Women and World War I

Discussion published by Robert Devetak on Tuesday, June 13, 2017
Type: Conference
Date: November 16, 2017 to November 17, 2017
Location: Slovenia
Subject Fields: Cultural History / Studies, Military History, Social History / Studies, Women's & Gender History / Studies, World History / Studies

Invitation to attend the international scientific conference:

Women and World War I

The Department of History at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana (address: Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Museo della Grande Guerra/Museo della Moda e delle Arti Applicate in Gorizia (Borgo Castello 13, 34170 Gorizia, Italy) invite you to the international conference Women and World War I, which will take place in Ljubljana and Gorizia on 16-17 November 2017. The conference will be held in English and in Italian.

The first international studies exploring the role of women in the Great War built on the premise that the world-wide conflict changed the gender order and contributed to women’s emancipation. The following decades saw the publication of works that questioned and relativized this premise, and some of them even denied it (Darrow, 2000). The most recent studies avoid the generalization in terms of positive or negative effects of the war, where women are regarded as a monolithic social category, and consider the diverse and at times also contradictory consequences of the war. They focus on different experiences of individual women, on the formation of different identities, on multifaceted responses, and the emotional culture during wartime (Doan, 2006; Thébaud, 2007; Cole, 2003). They discuss the activities of different social and occupational groups that were dominated by women during the war, e.g. factory workers and nurses (Hallet, 2009). They provide the necessary comparative insights and highlight the attitude of respective segments of the female population towards, for instance, patriotism and citizenship (Grayzel, 2002). In doing so, they draw attention to multifaceted stances, particularly in multi-ethnic state formations (Austria-Hungary), where the national identity did not necessarily overlap with the state identity (Healy, 2004). Other studies parallel and compare public representations with personal testimonies by women with (auto)biographical sources and place themselves to the history of emotions (Cole, 2003). Researches discussing the “female experience” of the war through literature and art (Siebrecht, 2013), and historiographical analyses depicting women in the role of criminals, offenders, protesters, spies (Darrow, 2000; Proctor, 2010; Healy, 2004), but also in the role of victims, for instance, enduring wartime famine, bomb attacks, rapes (Healy, 2004; Grayzel, 2012), and refugeeism (Verginella, 2013; Healy, 2004; Grayzel, 2012) have been mounting up. Parallel to adding new content, we also see an increase in historiographical works on the position of women during the Great War in different
national environments (Dittrich, 1994), along with general syntheses, and international comparisons (Sharp, Fell 2007; Grayzel, 2002; Storey, Housego, 2010; Hämmerle et al., 2014).

The discussion of women’s position during World War I in the territory of modern-day Slovenia and its neighbouring regions, particularly in Italy and Austria, has remained a marginal topic. The embeddedness of this subject matter into a more comprehensive study and a general review of the period of World War I are yet to be explored to a sufficient degree. The international contextualization and the comparative aspect remain poorly dealt with as well; the latter will be promoted by the symposium following the conclusion of the project Women and World War I, which was financed by the Slovenian Research Agency and whose results will be presented at the symposium. We invite researches, who focus on the topics stated below and who pay particular attention to the transnational approach and explore the aforementioned subject matters in the territory of the former Austrian-Italian firing line.

The contributions should fall into the following thematic sets:

1. Women in the labour market during World War I
2. Women in the front as nurses or serving as auxiliary military forces
3. Familial relations during World War I
4. Women’s movement and World War I (women and resistance, dissatisfaction with provision, pacifism, demonstrations within the labour movement, criminality)
5. Culture, fashion, and women
6. Women refugees, consequences of the war and women

We kindly invite authors to submit their abstracts no later than 15 July 2017 via e-mail to: robert.devetak@ff.uni-lj.si The abstracts should be written in English and should not exceed 200 words. Please enclose a short CV that includes your e-mail.

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