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FEMINIST REDESCRIPTIONS

Redescriptions journal has gone through some significant name changes during its existence. Launched in 1997 as the *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*, it was in 2003 renamed as *Redescriptions. Yearbook of Political Thought and Conceptual History*, a change more aptly reflecting the journal's host of international contributors and readership. Again, this year the editors felt that a new amendment was due, and the subtitle was changed to *Yearbook of Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory*. With this change we wish to highlight our journal's longstanding and continuous commitment to publish challenging and innovative work, which is inspired by and contributes to the feminist scholarship.

In this issue, again, several articles open up new perspectives by discussing research inspired by feminist theories. In her article on G.W.F. Hegel Laura Werner approaches Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* by looking at the ways in which he conceptualizes 'family' and 'state'. Werner maintains that Hegel's use of these concepts would best be seen as dialectical, which makes these categories non-separate. Her meticulous work on Hegel's language and metaphors shows how both 'family' and 'state' are already immersed by 'love' in his text – and thus express the structure of *Geist*. This observation challenges the more common readings in which Hegel is understood to argue that public sphere is to be seen separate from the private and in need of protection from being contaminated by it.

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As Werner shows, within Hegel's dialectical framework state divides itself first into family and civil society, two institutions functioning under opposing principles (substantial, necessary, communal vs. abstract, arbitrary, individualist), and then unifies them again under its concept. Taking his dialectics seriously makes it possible for Werner to look at, for instance, Hegel's treatment of divorce from an angle which allows her to notice an analogous discussion of the possible dissolution of the state.

Hegel's conceptual scheme of social and political life is based on the idea that people become themselves fully only by becoming a part of a relation, whether that is a family member or a citizen. To enter such a relation is thus an "ethical duty" and a manifestation of ethical spirit, or love. Thus, for Hegel family and state are analogous in structure, yet they are understood to have a different basis in feeling and law, respectively. However, as Werner argues, the way he treats patriotism in his texts suggests that patriotism and *politische Gesinnung* perform the same emotional function in the state as love does in marriage. It remains to be seen whether the affective turn, already strong in media studies, is about to take political sciences by surprise with a little help from Hegel scholars, otherwise committed to strict conceptual work.

Patriotism and ethical duty are also underlying, yet problematized, currents in the article by Mikako Iwatake. She looks at both the parallels of the Japanese and the Finnish women's history and the dissimilarities in their respective writing of history. Iwatake takes the colonialist and imperialist past of Japan between the 1860s and 1945 as her starting point. This past, marked by long wars and militarization, was radically disrupted after 1945, when Japan was turned into a non-militarist state. As she argues, a similar break is not evident in the way the Finns understand the nature of their state, irrespective of the fact that both countries were part of the Axis powers together with national socialist Germany during World War II. She substantiates this claim by having a closer look at the ways in which historical knowledge about women's war time efforts has been produced and reproduced.

Recent Japanese scholarship has paid particular attention to the modes of violence inflicted by a colonial state, in which women eagerly participated during the war. Women were not only fulfilling their duty in sustaining a disciplined home front, but seized also pos-

sibilities for obtaining higher social status and political rights in war collaboration. Women's complicity was also sustained by a conceptual construction of "good wife, wise mother", an ideology derived from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's and Hegel's thoughts and transmitted to and from Japan through colonial modernity. Moreover, women's cooperation in orientalizing Chinese and Korean women effectively helped to sustain a fatal distinction between "our" women in need of protection and the "others".

Similarly, also in Finland women organized to participate actively in the war efforts, and *yhteiskunnallinen äitiys* ("societal motherhood"), a parallel concept to "good wife, wise mother", existed to support women's active participation in warfare, even if Finnish women already had gained political rights, and there were therefore fewer rewards for them to attain. It can even be maintained that Karelia and Karelian women were, in post-colonial terms, made into the Finnish "Orient". Nevertheless, as Iwatake observes, unlike their Japanese colleagues, Finnish scholars have not taken up such tendencies critically.

Hence, in her article Iwatake raises the question about the conceptual moves and narrative structures *not* undertaken or applied by Finnish scholars in regard to writing women's history. She argues that as they remain too comfortably embedded in liberal feminist tradition, the familiar conceptualization of the Finnish state as women friendly remains inviolable. Likewise, the discussion about women's war collaboration cannot be effectively politicized, but remains problematically laudatory.

At the end of her article Iwatake suggest that one of the marked differences between Japan and Finland is that although Japan can be perceived as a more male-centered society, Finland strikes one as more heterosexist. Whereas heterosexism inevitably addresses men and women alike (although not as alike), patriarchal structures ask for and necessitate more radical responses, particularly from women. One hopes that in the future there will be an increase in the number of works that discuss in detail the ways in which this kind of analytical distinction between gender and sexuality could be made useful in analyses about the contextual structuring of political concepts.

Whereas Iwatake speaks for the necessity of politicizing academic history writing, Matti Hyvärinen, for his part, takes a look at a literary text about future. Interestingly enough, also Kazuo Ishiguro's

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novel *Never Let Me Go* takes up questions of love, duty, and othering. Hyvärinen takes this novel as a possibility for exploring the political relevance of the use of narratological distinctions such as the narrator, the implied author, the situation of narration and the narrative audience.

As Hyvärinen shows, the character-bound narration of Kathy H. in *Never Let Me Go* is one that actually disregards the actual reader, since the narrative audience is located in the story-world, which seems to follow its own rules, unfamiliar to the reader. This means that while the reader gets to hear the story, at the same time she is left in the dark. Yet, the same applies to the young people told about in the story, who are given only limited information about their already planned future. This means that while they know something about their upcoming duties, they simultaneously cannot really believe the fragments they have learnt. This oscillation between knowing and not-knowing effectively sustains the wishful paranoid reality of their youth spent in a well-sheltered boarding school.

The narration also makes evident the gap between the good intentions of the boarding school principal, who at the same time nevertheless fully subscribes to the existing circumstances and thus remains blind to the actual outcome of her deeds. She is convinced that acting on behalf of the students as a benefactor is better than informing them about their future or granting them the right to have bodily self-determination. But even Kathy H. is read by Hyvärinen as a selective narrator, whose politics are shown in how she chooses to tell her story to her listeners. Also here the uncomfortable question of complicity is raised, now in relation to the ideology of the boarding school and what it stands for.

As the reader gradually starts to get a full picture about the pressing circumstances the young people are at, she is surprised by how the story fails the more conventional expectations of turning into an emancipatory narrative or a *Bildungsroman*. Instead, it gives the reader a good look at the general horror before difference – and could thus, as I would like to add, be very well be read as a queer narrative, considering the way it raises issues about vulnerability, restricted bodily self-determination and a future without one in a world that is made on the orders of somebody else.

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In the narrative structure of the novel there is little consolation available for the reader. Therefore, little by little she starts to experience feelings so markedly absent in Kathy's narration: disappointment, rage, and hatred. As Hyvärinen is able to show, it is Ishiguro's mastery of the available narrative means that makes the novel a deeply disturbing and political one.

The editors will be happy to welcome further manuscripts which, like the above discussed writings, are political in a sense that they challenge and disturb the conventional interpretations of classical texts, force the reader to reconsider taken for granted theoretical approaches, and help to deconstruct sheltered perceptions of the world as it is narrated to us. Or, to put it briefly, texts which engage in feminist redescrptions.

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