If they had a family with younger children, they had to justify themselves all the more for the way they combined a political career with motherhood (Van Zoonen 292, 299). This was more difficult in the period before the second wave of feminism than after, but it became never easy. Even in the Scandinavian countries, seen as triumphs of emancipation, at least from the 1970s, it continued to be a struggle.

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<sup>1</sup> The countries involved are Sweden, Norway, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy and Germany.

4 I intend to delve deeper into the situation in two Scandinavian countries, Sweden and Norway. My focus will be on two prominent political women leaders from these countries, namely Alva Myrdal (1902-1986) and Gro Harlem Brundtland (1939-). Myrdal was a powerful political intellectual and cabinet minister in Sweden. Brundtland would become the first Norwegian woman Prime Minister. There is sufficient material available in the form of biographies, ego-documents and reflections on their political and scholarly activities, to be able to sketch a credible picture of both women. The portrait of Alva Myrdal is intended to increase the knowledge and understanding of the period before the second wave of feminism and that of Gro Harlem Brundtland the period that followed.

5 In recent years increasing amounts of literature on female political leadership have appeared, but these are often general overviews from a political or sociological perspective. Such general facts and insights are useful, but there is also a need to explore the lives and careers of individual female political leaders. In this way we can expand the insight into how women attempt to gain admittance to political parties and the field of parliamentary and governmental politics and how they combine these activities with their private life (Van der Steen 3). The biographical method also helps to prevent the formation of myths (Renders 39-42; Possing 4, 5). Both Myrdal and Brundtland have had to deal with problems in balancing their public and private lives. Their personal biographies give evidence of this: in both cases we are dealing with feminists who attempted to find solutions for their personal problems and at the same time for those of society as a whole. These are solutions that were implemented in their own countries during the second wave of feminism, and found their resonance in other countries. Nevertheless both politicians had difficulties with the feasibility of their own lives; something that for them, as social democrats – traditional believers in feasibility – must have come as a blow. In the conclusion I will further discuss the solutions to the problems these two women encountered in combining public and private spheres. In how far do they offer them a way out for women of today?

### **Alva Myrdal, fight against the cult of motherhood**

6 In Sweden there is no couple more famous than Alva and Gunnar Myrdal. Both were Nobel Prize winners, Gunnar in 1974 for economics and Alva in 1982 when she was awarded the Peace Prize. However, the question is how much pleasure they had from these. For many years Gunnar suffered from physical infirmities and regular bouts of depression. A few months before the 1982 presentation of the Nobel Prize, Alva and Gunnar were confronted with the memoir of their son Jan, a well-known journalist in Sweden with leftist sympathies.

The timing was a coincidence in so far that Jan probably did not know that his mother would receive the prize. But at the time she enjoyed much publicity because of the reception of another prize six months earlier. And this fact may have triggered him. After a period of frequent clashes, especially with Gunnar, Jan had not had contact with his parents since the end of the 1960s. In his book he publicly denounced his upbringing that, according to him, was characterised by the frequent absences of his parents and emotional neglect. Alva in particular was blamed for being a cold and distant mother. The book caused a sensation in Sweden; newspapers, radio and television had a field day. It seems likely that the difficult situation contributed to Alva Myrdal's health issues and her subsequent death (Bok 333-343, Hirdman 366-69; J. Myrdal 24-29).

7 In the case of Alva, her son's reproaches to her address were particularly hard to swallow because she had always loved to have children and moreover was a well-known child psychologist and pedagogics. She had published extensively in the field and as early as the 1930s she pleaded for a child-centred government policy. She combined her interest in children with her feminist aspirations. At a time when Sweden was not the emancipated nation it is today and the housewife-breadwinner model was prevalent there, Alva fought for the right of married women to have a job (Etzemüller 251f.). Collective facilities as childcare, free school lunches, free health care and housing subsidies for families should assist the paid working women. The Myrdal family also had the "Myrdal House" built in the late 1930s: this was a spacious home with every convenience and offered privacy to the parents and play areas for the children. Her daughter Sissela's biography of her mother's life notes how much they had enjoyed this house as children (Hirdman 174-91; Bok 115-25).

8 It was not self-evident that Alva Reimer would receive higher education. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sweden was a poor country with a class problem. Her parents were certainly not rich: her father worked in the building trade and her mother was a housewife. Her father was interested in politics and this influenced his eldest daughter who was regarded as gifted by both her parents and a teacher at her school. Alva read as much as possible and studied among other things philosophy, history and political science. She had to fight to be allowed to finish upper secondary school by taking private lessons. Just as in the Netherlands, it was the received wisdom that girls did not need to study because they would get married. Finally her father agreed. In 1922 she passed her exams. Two years later (22 years old) she received an undergraduate university degree in comparative literature, history of religion and Nordic languages. In the same year she married the law student – who later studied economics – Gunnar Myrdal (Hirdman xiii-25).

9        The relationship between the Myrdals is representative of that between other left-wing intellectual couples at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Initially Gunnar was somewhat anti-feminist, but as their relationship developed he became more and more an emancipated man. He fully supported the scholarly and political activities of his wife. However, his emancipation did not extend to his own household, as is evident from the biographies by the Swedish historian Yvonne Hirdman and his daughter Sissela. Alva had the responsibility for their three children. Gunnar was a brilliant but difficult and demanding man. He wanted to work together with Alva and he wished her to be his scientific assistant. Besides she should be his mental guardian. He saw his children and the care she gave to them as ‘hindrances’ between him and Alva. The result was that Alva continually had to mediate between the two parties. In the last instance it was Gunnar who won. In 1929, when their son was two years old, he was sent to his grandparents because his parents went to the United States for a year to pursue their academic activities. In 1941 the same thing happened, but this time three children were left in the care of one of their grandmothers. Hirdman points out that such things were not unusual in higher circles (Hirdman 135). This does not alter the fact that Alva already felt guilty the first time, and had great reservations the second time about going ahead with the plan, which, as on the previous occasion, had come about at the insistence of Gunnar. Later she deeply regretted both long absences. As her daughter Sissela writes with reference to the trip in 1941:

Alva later looked back at that journey as her life’s second great mistake. The first had been leaving Jan when he was two years old. This time she was confronted with an ultimatum. [...] Gunnar would have seen a choice favouring the children and her work over him as a betrayal. Divorce would, she thought, have been unavoidable. It was a possibility that she was not ready to consider. (Bok 156)

10      Both her daughters have a more positive opinion of their upbringing than their brother – as also evidenced by the youngest daughter’s memoir. Both Sissela and Kaj are not uncritical but see the life and career of their mother from the perspective of gender, which gives them the chance to stand back and also to appreciate what their mother achieved. In addition Kaj is very critical of her brother; he was eleven years older than she and dominated her in the absence of their parents (Fölster 81-89). Despite the harsh reality, Alva cherished an image of an ideal marriage with Gunnar, at least in the thirties and forties: “For that is then

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<sup>2</sup> For instance the relationship between the Dutch communist couple Jan and Annie Romein, well-known twentieth century historians, was similar to that of the Myrdals, see Romein-Verschoor 1970, Perry 2015.

our great superiority to other people, that we can maintain the most wonderful love in the most modern way of life, as the most boundless romance...”<sup>3</sup>

11 In a fascinating study, the German historian Thomas Etzemüller has illuminated the role of the Myrdals as important members of a broad group of intellectuals and artists who wanted to modernise Sweden. The Myrdal House was an architectural contribution to this process of modernisation (Etzemüller 227). In the framework of this modernisation process, in 1934 Gunnar and Alva published a controversial but ground breaking study in which solutions were offered for the problem of the population of Sweden. Too few children were being born: over 13 per 1,000 inhabitants in 1933, while during most of the nineteenth century yearly 30 children per 1,000 saw the life light. Gunnar was a member of the progressive Stockholm School of economists that, just as the contemporary J.M. Keynes, advocated government investment and monetary incentives to stimulate the economy and deal with the crisis. Alva advocated measures such as prohibiting the firing of pregnant paid working women, housing subsidies for families with children, better child care, easy access to contraceptives and the legalisation of abortion. The book was highly influential and determined much of the discussion around these issues. Many of their suggestions were implemented in Swedish society after the war.<sup>4</sup> In 1938 Alva was already one of the most influential women in Sweden (Etzemüller 240).

12 After the Second World War, Alva Myrdal made a successful career in Swedish politics. She was a prominent member of the Social-Democratic Party, was the director of the Department of Social Affairs of the United Nations in New York (1949-1951) and was the first female Swedish ambassador, being stationed in India from 1955 to 1961. Her finest hour came in 1966 when she was minister for disarmament, a post she held until 1973. She threw herself heart and soul into the cause of world peace and nuclear disarmament, carefully manoeuvring between the two great powers. In addition to this she was active as a feminist; immediately after the war she worked hard to open the masculine world of local and national politics and to involve more women in this area. She called on women's organisations to draw up a list of women who were capable of managing various political posts. She deplored the return of the 'ideal housewife' in the *zeitgeist* after the war. Therefore, in the period 1945-1946, she suggested a revolutionary method for dealing with the problem how to combine paid work and work in the family: a six-hour working day for both men and women, who

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<sup>3</sup> As cited by Etzemüller 241 (letters from Alva to Gunnar, 1925, 1932).

<sup>4</sup> Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, *Kris i befolkningsfrågan (Crisis in the Population Question)* 1934, see Bok 115-19, Etzemüller 130-36.

would then both contribute to the housework and childcare. This plan was a forerunner of the ideas of the second wave of feminism, as we shall see later (Etzemüller 260f.; Hirdman 266-71, 326; Kaplan 69).

13 In feminist circles, Alva Myrdal is best known for the book she wrote in 1956 with the sociologist Viola Klein, *Women's Two Roles*. In this she advocated a trajectory in which women first concentrated on their career and then dedicated themselves to the upbringing of their children, and once these were grown they could once again take up their careers. The book achieved international fame and became part of the canon of second wave feminism. At the same time, it was criticised by second wave feminists because the whole of the responsibility for housekeeping and childcare lay with the woman: the man had no such responsibility. With this approach of the problem Myrdal did take a step backwards from her earlier revolutionary ideas. However, Hirdman rightly notes, the book was written in the context of the conservative 1950s when the breadwinner/housewife model was prevalent everywhere (Hirdman 324-27). Taking the socio-historical context into account, the book now stands out as being progressive for its time. It is also probable that Alva Myrdal had become sadder and wiser through her own experiences of a dominant husband who left her with the burden of the household and children care and that this fact influenced her more conservative stance in the book.

14 When all has been said and done, the question arises if she would have had such an eminent political career if she had not been married to Gunnar. After all, he was a prominent economist whose advice was repeatedly sought by the Swedish government, and was also a cabinet minister for a time from 1945-1947. His position opened doors for Alva and moreover he promoted her career. On the other hand, it also happened that a particular important position was lost to her because the institution concerned did not see the need for two Myrdals. For instance could not she get a post in the education ministry after the war – a job that suited her greatly - because her husband was already a cabinet minister (Hirdman 266).

15 In her biography Yvonne Hirdman calls the problems Alva Myrdal encountered in combining a public with a private life her “gender drama” (Hirdman 291-93). But that is one side of the story. Because one cannot deny the fact that until very old age she kept trying to make a career and to develop herself. Apparently it was worth while, notwithstanding all the troubles she met. Those difficulties were not in the least caused by the fact that she was a pioneer as a female scholar and politician. For a long time she lived her life in a period when people in the west were negative about paid working women and mothers, especially in the

higher echelons. Her own husband and children too had to cope with a rare phenomenon of a politically influential working mother. Her ongoing attempts to fight the cult of motherhood and make her own life and that of other women better are inspiring. In the end she succeeded in creating a credible persona, albeit temporarily damaged by the problems with her son.

### **Gro Harlem Brundtland: feminism of the second wave in practice**

16      1986 was an exceptional year for emancipation. It was the year in which Gro Harlem Brundtland presented her second cabinet, almost half of which were women: eight of the eighteen members, internationally a unique occurrence at that time. This brought her worldwide publicity. Brundtland was a feminist of the second wave, but had relatively late become aware that something as discrimination against women exists, as she describes in her autobiography (Brundtland 34f., 72, 378; Milestones 35). With two emancipated parents she enjoyed a privileged youth. Her mother had studied law and was active in the Norwegian Social-Democratic Party; her father was a doctor and had twice served as cabinet minister for the same party in the 1950s and 1960s. According to Brundtland herself, her parents made no differentiation in the way in which they brought up their two daughters and two sons. All the children were encouraged to study and Gro Harlem studied medicine, just like her father had done. Only during her student days did she discover during a study trip to Yugoslavia that women and girls were at a disadvantage: it appeared that women there had a much lower status than men. The following step in the growing of her consciousness was when as a young doctor (1969-74) she was confronted with the problem of abortion. She had to judge applications for abortions and fight for these patients in a committee mostly consisting of men. She grew in favour of legalising abortion, which was achieved in Norway in 1978 (Brundtland 58-92).

17      In 1960 at the age of 21 she married Arne Olav Brundtland, a student of international law and later a diplomat. It is notable that until the end of the 1980s Arne Olav's politics were those of the right, while Gro rapidly made a career for herself in the Social-Democratic Party, following in her parents' footsteps and making use of their network. Gro Harlem Brundtland said herself that until the beginning of the 1980s this difference in political opinions was no obstacle in their marriage, although they had repeatedly to defend themselves against criticism from others, in the press and in her own party. In 1981 Arne Olav applied, as candidate for the Conservative Party and this situation was unacceptable to Gro: divorce threatened. However, this was avoided because in time Arne Olav realised that he should not pursue this course if he would preserve his marriage intact (Brundtland 178).

He was a feminist and from the start Gro and her husband shared the housekeeping and childcare duties. In the early years Gro took most of these responsibilities, but from the moment that Gro began her political career, Arne Olav took more of these on himself. In addition they regularly had nannies and help from Gro's parents. Later when Gro was a minister and then prime minister the responsibilities fell entirely to Arne Olav, although Gro always tried to be at home as much as possible in the weekends and holidays (Brundtland 40-43, 56f., 68, 173-76, 188).

18 The three priorities in Gro Harlem Brundtland's career were the climate problem and the concomitant poverty problem, the problem of emancipation and the socio-economic policy in Norway. The underlying factor that brought the three together was the social-democratic concept of equality. From 1974 to 1979 she was a competent minister of the environment. Particularly her resolute stand in preventing an oil disaster in 1977 brought her respect. The oilrig Bravo had begun to leak and only by rapid and efficient action was a worse situation avoided (Scandinavian Review 94f.; Ribberink 2009). In the area of climate control and the war on poverty she was known chiefly for being the chair of an international commission set up by the Secretary General of the United Nations Pérez de Cuéllar in 1983: this commission was to make a report with recommendations for governments throughout the world. This report *Our Common Future* appeared 1987 and presented the concept of sustainable development, a framework to combine moderate economic growth with climate control, including in the developing countries. Despite criticism of the feasibility of some of the recommendations in the report, it was adopted by most countries and became a guideline for their policy (World Commission 1987; Goodland 1991).

19 As Norwegian premier, Brundtland has done much for female emancipation. She realised all too clearly that as the first female premier she had to prove how good she was and that she was not allowed to fail as a role model: "You not only have to be better than a man; you also must be able to prove it" (Brundtland 233). Especially in 1981 when she was prime minister for the first time (for a period of less than a year) she had to face criticism and scrutiny. "The attacks came on many fronts: clothing, hairstyle, speech, gait, manner of leadership. Everything about me was examined" (Brundtland 153). Under her leadership Norway became one of the leaders in the area of childcare facilities, following the example of Sweden. At the beginning of the nineties, pregnancy leave was not only extended to a year, but also offered to both partners. In addition, there was the possibility of taking an unpaid parental leave. The result was a great increase in the number of (married) women in paid work, a high proportion of them in full-time occupations. These developments have



significantly contributed to the Scandinavian countries' position as frontrunners in the field of female emancipation/ family-friendly politics. Moreover laws were implemented to enforce role-breaking education in schools and to fight sexual violence. The glass ceiling in political bodies was broken by the fact that after Brundtland's 1986-1989 cabinet, the majority of the succeeding cabinets also consisted of at least forty percent women, even those of a conservative cast. Moreover, the Social-Democratic Party of which she was chair set forward a guideline that forty percent of all political functions at various levels should be filled by women (Kaplan 69; Ribberink 2006 and 2010).

20 Since the 1970s Norway has been the richest of the Scandinavian countries due to its oil reserves. These certainly helped the country to survive the economic crisis of the eighties relatively unscathed. However when world oil prices began to fall in the second half of this decade, this was a blow for Norway. But the policy of Brundtland's second cabinet was known for its effective measures such as curbing inflation by increasing interest rates, economic cuts and the devaluation of the Norwegian krona to increase Norway's competitiveness. The price to be paid for this was an increase in unemployment from two to four percent, low in comparison with the West-European countries, but high for Scandinavia (Kuehnle 147, 153, 167, 170, 178). This cost her the 1989 election and she was followed by a right-wing cabinet (Valen 1986, 1990). From 1990-96 she returned as premier when her greatest challenge was to bring Norway into the European Union. In a referendum in 1994, the supporters of entry lost by a narrow margin (48 against 52 percent). Generally speaking, her cabinets enjoyed a good reputation, in the opinion of, among others, the influential volume *Nordic Social Policy* (Kautto et al. 26, 44, 82; Davis 1995).

21 At first glance it seems as if Gro Harlem Brundtland really did manage to combine her career and her private life. A closer look reveals a less ideal picture. When, due to Gro's developing career, Arne Olav had to take on a greater share of the housekeeping and child care, he accepted this – but not without protest. He was forced to give less attention to his prospering career in the field of international relations and that did not sit entirely well with him, at least according to Gro's biographers Bjerke and Ekeberg (Chapter 2). In her autobiography she makes no mention of this. However, Gro herself was not completely satisfied with the combination of her public and private life. She felt guilty because her busy life meant that she saw too little of her husband and children (Brundtland 134; Ribberink 2006). Apart from the combination problem in the narrow sense, there was always the pressure from the media and publicity. As Prime Minister she was used to being in the spotlights and she accepted that. But she found the stress from the media on her family hard

to swallow. It made the burden of balancing her career and private life heavier. Brundtland wrote about the moment she became prime minister for the first time:

Both of us [Olav and she] understood that life from now on would be different. For six years my family and I had been in the public spotlight. We realized that we would have even less calm and privacy now. I had already seen the first signs that the children were suffering from my being under public scrutiny. It wasn't just that I had less time for them. Photographers and journalists caused considerable strain during weekdays – also at home. (Brundtland 134)

22 After her youngest son Jörgen committed suicide in 1992, Gro Harlem Brundtland blamed herself. He had suffered from depression for years and his parents were very worried. As a physician Gro had stepped into the affair, not by directly treating him, but by reading literature and talking to his psychiatrists. But the fact that she had not foreseen this tragedy, let alone prevented it, continued to torment her. Her autobiography testifies to her deep remorse and does not leave the reader unmoved. This was to be the greatest tragedy of her life and led to her resignation as party leader because the double burden with the premiership became unbearable (Brundtland 382-414). Her popularity in Norway rose to new heights because so many were concerned for her and her family.

23 In 1996 she stepped down as prime minister, but in 1998 the secretary general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, asked her to become the director general of the World Health Organisation. Brundtland hesitated to take on the post because she enjoyed being close to her family and grandchildren. Nevertheless she accepted and filled the post from 1998 to 2003 (Brundtland 429-34, 453). She deserves respect for the way she put ideas from the second wave of feminism about balancing private and public life into practice. Besides, she was a competent premier and functions as a role model in that capacity. But feminism was not enough. Following I shall discuss the obstacles she encountered during her struggle with the combination problem.

### **To conclude: what do we learn from their biographies?**

24 When we consider the biographies of these two women, we come to the conclusion that for them as women, a political career of the highest order was not easy to combine with a family. The two women I have discussed did their best, were competent but in the eyes of others (Myrdal) or in their own opinion (Brundtland and also Myrdal) were not successful enough in reaching their feminist ideals. Myrdal had to deal with a persistent cult of motherhood in the period from the beginning of the twentieth century to the second wave of feminism, which made entry into the public arena an uncertain and difficult undertaking. In

addition she had a husband who, to put it mildly, did not really co-operate in making the combination of public and private life any easier. She paid a high price in the fractured relationship with her eldest child and only son and the negative publicity that surrounded the affair. Brundtland, a child of the second wave of feminism, was certainly not completely happy with the way she had balanced her career with her private life. The care for her family was perfectly organised, but the way in which this was done caused tension with her husband. Moreover she felt guilty towards her family due to her frequent absences.

25 It is difficult to come to any general conclusions based on two cases, but they do lead to further thinking. The biographical method seems to be a useful means of giving a concrete basis for understanding female political leadership and balancing public and private life. There are other female political leaders who have had to deal with the problem of combining their career with caring for their children. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the female premier of Sri Lanka from 1960-65, 1970-77 and 1994-2000 and also the first woman prime minister in the world, in an interview in 1972 complained that her children saw little of her during her period of office (Fallaci 232). Margaret Thatcher, the first female prime minister of Great Britain (1979-90) did not talk about it herself, because most of the time she painted a perfect image of her career and her family, a perfect persona. But her daughter, in a biography of her father, among other things expressed criticism of her politician mother's frequent absences in her childhood (Thatcher 71). It is no coincidence that there are but few women politicians and government leaders with young children.

26 In the course of history, solutions have been offered from a feminist perspective for this dilemma, which seems to be a well-nigh insoluble problem. Just after the Second World War, Alva Myrdal herself came up with the idea of a six-hour working day for both sexes, as we saw earlier. During the second wave of feminism this sort of idea was again taken up. In Sweden parents together have sixteen months leave after the birth of a child. Because most of the time women took three quarters of this leave, a law has been implemented that allocates three months to each parent (BBC Television 2016). In the 1990s, after this period the parents could maintain a six-hour working day until the child had reached school age, whereby they decided between themselves who took the leave and when, but at a reduced income (Kaplan 69). At the moment people can take parental leave in a variety of forms until the child is eight at 80 per cent of their wage (Sweden Emigration Site 2016). In addition, since 2015 in various places in Sweden there has been an experimental six-day working week for everyone (Metro 2016 and Trouw 2016). So, at least in Sweden Alva Myrdal's solution for combination problems has not been forgotten. How about Norway and other countries?

27 The Norwegian and Swedish Social-Democratic Parties were closely allied (Brundtland 189). The women's organisation of the Norwegian Social-Democratic Party advocated the six-hour working day in 1981, but Premier Gro Harlem Brundtland judged this not achievable in the short term (Brundtland 154). The first organisation of the Dutch second wave of feminism, the Action Group Man Woman Society, founded in October 1968, argued for a five-hour working day in combination with a reallocation of the paid and unpaid work between the sexes. Swedish (Myrdal's) influences can be discerned here (Ribberink 1998 67f.). Ideas on the reduction of the working week in combination with a redistribution between the sexes of paid and unpaid work were also propagated later by the feminist movement in the Netherlands and found their way into the left-wing political parties and trade unions.

28 Gro Harlem Brundtland has also greatly contributed to facilitate the balancing of the public and private lives of young couples in Norway by her measures for parental leave and extending child care facilities. As premier, Brundtland had to deal with the opinion that higher and managerial functions both inside and outside politics can only be fulfilled in a full-time capacity. A working of week of sixty hours or more is not unusual. During the second wave of feminism ideas were brought forward about partner jobs for higher and managerial functions. These have scarcely been put into practice, although in medical care with group practices of general practitioners and dentists it is beginning to gain ground, at least in the Netherlands. Maybe it is time to internationally implement partner jobs and group practices into politics as well.

29 Myrdal came up with the idea for the six-hour working day in order to solve her personal dilemma and that of others. She could not profit from it herself, but the idea was not lost for later generations. During and after the second wave of feminism it returned in feminist programs. Brundtland played her part in trying to alleviate the combination problem for Norwegian young couples. And although she did not have a solution for the political culture of long working hours – her own problem - her contribution to women's emancipation was valuable. Both women had to fight hard in their own lives to make balancing private and public easier and they did not succeed in everything they wanted. But they both are inspiring in the things they did reach indeed and were able to present a credible persona in the end - as we can learn from their personal biographies.

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## **Laura Jane Grace: “True Trans Soul Rebel”**

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### **Abstract:**

On a cold May night in Durham, North Carolina, Laura Jane Grace stepped out on stage to meet a roaring crowd in the tightly packed Motorco Music Hall. Pulling out her birth certificate emblazoned with her birth name, “Thomas James Gabel,” she raised the document high for all to see before defiantly lighting it on fire. As Grace waived out the smoldering paper, she shouted, “Goodbye gender!”

Long before either Grace’s coming out, or the release of Against Me!’s 2014 album, *Transgender Dysphoria Blues*, the band has been reshaping contemporary conceptions of protest music. The punk group first rose to fame within their circles in the early 2000s, but have since experienced more widespread attention following Grace’s public transition. The singer has made no efforts to alter the sound of her deep, raspy shout, maintaining that, “this too is what a woman sounds like.”

Grace has been a pivotal figure in bridging the popular music scene to transgender equality issues. This piece discusses the artist’s construction of a trans-female identity in the punk community and in relation to the turbulent social-political climate faced by LGBTQ individuals. In exploring Grace’s gender nonconformity in a musical community dominated by masculinity, I consider cultural expectations of gender, performed both visually and aurally, and the ways in which Grace uses her stance as an empowered public female figure to transgress cultural expectations and draw large-scale awareness to contemporary human rights topics.

1 On a cold May 2016 night in Durham, North Carolina, Laura Jane Grace and the rest of Against Me! stepped out on stage to meet a roaring crowd in the tightly packed Motorco Music Hall. As the players grabbed their instruments and prepared to start the show, Grace paused. Pulling out her birth certificate, emblazoned with her birth name, “Thomas James Gabel,” she raised the document high for all to see, before proudly and defiantly lighting it on fire. Just as Grace waived out the smoldering paper, shouting, “Goodbye gender!,” the band tore off into their first tune of the night, “Burn,” from their 2001 EP, *Crime, as forgiven by Against Me!*. The audience continued to cheer and began to dance and shout along to an old, favorite anthem: “And it’ll burn burn burn like they did to the Anarchists, and it’ll burn burn burn like the histories they stole from us!”

2 Grace and her band’s intrepid actions from that night in Durham are far from unprecedented, as any long-term Against Me! fan would know. A near twenty year legacy precedes the group’s most recent album, *Shape Shift with Me* (September 2016)—two decades



that canonized the band's politically charged, rhythmically driving, raw punk anthems. Grace chose to first reveal her intention to transition genders in 2012 in a remarkably public way: published in the *Rolling Stone* article, "The Secret Life of Transgender Rocker Tom Gabel" (Eells). In January of 2014, the band released their first album following announcement of Grace's transition, *Transgender Dysphoria Blues*. While Grace has since changed her appearance to align more with conventional markers of femininity, her vocal timbre remains unaltered—consistent with her gritty, harsh sound and low pitch range heard on Against Me!'s previous albums. Grace has made no intentional efforts to change the range or sound of her raspy shout, maintaining that "this too is what a woman sounds like" ("Hi, I'm Laura Jane Grace. Ask Me Anything.").

3 An exploration of Laura Jane Grace's construction of a trans female identity in the punk community, a musical sphere dominated by masculinity, helps to shed light on the importance of her contributions made as a political activist and an LGBTQ rights advocate. As one of the first major musical icons to publicly come out as transgender, Grace and her experiences provide a glimpse into the journeys of gender variant individuals, their construction and articulation of identity, and the ways in which these identities are interpreted and understood within a binary mainstream cultural framework. The following essay looks closely at how Grace has shaped her trans-female identity in a male-centric music scene and dichotomously gendered society, by considering the ways in which identity can be communicated and understood through visual and sonic performative cues of gender, hegemonic cultural norms, and the influence of media depiction.

4 During the fifteen years preceding Grace's transition, Against Me! released a large body of recordings including albums, demos, and EPs that canonized the band's strong political stance, raw recording quality, and driving rhythms, topped with Grace's impassioned, rallying shout. With the announcement of the singer's decision to transition, many long-time listeners feared a loss of the voice they had come to associate with the band's specific sound. In the months following Grace's coming-out, interviewers followed up with a frenzy of questions, attempting to sort out a new understanding of Grace's identity. In a 2013 radio interview for the Kevin and Bean Show, host Kevin Ryder bluntly asked, "Why is your voice so similar to how it used to be? I think a lot of people would be expecting you to sound more like a woman." In response, Grace mused, "Well, what does a woman sound like, you know? That's all interpretive

or opinion, but I mean my voice is my voice, I don't feel ashamed of my voice in any way and especially with my singing voice" ("Kevin & Bean Interview Against Me!").

5 In the multitude of interviews given since her coming out, Grace has made a point of reassuring Against Me! listeners that the rough edge of her vocal timbre would not be lost during her transition. "The [hormone replacement therapy] won't change my voice [...] only surgery can do that—but I like my singing voice, so I don't really care about that" ("Hi, I'm Laura Jane Grace. Ask Me Anything"). In many cases, those assigned female at birth transitioning to male may notice changes in vocal timbre as a result of the thickening and ossification of the vocal cords catalyzed by testosterone hormone replacement therapy, not unlike the changes that take place during male adolescence (Constansis). Alternatively, adults transitioning from male to female using estrogen hormone replacement therapy do *not* experience a vocal shift at a physiological level, as the resulting vocal changes from puberty are irreversible. Although Grace has chosen not to, some transgender women opt for voice-altering surgeries, such as the pitch heightening tracheal shave. In some cases, others may seek professional voice coaching from speech therapists who offer programs geared towards the replication of socially recognized gendered speech patterns, inflections, and cadences, specifically for those in the process of gender transition.

6 The unrestrained expression of emotion has long been associated with women's musical performance, while conversely, artists applauded for their machismo are more often read as stoic and controlled. Popular music scholar Stan Hawkins confirms, "It is well known that the regulation of emotional display through all forms of artistic expression determines the tightly regulated behavioral patterns in males" (204). Put plainly, Grace's singing style and stage presence have rarely, if ever, fit this paradigm of careful regulation. In the 2002 track, "Scream Until You're Coughing up Blood," the strain in her voice during the entirely shouted song is so audible that as it builds in intensity, the scream goes from controlled pitch to an entirely wild and unbridled expression of angst. The pain in Grace's voice is practically tangible at that moment—the relatable experience of screaming, "until you're coughing up blood." (*Against Me! Is Reinventing Axl Rose*)

7 Oddly enough, some listeners have identified what they deem to be a new emotive quality in Grace's singing on *Transgender Dysphoria Blues*. In an interview for her network, Shaw TV reporter Tracy Koga insisted, "Just the sound in your voice is different in this one.

There's a lot of, I think, *raw emotion* in this new album." Chuckling, Grace complied, "Sure, yeah. I think maybe the sound of my voice has more been affected by years of smoking cigarettes and drinking whiskey, but you know, sure" ("Laura Jane Grace of Against Me! Interview and Acoustic on Shaw TV"). Koga implies "raw emotion" as a characteristic of what she hears to be Grace's "new" sound, and possibly unknowingly connects unabashed displays of emotion to markers of femininity, despite the existing catalog of equally unrestrained moments of passion captured on many earlier Against Me! recordings.

8 A discussion of the context in which both Ryder and Koga frame their understandings of Grace's gender identity is an imperative part of the conversation regarding transgender and gender nonconforming identities. The questions raised by both interviewers imply a dichotomous view of gender as male or female, a binary that has long been entrenched within our culture. A presumed understanding of transgender experiences within this framework would imply an individual's complete shift from one pole to another—conventionally male to female, or female to male. A widening of this narrow view, however, reveals the exclusion of many sorts of variant sexualities and genders left out of a binary system, including (but not limited to) individuals born intersex, gender nonconforming people, and those identified as agender. If gender and sex are to be seen as fluid as opposed to polar, the issues that arise surrounding the conflict between Grace's appearance (read: feminine) and voice (read: masculine) can be ameliorated.

9 In a closer investigation of the differences between male and female voices, we might find ourselves wondering where the influences of nature and nurture begin to split. Is the voice of a person assigned female at birth irrevocably heard and understood as female because of the development of the muscles that produce the sound, along with other physiological predispositions? How much of a woman's voice is heard as such because of the *way* she talks, sings, or makes sound? In her paramount work *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler theorizes gender as a performative act, rather than a predetermined biological assignment. Her article "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," asserts:

[...] gender is a performance that produces the illusion of an inner sex or essence or psychic gender core; it produces on the skin, through the gesture, the move, the gait (that array of corporeal theatrics understood as gender presentation), the illusion of an inner depth (28).

Musicologist Freya Jarman-Ivens expands upon Butler's discussion in her book, *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw*. Jarman-Ivens suggests that vocal performativity

also be included in what Butler describes as the “corporeal theatrics” of performed gender cues. “Although it is less visible,” says Jarman-Ivens, “the voice is nonetheless complicit in the theatrics of gender, and a voice that does not comply with the visible signs of gender is as disruptive to the performance of gender as any other, silent sign could be” (20). It is precisely this disruption between voice and body—in conjunction with Grace’s decision to embody certain markers of femininity while rejecting others—that creates her unique identity, a new assertion of what it means to be a woman.

10 Grace’s change in gender presentation has affected her stance as a musician in the punk world, a hegemonically masculine realm born of transgressive counterculture and anti-establishment ideals. Despite the progressive politics and emphasis on inclusion promoted by many sub-groups of punk culture, punk’s most prominent and successful bands are mostly (if not entirely) male—and quite conventionally so. For decades, female punk musicians have experienced far less mainstream recognition than their male counterparts, as evidenced by *Rolling Stone*’s “Readers Poll: The Best Punk Rock Bands of All Time,” which features ten all-male groups (Greene), and *LA Weekly*’s list of “Top 20 Punk Albums in History,” which is not much better.

11 Naturally, in a musical arena saturated with male groups, visual and sonic markers of masculinity have become entangled with punk music and posturing, and can often be seen in the performance practices of both male *and* female artists. Caroline O’Meara’s article, “The Raincoats: Breaking down Punk Rock’s Masculinities,” identifies these markers—“loud, guttural singing and aggressive stage posturing”—as distinctly male elements of punk music, a “macho posturing” that can exist both in the performance and lyrics of punk, she notes (299-313). Punk scholar and expert Craig O’Hara adds that unemotional and serious self-presentation, another common masculine trope in punk performance, is often interpreted as a display of power by male musicians. Arguing that women artists have embraced similar performance styles in order to enhance their own demonstrations of power, O’Hara states boldly, “As much as men do not want to relinquish that power, many women seek to gain it by adopting stereotypically male characteristics” (105). The critical consumer of punk music might detach these performances of power from maleness, instead understanding this aggressive style as a non-gendered marker of punk expression. Whether or not O’Hara’s assertion holds any bearing in regard to power dynamic between musicians, the tropes he identifies are indeed pervasive within the genre, and

Grace has noted changes in her own interactions with the community since beginning to present as a woman.

12 In a radio interview with National Public Radio's Rachel Martin, Grace explained her relentless struggle with gender dysphoria prior to coming out:

[...] that's where the disconnect was happening for me: being on stage and being featured in magazines where you're essentially competing with other male singers. Rock 'n' roll, or punk rock, it's a boy's club in a lot of ways, and you're out there with your photo side-by-side with these other people that you're supposed to measure up to. And I didn't. I wasn't one of those dudes ("Laura Jane Grace, Transgender Punk, on Life in Transition").

Grace's anxieties about gender roles have been mitigated by her change in presentation. She states,

Deciding to transition has been really liberating as an artist, especially on stage. I feel like it's just okay to be me and I don't have to measure up to some popular perception of what a 'front man' does. Which before had been extremely dysphoria inducing ("Hi, I'm Laura Jane Grace. Ask Me Anything").

Here, the singer expresses the previous discomfort she experienced appearing on stage, locked into a preset paradigm of expectations for male punk artists. Interestingly, not much about Grace's physical or sonic performance style has changed since she first came out nearly five years ago. Her physical stance remains powerful and assertive: legs apart, her arm pumps up and down as she aggressively strums her guitar. She runs and jumps forcefully across the stage, sweating and shouting. Head banging in time with the rest of Against Me!, her long hair tangles and the sweat pours from her face, her black eye makeup smudged and running. Maintaining her aggressive and energetic physical stage presence in addition to her low pitched, harsh vocal timbre, Grace's own construction of womanhood rejects a number of conventional feminine traits, yet celebrates her autonomy over her own gender identity.

13 A 2012 video of Against Me! performing at FYF Fest 2012 in Los Angeles, was one of the first visual recordings of the band released (albeit unprofessionally) following Grace's coming out ("Against Me! - Drinking With The Jocks - live FYF Fest, September 2, 2012"). In the video, the band performs their new song, "Drinking With The Jocks"—a tongue-in-cheek parody of hegemonic masculinity—prior to its studio release on *Transgender Dysphoria Blues* in 2014. Musically, "Drinking With The Jocks" is similar in style to many early Against Me! recordings. Grace plays a two bar introduction on her loud, heavily distorted guitar. The verse begins with the stiff outline of the rigid meter on the tom-tom drums and cymbals as bass and

rhythm guitar enter. Grace's shout is so strained that the words are nearly indistinguishable as she forcefully presses the lyrics out. She screams:

I'm drinking with the jocks, I'm laughing at the faggots.  
Just like one of the boys, Swinging my dick in my hand!  
(*Transgender Dysphoria Blues*).

Grace stands front and center, between the band's rhythm guitarist and bassist. As the camera pans from one end of the stage to the next, it becomes apparent that, despite her short, sleeveless dress, tights, and shoulder length hair, Grace's posture matches her male band mates'. She stands with her feet apart, her head and shoulders somewhat slumped over her guitar. Her right arm moves aggressively as she pounds out chords, occasionally she steps back from her microphone to bob her head and upper body to the beat. Grace's performance style at FYF Fest—and in numerous live performances since 2012—is largely unchanged from that of her earlier years presenting as male. Although the artist claims her sounds, movements, and posturing as part of her identity as a woman, many mainstream listeners still grapple with this fluid conception of gender roles and traits, and some media sources have carefully controlled their video and photographic depictions of Grace to align with traditional conventions of femininity.

14 In October of 2014, AOL premiered a new online series, *True Trans: With Laura Jane Grace*, centered around Grace's gender transition and the interpersonal connections she has forged along the way with other transgender people. At face value, the show appears to be a progressive and inspirational response to contemporary social issues, but the application of a critical lens reveals subtle controversies worth investigating. Starkly different from nearly all live Against Me! performance footage, *True Trans* favors closely-framed shots that reveal Grace as demure, made-up and manicured, distinctly feminine. Editors sandwich footage of the calm and composed Grace of today between shots of a young Tom Gable, aggressively striking chords on the guitar and shouting into the microphone, highlighting conventional signifiers of masculinity. In doing so, this juxtaposition emphasizes a hyper-masculinized portrayal of Grace against an austere serene and feminine one.

15 The short episodes of *True Trans* (each around 7:00-11:00 minutes in length) are laid out in a documentary-like style, alternating between band shots, footage of Grace interacting with others, and individual interviews. The scenes in which the singer is interviewed alone are often framed tightly around her face, either from chest or shoulder height up. Grace appears to be

wearing mascara and dark eyeliner or shadow. Her skin looks smooth, her eyebrows are precisely groomed, and her long hair is always worn down, cascading across the side of her face.

16 Interestingly, Grace's actual stage presence (as discussed previously) is decidedly the opposite of her depiction in both the interview scenes and live footage clips spliced into *True Trans*. Regularly throughout the series, Grace is shown sitting on a stool in an empty room, playing solo reductions of Against Me! songs on her guitar. In these scenes, the camera zooms in on Grace's face—her head is often turned sideways, hair hanging down over her shoulder as she plays, she never looks directly into the camera. These clips feature close up shots of Grace's hands as she strums, exhibiting her manicured nails painted a light shade of lavender. Editing choices such as these convey a softer side of the singer, stripped away from her usual world of the upbeat and aggressive settings of Against Me! shows. She appears as the sensitive singer-songwriter type, revealed in her private world, supposedly free of the costuming and posturing of public performances.

17 Laura Jane Grace proudly identifies as a woman, but she has chosen to refute many traditional markers of femininity, instead constructing her own identity as a transgender punk woman. Still, in many instances, the media struggles to box Grace into a traditional framework of binary gender. In the same way that Tracy Koga hears a new "raw emotion" in Grace's unaltered singing voice, the editors of *True Trans* carefully select footage and images of Grace that appear most feminine, adhering to the heteronormative expectations of what someone "becoming" a woman "should" embody. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler asserts that culturally constructed understandings of gender are forced onto bodies to fit these dichotomous understandings of male and female. Butler states:

On some accounts, the notion that gender is constructed suggests a certain determinism of gender meanings inscribed on anatomically differentiated bodies, where those bodies are understood as passive recipients of an inexorable cultural law. When the relevant "culture" that "constructs" gender is understood in terms of such a law or set of laws, then it seems that gender is as determined and fixed as it was under the biology-is-destiny formulation. In such a case, not biology, but culture, becomes destiny (12).

By this set of cultural expectations, if Grace claims her body and self as female, she must follow with additional markers and prescribed characteristics of that gender in order to be perceived and culturally accepted as a woman. Many choices in the way that Grace is portrayed in *True Trans* reflects the producers' inflation of these conventional markers of femininity. The close-up shots

revealing Grace's makeup and manicured hands, demure posture, and peaceful solitary guitar playing seem classically feminine. The decision to film Grace covering Against Me! songs without her famous vocals wards off any sonic signifiers of masculinity that Grace might also embody, convincing viewers of the authenticity and completeness of her transition to female.

18 In Episode 7 of *True Trans*, producers juxtapose footage of Laura Jane Grace of 2014 alongside old video of the singer from her time identified as Tom Gabel, presenting as male. In an interview clip, Grace's made-up face is closely framed as she explains, "the threat of violence to trans women as opposed to trans men speaks a lot to male privilege [...]." Immediately, the visual cuts to a clip of an early Against Me! performance in which Gabel is shouting and playing guitar. Brow furrowed, dripping with sweat he makes blunt, aggressive movements while he plays. Over this image, Grace continues speaking: "[...] prior to my transition I didn't realize what that extended to you and to how misogynist culture is." The scene ends as the picture switches back to the close up of Grace's face, creating a comparison of the young, seemingly reckless and aggressive Tom Gabel, betwixt two reserved, still shots of the intentionally feminized Laura Jane Grace. The selection of this old footage of Gabel exaggerates traditional signifiers of masculinity: sweat, labor, sharp and harsh movement, paired with a furrowed, serious facial expression. The show's editors overlay this carefully chosen image with the words "male privilege," and "misogyny," as Grace narrates. In doing so, they create a hyper-masculinized "before" portrayal of Grace that is compared against an astonishingly serene, feminine "after."

19 The producers of *True Trans* have been highly selective in their use of particular live performance footage of Against Me!. Despite nearly two decades worth of video from many types of performances, the clips used in the series always feature the band's current lineup of personnel (excluding two significant, long term members from earlier years) performing songs from *Gender Dysphoria Blues*, the most recent album (and only album at the time) released after Grace's coming out. The footage used frequently captures Grace from behind, looking out over a sea of adoring fans who sing along to every word. Very rarely do the producers elect to show performance clips in which Grace is head banging, jumping, or dancing and playing aggressively. Avoiding any lengthy shots of Grace's classic punk performance style—essentially unchanged from that of Against Me!'s early career—the camera moves out towards the audience. Generally, these clips serve not to highlight Grace's singing or stage punk-style presence, rather,



they focus on her interaction and relationship with adoring fans. Interrogating these varied filming, editing, and sonic choices behind the *True Trans* series reveal ways in which Grace's gender identity is prescribed and even inflated, creating distinct framings that seek to manipulate and guide the experiences of viewers.

20 As Laura Jane Grace set foot on stage that May 2016 night in Durham, she acted not only as a musical idol to her fans, but also as a trailblazer for transwomen, and an engaged political activist, using her music to insight change. After playing the first few songs of the set, the band paused for Grace to ask the audience, "Anything in the news lately?" referring to the recently instated North Carolina House Bill 2. The discriminatory bill requires all North Carolinians use the designated public restroom that corresponds with the sex assigned to them at birth. Its intentions are stated in the document as:

An act to provide for single-sex multiple occupancy bathroom and changing facilities in schools and public agencies and to create statewide consistency in regulation of employment and public accommodations (*House Bill 2*).

Inherently biased, possibly the most problematic aspect of the bill is its treatment of sex and gender as a male/female dichotomy. Requiring any person to use a bathroom with which their gender identity is not aligned raises safety concerns, especially in this case for the wellbeing of those identified as gender variant, nonconforming, or transgender. Grace and the rest of Against Me! have fought against HB2, both for the safety of other gender variant people, and for the increased awareness of gender rights issues in the political sphere. Until bathroom laws can be guaranteed protective and equitable for all, "I will be peeing and shitting outside like a dog," said Grace (*Against Me! Live Performance at Motorco Music Hall, Durham*).

21 To boycott HB2 and legalized forms of oppression, many musical artists have continued to cancel tour dates across North Carolina. During their show at Motorco Music Hall in Durham, Grace paused to explain the importance of her band's choice to *play* their show as a form of protest, rather than simply opt out. Grace told audience members, "there's also a lot of point to coming here and talking about these things, [...] showing people in other states. Like, you know it's one thing to press a 'like' button on Facebook or something like that, but showing people [...] that the way you affect change is to empower the grassroots activist organizations" (*Against Me! Live Performance at Motorco Music Hall, Durham*) As she called out the injustices of laws like HB2, the audience cheered in support, rallying around Grace's message.

22      The excitement from Against Me!’s May 16, 2016 show in Durham, North Carolina rose not only out of the band’s captivating stage presence and energetic performance that evening, but also from an invigorated audience, called to action by Grace in support of urgent LGBTQ issues. The show itself took on the role of an active protest, standing up against House Bill 2’s discriminatory opposition of the basic rights of trans and gender nonconforming people. Much in the way that Laura Jane Grace’s active refusal to change the timbre of her traditionally masculine singing voice protests a conventional, limiting binary view of gender and its presumed roles, Against Me!’s refusal to cancel their concert in North Carolina gave voices to those fighting back against hateful and oppressive legislature coded into laws like House Bill 2. Laura Jane Grace sounds exactly like she used to... when she was Tom Gabel. By transgressing archaic tropes of binary gender, instead forging her own non-traditional path as a woman, Grace has undoubtedly become one of music’s most noteworthy women.

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*Gender and Sexuality in Muslim Cultures*. Edited by Gul Ozyegin. United States: Ashgate, 2015.

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In *Gender and Sexuality in Muslim Cultures* (hereafter, *GSMC*), Gul Ozyegin brings together 19 chapters by international scholars from a variety of disciplines (such as history, feminist studies, anthropology, sociology) to examine intersections between gender and sexuality in Muslim contexts with the goal of providing an understanding of what constitutes a Muslim identity. As a scholar that has previously worked on gender and sexuality in Muslim societies, I find that *GSMC* contributes to this body of literature by engaging in current and past debates and, thus, is helpful to build an understanding on these issues among those who are not familiar with Islamic studies while expanding the knowledge of those who have been previously interested in these topics. The book is itself an example of the many nuances of a Muslim identity in countries such as Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Syria and Pakistan, among others. It is organised into five thematic sections, each exploring different fields in relation to gender and sexuality through chapters based on in-depth ethnographic and historical research. In presenting the argumentative structure of this volume, my focus will be on those chapters I consider most ground-breaking.

Part 1, under the title “Challenged Masculinities”, addresses the crisis of hegemonic masculinity, which is now challenged and reconfigured under the pressure of different forces (marriage, migration, the army, disability). The included studies present the struggle of men to fight patriarchal constructions. Salih Can Açıksöz (Chapter 1) examines the Turkish state-sponsored assisted conception program, which has been seeking to make fathers out of veterans who got disabled as a consequence of their fight with Kurdish guerrillas. Açıksöz provides an interesting account of how disabilities can lead to an expulsion from hegemonic masculinity. Taking into consideration how both gender and disability have traditionally been used as a discriminatory tool, I consider Açıksöz’s chapter an important contribution to the intersection of both gender and disability studies.

Mustafa Abdalla (Chapter 2) brings the reader to Egypt in order to explore how the introductions of neoliberal economic policies have challenged the positions that men hold in traditional patriarchal schemes. This idea is evidenced through the case of young

men working in the tourism sector and permanently exposed to foreign tourists, an experience that leads them to a greater investment in their bodies in the absence of economic capital. The chapter can be framed within a body of literature that has focused on this type of man and that keeps growing with titles such as *Romancing Strangers: The Intimate Politics of Beach Tourism in Kenya* (Tami 2008) discussing the concept of the ‘beach boy’, and *Islam, Youth and Modernity in the Gambia* (2013) in which Marloen Janson explores the growth in sex tourism on the Gambian coast.

Aisha Anees Malik (Chapter 3) considers the experiences of Pakistani men migrating to the UK by marrying Muslim women of their origin. The study contributes to the understudied intersectional field of marriage, migration and masculinity by focusing on the transnational marriage of men migrating from two specific Pakistani villages to the United Kingdom, which leads to the experience of a gender crisis.

The last three chapters in Part 1 focus on Turkey. Through an approach that does not only include narrative analysis, but also pays attention to the social context through participant observation and in-depth interviews, the last three chapters of Part 1 bring the discussion forward through the inclusion of ethnographies and the analysis of archival documents.

In Chapter 6, “Masculinity and Male Friendship in Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Istanbul”, Serkan Delice explores an issue of particular interest for the development of debates on the performance of transgressive masculinities by presenting the experiences of the so-called “beardless youths” (116), lower-class young shampooers offering their sexual services in the *hammams* of Istanbul. This chapter made me think of Khaled El-Rouayheb’s work *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800* (2005), which offers a detailed account of homosexual practices in the pre-modern Arab-Islamic world, highly recommended for the reader interested in the topic. The advantages of Delice’s exceptional contribution lie in the discussion of the role of the state as a centre of gender production, an issue that El-Rouayheb anticipated in his work but only explored partially.

While Part 1 puts the focus on masculinities, Part 2, “Producing Muslim Femininities, Sexualities, and Gender Relations”, is devoted to women and constructions of femininity through embodied practices. In Chapter 7, Maria Frederika Malmström explores how bodily practices can create a “correct moral and feminine Muslim self” (140). Chapters 8 and 9 are interconnected: in the former, Victoria A. Castillo offers a pedagogical perspective for teaching about Female Genital Cutting

(FGC) and serves as an introduction to the subsequent chapter. Chapter 9, following an interview structure, completely breaks the fluidity of the volume and this could have been avoided by following the same essay structure which is used in the other chapters.

Part 3, under the title “*Mahrem*, the Gaze and Intimate Gender and Sexual Crossings”, presents three studies dealing with sexualities, intimacies and bodies in different countries and historical times. Chapter 12, by Saadia Abib, explores the construction of identities through clothing by focusing on the Madrassah Jamia Hafsa in Islamabad, Pakistan. The use of the *burqa* is presented as a tool that does not only help hiding one’s identity on an individual level, but also creates a sense of community by bringing uniformity to those who wear it.

In Chapter 13, Sehlikoglu moves the focus beyond heterosexual culture in Turkey through the culture of *mahremiyet*, the “Islamic notion of privacy and intimacy” (235). Two examples are used to illustrate how this culture is in danger: *Âlâ* magazine, with its covers showing headscarf-clad young girls, and the kissing protest that took place in Ankara against the banning of public displays of affection. Although the linkage between the two examples does not seem very clear, they both are used to show a shift in heterosexual culture towards new notions of what is permitted and prohibited.

Chapter 14 concludes Part 3, marking a temporal break in the volume with a study on gender and sex in the Ottoman *hammam* or bathhouse. The chapter could have been included in the first part of the volume due to its similarity to Chapter 6, which discussed the role of the beardless young shampooers in the *hammams* of Istanbul. The similarity with the previous chapter both in the topic and historical time makes the volume slightly repetitive and desynchronized. However, and even though the essays significantly overlap in content, it must be admitted that each of them provides a distinctive perspective on the topic.

Part 4, “The Desiring, Protesting Body and Muslim Authenticity in Fiction and Political Discourses”, complements the volume by exploring the use of the body as a protesting tool. Al-Tahawy discusses in Chapter 15 the importance of Arab women’s writing as a protesting tool against conservative and patriarchal cultures focusing on the Egyptian writer Alifa Rifaat. It is an interesting chapter because the author does not only focus on Rifaat’s work, but considers current uses of the body as a means of protest with regard to the Arab Spring and recent events in countries such as Morocco and Egypt. This chapter raises thoughts about the use of the body as a subject to protest,

situating the analysis in a broader context of gendered body protests and nakedness as a political tool.

In Chapter 16, Censi analyses three novels focusing on contemporary Syrian society and written by Syrian women. The detailed analysis of these novels, which are crucial to understand the new meaning of the body, is deeply welcome. Continuing with women issues, and in connection with the previous chapter, in Chapter 17, Sherine Hafez analyses the 2013 trial against fourteen Egyptian women who were members of the Muslim Brotherhood after joining protests. Hafez considers the faces and bodies of this group of women, dressed in white behind bars, to have played an important role “in the process of subject production” (326) evidencing the centrality of the female body as a political space. Reinforced by the other two chapters in this part, the argument is highly convincing when proving that the body is indeed a site of political action.

Ozyegin’s volume concludes with Part 5, which is made of two chapters dealing with feminist and queer questions in Iran. In Chapter 18, Mouri and Batmanghelichi explore feminist mobilization in Iran after 1979. They provide the reader with an interesting reflection on the danger of feminism in creating idealized expressions of gender that could “produce new forms of hierarchy” (350), paraphrasing Butler and highlighting the diversity of approaches that one can find within the feminist movement through the case study of Iran. The use of Butler’s work as a theoretical framework could have been interesting if it had been used from the beginning rather than being introduced in the conclusion, where it seems somewhat out of place.

The last chapter, written by Farhang Rouhani, argues for an analysis of diasporic Iranian’s women memoirs “for the creative expression of kinship and intimacy” (355). It is done through the exploration of Darznik’s book *The Good Daughter*, which develops the story of three generations of Iranian women in permanent struggle for freedom, focusing on reviews posted on Amazon and Goodreads – a methodology that might not be very reliable depending on who authored the review. The chapter concludes the volume paraphrasing Jose Esteban Munoz, one of the fathers of queer utopias, sadly victim of an early death. Part 5 constitutes an excellent complement to Part 4 as both explore factual and fictional narratives of dissent and desire.

In sum, Gul Ozyegin puts together in *Gender and Sexuality in Muslim Cultures* nineteen chapters of unequal quality, but nonetheless of extraordinary value to the overall goal of providing an understanding of what has built gender and sexual identities in Muslim-majority countries. It provides an account of today’s bodily, gender and



sexual practices, while also looking at the past through the work of not only well-known scholars, but also those emerging voices who are contributing to the field with their fresh and original research. One of the main strengths of the book is that it offers the reader with specific topics that mainly use ethnographic methods to illustrate new trends in Muslim societies. The disposition of the chapters and the repetitive character of some of them can be seen as a weakness. In any case, Ozyegin's work in editing the volume must be acknowledged as an exercise to challenge conservative notions on gender and sexuality through an extraordinary diversity of disciplines. This is an excellent volume for those interested in Islam, gender and queer studies. In opposition to similar previous works, such as *Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies* (İlkkaracan 2000) or *Homosexualities, Muslim Cultures and Modernity* (Rahman 2014), Ozyegin expands the scope to cover issues that had not yet been explored through providing a global perspective while looking at the specificities of Middle Eastern and North African countries. All in all, *GSMC* constitutes an exciting introduction to the new ways in which genders and sexualities are built and contested in Muslim-majority countries.

## List of Contributors

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**Yuwei Ge** is a doctoral candidate at Philipps-Universität Marburg. Her doctoral dissertation focuses on female political leadership in the United States. Yuwei received her BA degree from Xi'an International Studies University in English and American Studies and her first MA degree from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Chinese and Bilingual Studies from 2006 to 2012. She received her second MA degree from Philipps-Universität Marburg in North American Studies with her thesis focusing on American politics in television series. Her research interests include gender studies, postmodern literature, media studies, autobiography studies, American politics, and American television series.

[Anneke Ribberink](#) is affiliated to the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam as a political historian. She received her PhD in 1998 with a dissertation of the early phase of the second wave of feminism in the Netherlands, '*Leidsvrouwen en zaakwaarneemsters. Een geschiedenis van de Aktiegroep Man Vrouw Maatschappij (MVM) 1968-1973*' (Hilversum: Verloren). At the moment she is working on a book about five important female political leaders of the twentieth century in Western Europe - Alva Myrdal (Sweden), Marga Klompé (the Netherlands), Margaret Thatcher (United Kingdom), Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway) and Angela Merkel (Germany). In recent years her national and international publications and

other activities dealt chiefly with Thatcher and Brundtland, and also the second wave of feminism.

**Marta Kelleher**, a native of Cleveland, Ohio, is an ethnomusicologist living and working in Athens, Georgia. Marta holds degrees in Music (Cello) from Ithaca College, and in Musicology from the University of Georgia. Her work explores the intersections of music and gender, specifically the ways in which transgender, and gender variant musicians make careful choices regarding voice, affect, and image to both subtly and overtly convey messages about multifaceted, and non-binary gender identities. Marta currently works as an undergraduate academic advisor in the University of Georgia's Hugh Hodgson School of Music. She hopes to begin doctoral studies this coming fall.

**Diego Garcia Rodriguez**, born in Albacete, Spain, is a doctoral candidate in Gender and Sexuality Studies at University College London. Diego received his BA in Journalism from the University Complutense of Madrid (Spain) with two scholarships to study at the University of Tampere (Finland) and Korea University (South Korea), and his MSc in Asian Studies from Lund University (Sweden) via a semester abroad at the National University of Singapore. His work focuses on LGBT emancipation through Islamic faith in Indonesia, exploring the strategies used by LGBT Muslims to construct their identities and looking at the possibilities of an overlapping queer and religious agency in both secular and religious settings. His research interests include gender and sexuality studies, Indonesian studies, Islamic studies, Foucauldian theory, and queer theory. He is the co-founder of the project Binan Indonesia ([www.binanindonesia.com](http://www.binanindonesia.com)) and can be contacted on [diego.rodriguez.16@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:diego.rodriguez.16@ucl.ac.uk)