

Abstracts

Anette Baldauf, *Ikonography of the Blonde. Femininity as Special Effect*

In the 70s, feminists furiously burnt their bras in public. In the early 90s, Madonna presented her body, strengthened by weight lifting and strapped into Gaultier's stylized corset; chronically unruly Courtney Love claimed that she invented the "Kinder-whore style" and called her breasts and nose "well done". The status of the body and style are contested minefields in the war of position between the second and the third wave of feminism: according to traditional historiographies, the former longed for a return to the authentic pre-deformed state of natural femininity, while the latter celebrated the inauthenticity of conspicuously unnatural poses. Following their epistemology, body work and fashion were a "technique of the self", which allowed the subject not so much to "express" but creatively produce herself.

With the current generation of girl performers, natural born drag queens who have professionally worked out their femininity seem to populate catwalks and stages, magazines, and stores; their estrogen implodes in super-straight performances as Lolitas and lovelorn girls. This blond brigade of teen performers is not interested in staging an ironic taken on femininity. Instead, they present its hyper-simulation – as young, fresh and clean as possible. While conspicuously evoking association with the vocal and dance repertoire of black popular culture, these teens simultaneously stress the purity of the good, white girl. Distinguishing themselves from the girls in hip-hop and punk rock, who constructed their identities upon "being bad", the current teen girls build their identities on "wholesomeness". The difference is not a qualitative one but a matter of scale: the pendulum has merely swung from one side to the other, and the new teen girl is still defined along the axis of sexuality and body politics.

Ruth Dawson, *Catherine II and the Celebrity*

The non-courtly reception of eighteenth-century monarchs such as Catherine II of Russia can be understood as an early version of celebrity. With the growth of mass media, the new emphasis on the individual, and the commodification and secularization of culture, the prerequisites for celebrity discourse as a non-courtly reinterpretation of royal *gloire* were in place. The large number and diverse quality and price of graphic and textual representations of Catherine II produced outside Russia are evidence of ways in which she was commodified and her role as female ruler was both trivialized and sexualized. Close examination of the texts and images illustrate the simultaneous intimacy, grandeur, and partial transgressiveness that mark celebrity and that invite the public to identify and to mobilize its fantasies, briefly imagining being celebrated too.

Karin Liebhart, *Béla Rásky, Heroes and Heroines within Austrian and Hungarian National Myths and Narrations*

The idea of heroes and heroism is an almost exclusively masculine one: as in other parts, the concept of heroine is an almost unknown feature of the different nation-building processes of Central Europe. Starting from this presumption, the authors try to compare the national myths and heroic historical constructions, inventions, the self-imageries of two distinct Central European nations which in general are regarded to be very similar and/or related to one another – Austria and Hungary. The concept of hero and the heroic national myths in both countries are analysed in their historical context in all their different aspects – in history, in the built environment and state representation, in public and/or official memory, in popular material and immaterial culture, as well as in the anonymous "mass body" of the nation.

The authors suggest many similarities – due to the different paths of nation building and the different tools used for that goal, asynchronous – between the two countries. However, they pinpoint at a main divergence: though both national constructions use the narrative of having heroically suffered under the impairs of history, the Austrian “model” rather seems to follow a line of (self-)victimisation, thus in a way effeminising the heroism of Austrianism, while the Hungarian “concept” concentrates on the narrative of the national martyr – men actively fighting destiny for their rights and pathetically failing.

Anuschka Tischer, A French Woman Ambassador in Poland 1645–1646. The Diplomatic Mission of Renée de Guébriant to the Court of Władisław IV

From 1645 to 1646 a woman ambassador, the widowed countess Renée de Guébriant, accompanied king Władisław IV's new wife, the French Louise-Marie, to Poland, supervised the queen's reception at the Polish court and negotiated with the king the political implications. She should have negotiated a French marriage at the Imperial court, too, but the Emperor refused. The details of her mission can be found in the French diplomatic archives but also in French publications of the time. The countess was the first French woman ambassador, probably the first woman ambassador at all, and the second woman to hold an official diplomatic charge after Catharina Stopia, Swedish agent in Moscow 1632–1634. The countess herself, once she was chosen for the mission, had asked for this official title. Her outstanding career is based on a constellation of individual elements – such as Louis XIV' minority and the government of his mother, the countess's fame and strong personality – but it would hardly have been possible had not noble women been part of the early modern court. So, even when the Habsburg court refused to accept the countess as an ambassador, the reason was not gender but the political situation, and early diplomatic theorist Juan de Vera took women diplomats into consideration. Later diplomatic theory and practice, however, excluded women from official charges.