

Abstracts

Roberta Cimino, Women and Gendered Communication: Female Voices in Carolingian Diplomas

This essay analyses the language used to describe royal women in Carolingian diplomas, the official documents through which rulers granted and confirmed rights and properties. It focuses in particular on the way in which these texts portrayed female voices, as women often appeared in diplomas to request – for themselves or for someone else – or grant favours. By examining some examples from the eighth to the late ninth century the article emphasises the significance of gender discourse in Carolingian family politics. Thanks to their personal relationship with the ruler, royal women appeared in diplomas to carry out gendered activities, such as founding and patronising monasteries, administering the court and protecting their children. Royal charters therefore illustrate how gender discourse was employed to strengthen political messages. Moreover, they show that women could actively participate in royal politics. Ultimately, the article argues that diplomas are a valuable source for understanding family and gender dynamics and the multiple ways in which women could make their voices heard in Carolingian courts.

Sophie Houdard, Who Speaks – Girl or Devil? The Theatre of Demonic Possession in Early Modern France

Demonic possession in sixteenth and seventeenth century France was a spectacle in which the Church fought against devils who allegedly possessed the bodies of nuns who vociferated, brayed, and cursed against God and his Church. Once vanquished, the devils were forced to pronounce their defeat using the voices of the possessed nuns thus admitting the grandeur of Catholic dogma. Possessed nuns became alienated bodies, abandoned to demons who used them to exercise demonic power until defeated and made to exhibit their defeat before Church representatives and priests. The massive yet ephemeral power of the devil was expressed only via the weakness and awkwardness of

the female voice. This schema, however, is interrupted in moments of ambivalence when the possessed nun speaks for herself, making way for the possibility of a subject who affirms herself, even as she is alienated. In this article we ask how and if demonic possession allowed for a paradoxical form of expression through a voice that did not belong to the body that spoke, and yet claimed authority from this ambivalent state of *otherness*.

Ulrike Krampfl, Working with Languages. Foreign Languages, Servants and Gender in Paris at the End of the Ancien Régime

Based on advertisements in Parisian newspapers (1751–1789), this article examines the role of foreign languages as a working tool for house servants ranging from teaching languages, translating and interpreting to reading, having conversations to being a companion at home and when travelling. In these advertisements women were outnumbered by men in general and in particular for positions that required a high level of literacy due to medial (newspaper advertisements) and cultural reasons (education, international mobility); in this context Latin played a structuring role in social and gender terms. However, the command of a foreign language – especially English, Italian, and German – did not necessarily depend on formal writing and (Latin) grammar skills. The advertisements show the cultural and pedagogical importance of orality in foreign languages. Although probably also socially differentiated, these oral language skills – at least when a ‘good’ pronunciation was required – could pave the way for specific acknowledged occupations even for less educated men and women.

Patrick Farges, “This Language of Mine that has Become so Manly.” Yekkes in Palestine/Israel between Languages and Gender

In the 1930s, German-Jewish men and women left Europe and migrated to Mandate Palestine during the ‘Fifth Aliya’. In Israel, they are called ‘Yekkes’, once a derogatory label alluding to the confrontation between ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ Jewry. The Israeli nation-building process after 1948 went along with highly cultural and gendered politics imposing that the New (male) Jew should speak Modern Hebrew. However, recent historiography on Yekkes has shown that despite the official ban of the German language in Israel in the 1950s, Yekkes have, against all odds, been culturally resistant in maintaining linguistic and other ‘German’ features. Moreover, according to post-Zionist historiography Israel was (and still is) a site of numerous multicultural and multilingual contacts and confrontations. In the course of their lives, Yekkes hence constantly navigated between different languages – German, Modern Hebrew, Arabic, Yiddish, and other Diaspora languages – that conveyed different social and gendered connota-

tions. How do masculinity and language intersect in the Yekkes' narratives? This article is based on self-narratives: memoirs, autobiographies, and oral history interviews conducted in the 1990s. These narratives function as "linguistic biographies" in which language and gender are closely interwoven. Language retention and language distinction thus served as cultural strategies of resistance against both memories of the Nazi brutalisation of language and Zionist masculinisation tendencies.

Monika Mommertz, Useful for the 'Distant Pasts'? Gender as Marker/Resource/Tracer

Taking the second part of Joan Scott's seminal definition of gender from 1986 as a starting point (gender as "a primary way of signifying relationships of power") this paper argues that our understanding of gender and other differences needs to be broadened and in part reformulated. Gender is deeply rooted in, yet not limited to problems such as identities, power relationships and/or discrimination. In Early Modern Cultural History we are confronted with unfamiliar perceptions and practices, i.e. with 'distant pasts' and/or with non-European, non-Christian etc. societies. Thus we need a more open approach focused on the reconstruction of gender as part of historical webs of meaning rather than informed by modern Western assumptions. Three interconnected metaphors are suggested for gender to become a more useful category in exploring the unfamiliar: gender as a *designation/mark* (*Markierung*), a *resource* and a *tracer*. The potential of these metaphors to change both our theories and methods in gender history is illustrated by examining examples from the Early Modern History of Science and Knowledge between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

