

2016 Heldt Prizes

Best Book in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Women's Studies

Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Devil's Chain: Prostitution and Social Control in Partitioned Poland* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

In *The Devil's Chain*, Keely Stauter-Halsted has painstakingly excavated the archive to provide a rich and detailed portrait of sex work, the sex industry, and the trafficking in women in the lands of partitioned Poland. Drawing on newspaper accounts, police registries, medical reports, records of rescue shelters, charitable associations, reports from international congresses devoted to sex trafficking, writings of contemporary experts touching on women's sexuality and mental health and sexology, and trial proceedings of traffickers, Stauter-Halsted places prostitution and its attendant disorders at the center of discussions about the Polish nation's future.

As Stauter-Halsted points out, Polish elites in the late 19th and early 20th centuries engaged in conversations about modernizing the Polish national body in preparation for national independence. However, to truly understand these discourses, she argues it is necessary to examine nation-building through the lens of gender and sexuality. Stauter-Halsted demonstrates that these discourses mattered to the nation-building process because of how they framed elite ideas about gender propriety, social class, morality, family and reproductive life, and gender roles.

It should come as no surprise to those familiar with Stauter-Halsted's earlier work that she excels at the granular, finding and reconstructing stories of young peasant women moving to the city in search of work. She details how the contingent nature of work in bourgeois households led the neediest into part-time prostitution, thus providing a steady stream of women for the brothels visited by the male members of bourgeois households. Not willing to depict these women as passive victims, Stauter-Halsted reveals how they often determined their own fates. *The Devil's Chain* not only focuses on the lower-class streetwalkers and brothel residents but also on the social activists who were determined to control and reform morally challenged women and incorporate them into a new Polish nation-state. Stauter-Halsted's monograph represents the best that women's and gender history has to offer to the field of East European and Russian studies. Readers will not be able to read *The Devil's Chain* without thinking about how gender and sexuality shape our modern national identities.

The 2016 Heldt Prize committee applauds Dr. Stauter-Halsted for her painstaking research, the readability of the monograph, and how it challenges Polish historiography to put gender at the center of any discussion on nation and state-building.

Honorable Mention

Jennifer Suchland, *Economies of Violence: Transnational Feminism, Postsocialism, and the Politics of Sex Trafficking* (Duke University Press, 2015).

In *Economies of Violence: Transnational Feminism, Postsocialism, and the Politics of Sex Trafficking*, Jennifer Suchland shifts the paradigm away from sex trafficking as solely about violence against women and individual exploitation and toward seeing it as part of the global political economy, precarious labor markets, and postsocialism. Suchland provides a genealogy of global human trafficking that maps two intersecting processes: the development of sex trafficking and discourses that arose around its brutality and violence; and the politics of postsocialism as a particular location and a “metageographically imagined space.” By analyzing language deployed by the United Nations to describe and then advocate against sex trafficking, Suchland ties the discourse of human trafficking to transnational feminist studies, feminist political economy, and human rights.

Suchland’s book deserves to be recognized since it calls for rethinking the rhetorical tropes surrounding sex trafficking. *Economies of Violence* challenges activists to see trafficking as a symptom of “multifaceted injustices” and to advocate for improved conditions within industries that are sites of normalized violence rather than simply finding and helping victims after the fact.

Best Book by a Woman in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

Lisa Kirschenbaum, *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War: Solidarity and Suspicion* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

In her most recent book, Lisa Kirschenbaum seeks to shift from the polarized debates about the Spanish Civil War to examine the “webs of interaction” through which the international communist movement evolved. Rather than focusing on the actions of party leaders, she shows how activists, inspired by the Russian Revolution, came together, first in Moscow, then in Spain, to create a transnational collaboration and movement. The lives of party members, their relationships with one another, and the importance of their experiences in Spain as a “personal and political point of reference” form the foundation of this narrative. Marshalling a wide array of archival and published sources from collections in Moscow, Madrid, Barcelona, and the U.S., the book provides a transnational perspective on the lives of party members, their idealism, and their responses to the realities of life in the USSR during the 1920s and 1930s. As they moved to Spain to fight against Franco in the late 1930s, they faced shortages of arms and supplies, tensions among anti-fascist forces, and, ultimately, defeat. Later, during the aftermath of World War II, late Stalinism, and anti-communist campaigns, these veterans sought simultaneously to re-unite the movement and to distance themselves from the USSR. In sum, Kirschenbaum’s book is an important contribution to the historiography of this era of international communism.

Honorable Mentions

Erika Monahan, *The Merchants of Siberia: Trade in Early Modern Russia* (Cornell University Press, 2016).

The Merchants of Siberia: Trade in Early Modern Russia challenges received opinions about early modern Russia, such as the alleged risk-averse nature of its merchantry, and opens up a region and social caste to closer inspection. In doing so, Monahan not only describes a portrait of Siberian merchants as actively pursuing their financial interests, but shows the interaction between trade and state-building while placing Russia in a comparative global context that questions the view of the country as an outlier and shining a spotlight on imperial borderlands. Monahan integrates a broad range of archival, primary, and secondary sources into a compelling argument in a manner that is both engaging and clear.

Eileen Kane, *Russian Hajj: Empire and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

Eileen Kane's book argues that the tsarist state in the late 19th and early 20th centuries became a key player in the hajj, especially in its creation of transportation networks from Russia, Persia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus to the Black Sea, Istanbul, and Mecca. Kane conceptualizes empire not as a territory that is acquired and occupied, but instead as the mobility and movement of people through space. Thus, she sees transportation as one key to imperial power, which for Russia faded under the pressures of war and revolution. Kane makes outstanding use of archives in several countries, official and unofficial documents, and original maps to reconstruct the history of the imperial and, later, Soviet sponsorship of the Hajj, despite the state's close ties with the Russian Orthodox Church. Thus, this book is an important contribution to late imperial and Soviet history.

Best Article in Slavic/East European/Eurasian Women's Studies

Claire E. McCallum, "Scorched by the Fire of War: Masculinity, War Wounds and Disability in Soviet Visual Culture, 1941-65," *Slavonic and East European Review* 93 (2): 251-85.

Claire E. McCallum's article, "Scorched by the Fire of War: Masculinity, War Wounds and Disability in Soviet Visual Culture, 1941-65," explores how Soviet cultural genres -- in particular visual images such as photographs, cartoons, posters, sculpture, and paintings -- have treated the issue of war-damaged disability in relation to masculinity. Drawing on a wide variety of source material, McCallum carefully differentiates between works that only appeared in thick art journals as opposed to those reproduced in popular magazines or designed--like wartime posters--to reach a mass audience. Her thorough and fascinating study marks a major contribution to our understanding of the Soviet construction of masculinity, how it changed over time, and how the visual arts followed a unique trajectory distinct from that of film and fiction, despite all cultural forms facing the same ideological constraints. To a large extent those differences stemmed from the intrinsic limitations of the visual arts, compared to film and fiction, to set disability in a wider context or narrative. Tracking changes in visual portrayals of the terrible legacy of war from 1941 to 1964, McCallum notes that the visual arts consistently showed the wounded male body almost entirely in military settings, where injured soldiers either

determinedly fought on or demonstrated a willingness to die for their country. A shift in visual presentation occurred in the mid-1960s—not during the Thaw, as one might expect—but in response to the Brezhnev administration’s reinstatement of Victory Day as a public holiday, a move accompanied by the intensification of the war cult and by a wave of memorial building. For the visual arts, a more realistic view of military heroism emerged, one which turned more attention to the brutal legacies of war, including psychological anguish as well as physical disfigurement.