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### Review Of "Vienna And The Fall Of The Habsburg Empire: Total War And Everyday Life In World War I" By M. Healy

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Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I*

Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I by Maureen Healy

Review by: Pieter M. Judson

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into the broader sphere of cultural history. *Eros and Inwardness in Vienna* is significant in certain ways I hope to outline here, but it does not share Schorske's ambition to read cultural and intellectual activity as a marker of sociopolitical history. He does argue for an ambivalent legacy of Austria's abbreviated liberal political tradition, the presence of a "basic tension" between a neohumanist liberal culture and the political practice of its elite, and a familiarly Austrian *Sonderweg* thesis, in which a lively bourgeois public sphere mirrored modernization in Western Europe even as traditional if not reactionary institutional forces "remained largely in charge until the end of the empire" (17). Yet it is clear that Luft's commitment is not to this thesis (which seems coarse and somewhat dated after Pieter M. Judson's nuanced reassessment of the liberal legacy in *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848–1914* [Ann Arbor, MI, 1997]). His true investment is in a history-of-ideas approach, rather than in sociocultural history, and in reading sexuality and gender as a code for "the relationship between self and world" (183).

Luft's comparative treatment reminds us that the history of sexuality is a history of ideas, and his idiosyncratic comparison brings into relief the specific affinity of twentieth-century Austrian intellectual history and the modernist preoccupation with sexuality. Of course, the history of sexuality is also cultural history, but Luft is an unreconstructed intellectual historian. The cultural dimensions of sex—whether manifest in public sensations, popular culture, the sensual visual arts, or everyday experience of diverse strata—do not fall within the scope of his analysis. This insulates Luft's book in many ways from the broad range of sexuality studies that have emerged since the 1990s. Its author makes no effort to integrate his readings of his three thinkers into the contexts provided by recent histories or, for that matter, theories of sexuality and gender. He plainly avoids not only the work of Michel Foucault but also decades of historical work in its wake. While Luft recognizes that the result (or "virtue," as he puts it) of Weininger's method is to allow the distinction of gender from sex (55), he sees no reason to cite either Gayle Rubin or Tom Laqueur to contextualize this observation. Although Foucault's *History of Sexuality* and a single volume by Jeffrey Weeks are listed in the bibliography, there is no discernible impact of either on Luft's thinking. Other historians of sexuality such as Carolyn Dean (whose work on European sexuality is also, and differently, indebted to a rigorous intellectual historical method) are completely out of view.

In some sense, this insulation can arguably be useful: the book's concentrated gaze reveals connections that have never been exposed before. A disciplined focus on three particular thinkers also saves the study from domination by the towering figure of Freud, who remains very much in the book's sidelines, along with other personages strongly associated with the Viennese erotic in this period (whether Krafft-Ebing, Schnitzler, Klimt, Kokoshka, Schiele, or Kraus). This, too, is arguably to the good, because in keeping all these figures in the margins or completely outside of his history of ideas, Luft succeeds in providing an admittedly partial, but nonetheless important, historical explanation of why and how the currents of European sexual modernism bubbled from a furtive source in Central Europe.

SCOTT SPECTOR

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**Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in**

**World War I.** By *Maureen Healy*. Studies in the Social and Cultural History of

Modern Warfare, volume 17. Edited by *Jay Winter*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. xv + 333. \$75.00.

This challenging volume invites the reader to rethink completely the terrain of home-front politics in the First World War. The political actors (and actresses) whose struggles and activism Maureen Healy analyzes are not the traditional ward politicians, religious leaders,

or social activists on whom most studies of the home front focus. They are the women, children, and so-called left-behind men from whom the state demanded considerable sacrifice. Healy's activists neither organized distinct groups that might be defined by traditional labels of identity (class, nation, religion, region) nor are they atomized individuals whose actions lack significance beyond particular situations. Instead, Healy's subjects constitute a series of loosely bounded communities that continually dissolved and reformed themselves in response to harsh wartime conditions.

The sites of this political activism, too, are unconventional and largely unexamined by previous historians. In this study, violence in the food line or verbal outbursts at the cinema replace protest in the city council chambers or organized demonstrations in the streets. In this world, rumor and denunciation are the favored instruments of political power. Their effectiveness far outweighed state propaganda or politicians' appeals. In this world, the hapless state could barely respond to one set of challenges before the escalating activism of Vienna's starving women, children, and left-behind men produced more effective new political strategies. The politicians never mastered the situation in Vienna's neighborhoods where patriotism, loyalty, and sacrifice came to be understood in terms of fairness in food distribution, access to resources for survival, and exploitation of children. To the contrary, the state could only chase the new politics blindly, issuing flurries of irrelevant regulations that responded to last week's crises and depleting all remaining reserves of loyalty among the suffering populace. Ultimately, according to Healy, failure on this urban front hastened the collapse of the Habsburg Empire by shattering trust in the regime's ability to uphold its side of the social contract. The political violence that characterized the ensuing years in the First Republic may have been less a product of the violent *Frontgeist*, she writes, than of the desperate home-front-*Geist* (313).

When the state framed the war in terms of complementary sacrifice—home and front—it inadvertently created opportunities for activism among civilians who noticed that some people at home sacrificed a lot more than did others. The uncomplaining *Durchhalten* (“hang-in-there” attitude) demanded of Vienna's women created powerful expectations of fair treatment among the home-front denizens (so-called stay-at-home men remained largely invisible in contemporary gendered conceptualizations of home-front sacrifice). Almost immediately, however, the improvised system of food supply and distribution broke down. Popular accusations of profiteering targeted private firms, neighborhood distribution centers, local farmers, scapegoat populations, or “Hungarians” (who, the starving Viennese imagined, enjoyed strudel made with white flour in nearby Pressburg/Poszony; 49). Eventually, popular anger turned against the state that allowed a loyal people to suffer at the hands of profiteers. As the war ground on, popular violence targeted putative hoarders, traitors, and criminals in several neighborhoods. It is not surprising that much of this violence took place in the markets where women and their children waited in line, often overnight, only to find supplies exhausted when they reached the front of the line. While the state guaranteed on paper that each man, woman, and child would receive a minimum daily number of calories, finding that food was another matter altogether.

Despite creative efforts, the state could do little either to stop the accusations that undermined its legitimacy or to distract the public from the apocalyptic rumors circulating in the city. The War Exhibition of 1916 constituted one attempt to control the public's understanding of the war on both the home front and the battlefield. By the time they opened, however, the carefully sanitized exhibits only reminded a weary public of the gap separating its own experience from the government's optimistic depictions. Ironically, the War Exhibition seems to have succeeded largely thanks to its entertainment value rather than its interpretive power. In a chapter that combines remarkable archival research with interpretive virtuosity, Healy examines the ways in which the informal political system of rumors and denunciations about food distribution and the progress of the war drove the very censorship system that was supposed to control it. State attempts to manage information through surveillance and censorship failed to thwart the astonishing diversity of information that circulated among the people of wartime Vienna.

Many of the sources of illegal rumors turned out to be women, who were treated as harmless gossips rather than as entrepreneurs of dangerous information. Women's activism was rendered invisible or harmless in the eyes of the authorities precisely because of traditional beliefs and laws about gender and citizenship. The degree of a woman's patriotic commitment (*Gesinnung*) rarely carried the decisive weight in legal matters that her husband's citizenship or her brother's wartime accomplishments did. Ambivalence about women as citizens produced contradictory official responses. Gendered beliefs about women's fundamental ignorance of public affairs saved many women from severe punishment for traitorous outbursts or violent acts in public places. At the same time, the state increasingly relied on women to assume wartime responsibilities in public. The Woman's Auxiliary Service, for example, deployed uniformed women in men's secretarial jobs behind the front lines, releasing soldiers to fight in the trenches. The praise and ridicule the auxiliaries encountered reflected the same contradictory beliefs about women's roles in public.

The mobilization of children for war produced similar contradictions. Early on, children constituted a future-oriented "regenerative" image of Austrian society. Images of orphans, starting with the children of the murdered archduke Franz Ferdinand, also helped link the ethos of wartime sacrifice to Austria's younger generation. Children themselves vicariously participated in war through games or geography lessons in school. Later they too were mobilized in endless campaigns to collect funds or recyclable materials for the war effort. Eventually, children who were released for war work from school became potent symbols of the moral degeneration of the fatherless family, delinquents who smoked, gambled, and cursed in public. Many of Vienna's children spent long night hours in food lines, and all suffered severely from the starvation crisis.

One significant problem with Healy's otherwise exemplary analysis is her tendency to revert to reification when she discusses nationalist forms of self-identification. It is striking that an author who so carefully delineates the daily re-creation of situational communities of interest should treat nationalist interest as a stable, self-explanatory variable in social life. Healy takes claims about nationalist forms of identity (Czech, German) too much at face value, even as she wisely cautions the reader that other forms of self-identification, such as class, depended on situational factors. Her treatment of Vienna's Czech-speaking residents suggests that theirs was a real, enduring, but also strangely passive community often victimized by "Germans." As both Alon Rachamimov and Tara Zahra have recently shown in their work on World War I, nationalist identities in Austria formed and reformed in complex and often unexpected ways then. Ordinary Czech speakers at home turn out to have been no less patriotic than any other group, and Healy's skepticism about Austrian patriotism during the war, strangely based more on national feeling than on food issues, is not convincing. These blind spots result from Healy's focus on Vienna, a city whose conditions were atypical of the rest of the monarchy, and not from any lack of knowledge about her subject. In sum, this book offers a superb set of interpretive strategies for understanding total war and everyday life in the First World War. It is to be hoped that other scholars will meet the challenge to apply these analytic strategies to the rest of wartime Austria-Hungary.

PIETER M. JUDSON

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**German Scholars and Ethnic Cleansing, 1919–1945.** Edited by *Ingo Haar* and *Michael Fahlbusch*.  
New York: Berghahn Books, 2005. Pp. xxi + 298. \$60.00.

In recent years there has been considerable—and at times vehement—examination and discussion in Germany of the role of historians and other scholars in the humanities and social sciences during the Third Reich. A substantial portion of this examination and dis-