

BOOK REVIEW Renate Haas (Ed.). 2015. *Rewriting Academia. The Development of the Anglicist Women's and Gender Studies of Continental Europe*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 442 pp., ISBN 978-3-631-66985-3.

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The volume is an impressive collection of different vantage points on the academic establishment of Women's and Gender Studies and its various degrees of attainment within or in close connection with English Studies. The volume includes sixteen contributions from different countries in Europe which are aimed at mapping the present state of Women's and Gender Studies, focusing both on their degree of academic institutionalization and on documenting major turning points in history that lead to their establishment. The volume is divided into four main sections covering Southern Europe, Western and Central Europe, Northern Europe and South-Eastern and Eastern Europe; each section includes several contributions reflecting the situation of Women's and Gender Studies from the perspective of English Studies in different countries belonging to that region while recognizing national specificities. The parallel structure of the different contributions functions as a means of unifying the otherwise diverse set of national surveys and allows for a comparative perspective, a three-fold structure being followed by each contribution (reflection of national context, important moves in the institutionalization of Women's and Gender Studies and a particular focus on the case of Anglicist Women's and Gender Studies).

In the introduction to the volume, Haas explains the choice of focusing on the instrumental role of English Studies for the establishment of Women's and Gender Studies as a clear intention of the volume to probe the claim of Rosi Braidotti that "English-speaking cultures and traditions" (12) have played a significant role in fostering research efforts in the field of Women's and Gender

Studies. However, Haas explains that English Studies is to be understood comprehensively as referring to both Anglicist and American Studies, which in most European contexts are institutionally unified under one department.

The first section on Women's and Gender Studies in Southern Europe is opened by Ana Gabriela Macedo and Margarida Esteves Pereira with their analysis "*Women's and Gender Studies in Portugal: An Overview from an Anglicist Perspective*". In a circular flow movement, Macedo and Pereira start by zooming in on Universidade do Minho and the establishment of Gender Studies, which can be traced back to the early 1990s at the level of teaching within the English Studies programmes, and end with the significant research projects from the turn of the century onwards, among the most notable here being the anthology of contemporary feminism and "the first dictionary of feminist criticism in Portuguese" (29), *Dicionário da Crítica Feminista* (Macedo, Amaral eds. 2005). Macedo and Pereira then continue with a chronological inventory of milestones for the feminist movement in Portugal, from the first publications towards female independence to the trial of the authors of *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* (The New Portuguese Letters) for immoral behaviour, obscenity and the establishment of the *Women's Liberation Movement* in 1974. Macedo and Pereira then come full circle and highlight the new visibility attained by Women's Studies starting from the 1990s that coincided with the introduction of degree programmes in Gender Studies or as part of other programmes. The authors acknowledge the role of medium played by the Anglicist Studies, although, they admit to a rather late cultural transition from French to English (after the 1960s) and do not overlook the significant contributions brought to the field by research in other sciences.

In "*Women's Studies and English Studies in Spain: From Democracy to Transnationalism*", Esther Álvarez López, Isabel Carrera Suárez and Carla Rodríguez González start with a brief historical overview and highlight the advances made by women movements during the period of the Republic as well as the massive setbacks of the fascist regime concerning women's rights. The death of Franco and the end of his dictatorship brought about new freedom and the start of rapid social and educational developments, women's studies finally becoming part of the Spanish academe at the end of the 1970s against the backdrop of a "rigid and centralised Higher Education structure" (54). In the next two sections, López, Suárez and González acknowledge the efforts of feminist academics in the establishment of women's studies at a time of great development for the universities and build an impressive inventory of the most significant research

outcomes in the field of Women's and Gender studies via Anglicists in many Spanish universities. Additionally, in section two, the authors also bring further details to support the claims of a flourishing field of studies especially at MA and PhD level, with "16 PhD programmes in Gender or Women's Studies and 14 postgraduate programmes" around the beginning of the new millennium (57). López, Suárez and González conclude their detailed account of work carried out in the field by underlining the rather high degree of institutionalization and recognition of Women's, Gender and Feminist Studies in Spain so far.

Vita Fortunati closes the section on Southern Europe with her contribution "Anglicist Women's and Gender Studies in Italy: The Bologna Case as an Emblematic Example", covering the delicate issue of the institutionalisation of Women's and Gender Studies, less welcomed by those who see it as a way of "depriving them of their subversive potential" (87). Fortunati acknowledges the recent efforts of the last ministers for equal opportunities of inserting Women's and Gender Studies in the academic curricula, which seem to be in opposition with an "almost non-existent" (89) institutional recognition for such studies in Italy, although research in Women's and Gender Studies is visible at the level of courses, seminars or MA/ PhD programmes. Fortunati then proceeds to build a complex argument in favour of establishing Women's and Gender Studies Departments, which may lead to transdisciplinary research and which may "strengthen the field of comparative and integrative studies" (89). As part of her argument, Fortunati discusses the different teaching and research efforts that have led to the creation of programmes such as *Women's and Gender Studies Permanent Course* (90) or the inclusion of such courses in the European Master GEMMA at the University of Bologna. Fortunati closes this discussion on Women's and Gender Studies in Italy, with a review of the most important individual research efforts of members of the academia from different universities across Italy.

The next section on Western and Central Europe starts with "Beyond Invisibility and Bias: English Women's and Gender Studies in France" by Florence Binard, who highlights that in France the establishment of Women's and Gender Studies was primarily the result of a bottom-up development, born from the Women's Liberation Movement. Binard explains that these origins have made it difficult on the one hand for Women's Studies to be perceived as a discipline of scientific worth, often being considered "ideological in nature and therefore perceived as lacking objectivity" (127). On the other hand, Binard also brings into discussion the highly centralized French university system, which implies that government approval is still necessary for new

courses to be introduced or curricula to be changed. Binard also distinguishes here a more recent acknowledgement of the “social and political relevance of Women’s Studies” (114) by the government, yet she considers that the choice of academics to pursue courses and research in this field is still “ill-identified” (114). In the second part, Binard focuses on English Studies as a medium for Women’s and Gender Studies to develop and builds a considerable inventory of contributions by individual researchers or different research teams to the field. However, Binard mentions here the rather inflexible syllabus for the English specialisation exam (agrégation), which had a direct impact upon the degree courses until 2015, when some changes were about to follow. Moreover, Binard also brings into discussion the impact of such specialization upon the professorship requirements, illustrating how research and teaching in the field of Women’s and Gender Studies may prove a disadvantage. Binard concludes this chapter by remarking that the institutionalization of Women’s and Gender Studies within English departments has mostly benefited from the multidisciplinary nature of English studies and that it relied mostly on “individual rather than institutional goodwill” (129).

Marysa Demoor’s contribution “Women’s Studies in Belgium: Through the Gate of English Literature” zooms in on the situation of Women’s and Gender Studies in Belgium, claiming from the start that “Belgium is not a particularly remarkable country in the history of feminism and women’s studies” (133). Similarly to other countries in the region, the institutionalization of Women’s and Gender Studies commenced with the establishment of academic centres for Women’s Studies in major universities in the 1980s, as well as the foundation of external organisations such as Sophia and Amazone, which provided support for research in the field of Gender Studies in Belgium. Demoor mentions that the intersection of English Studies with Women’s and Gender Studies was mostly a result of personal involvement of different scholars with interests in English literature and discusses the more recent progress in the field, in spite of occasional opposition from fellow members of the academia.

“Germany: Two Steps Forward and One Back, or Slow Snowball Effect?” by Renate Haas covers the establishment of the discipline in the context of unified Germany, occasionally singularizing the particularities of the situation in East Germany. Haas starts by illustrating the strong starting point for the construction of a woman-friendly national context in Germany, and mentions the important women of the 17th century, the first female doctorate in the 18th century, the strong Women’s Movement of the 19th century documented in *Handbuch der Frauenbewegung*

(“The Handbook of the Women’s Movement”) and the early 20th century conquests in women and gender rights (including exerting influence on the US with the foundation of the homosexual Bund für Menschenrechte). Haas then mentions the major setback of the Third Reich, when “much of what had been crushed remained in oblivion” (146). It is against this backdrop that the Second Women’s Movement emerged. Haas then charts the more recent steps towards the institutionalization of Women and Gender Studies in a four-phase division proposed by sociologists: 1968-1982 Second Women’s Movement, setting out; 1982-1988 pushing through; 1989-1996 professionalization and from 1997 onwards normalization, or reaching the status of a normal academic discipline. Focusing on the case of German Anglicist Women’s and Gender Studies, Haas discusses progress through the perspective of 2014 statistics (documenting female students, graduates, doctorates, junior academic staff, habilitations, professorships and chairs) and highlights a difference between American and English Studies, the first enjoying greater advances; she also comments on the fact that “Languages have created substantially fewer Women’s and Gender Studies professorships than Sociology” (158). In her conclusion, Haas dwells on the “low visibility of German Anglicist Women’s and Gender Studies“ and analyses it according to their impact on the broad public, their impact on other disciplines, their position within German English and American Studies and within the international English and American Studies, the latter being perceived as “probably carry[ing] the greatest weight” (159).

In the sub-section “Austria: The Long and Winding Road towards the Institutionalization of Women’s and Gender Studies” Susanne Hamscha recognizes that in spite of a natural affinity for American Studies, the “trailblazer for the promotion of Women’s and Gender Studies in the academia” (171) at the University of Vienna was the history department. In addition to a late start, Austria being the “last European country to admit women to higher education” as Hamscha highlights, the country’s efforts of catching up with other European countries were also affected by the brain drain under the Nazi regime. “Gender related research and feminist theory tentatively entered course syllabi in selected fields of study” (175) only with the second feminist movement and through individual courses. Hamscha points out that in comparison with the advances of the history department at the University of Vienna, where the Centre for Advanced Gender Studies was established towards the beginning of the new millennium, institutionalization within English and American Studies departments “is at first glance disappointing” (180). Women’s and Gender Studies as compulsory courses were established only in 2002/2003 at the University of Vienna, but

they were only compulsory to students pursuing a master degree, not a teaching diploma. Moreover, Women's and Gender Studies are perceived as a "sub-discipline of Cultural Studies and not a field in its own right" (182). Hamscha then continues with a closer look at efforts towards the establishment of the Women and Gender Studies within English and American Studies in five Austrian universities and concludes that in spite of a rather slow process, all main English and American Studies Departments offer "gendered-focused courses [...] albeit in very varying degrees" (191).

The case of "Anglicist Women's and Gender Studies in the Czech Republic: An Uncertain Discipline" is discussed by Vera Eliášová, Simona Fojtová and Martina Horáková, who argue that "Anglicist Women's and Gender Studies remains a tenuous intellectual formation that is not supported by any faculty lines or other forms of institutional commitment and is mostly propelled by personal initiatives of individual faculty in the departments of English and American studies" (196). As such, when Eliášová, Fojtová and Horáková map post-communist efforts leading to the establishment of Women's and Gender Studies in the Czech Republic, they bring the example of Medúza, a reading group founded in 1995 by a group of students at the English and American Departments, set up initially as a reading group and then expanding activities to collecting resources, organising discussion groups or even setting up a publishing house that focused on women writers. Considering more recent developments in the field of Women's and Gender Studies, Eliášová, Fojtová and Horáková observe that these are often fostered by the departments of sociology rather than English Studies and conclude that although Women's and Gender Studies have become "a stable component of educational curricula" (215) the continuation of this field relies on the determination of individual scholars.

The brief sub-section on Women's and Gender Studies in Croatia, due to the departure of its author Ljiljana Ina Gjurgjan, underlines the communist paradox of the perspectives on "women's liberation movement, which was seen as an import from the decadent West" (219), while certain aspects of equality of women were guaranteed through law – wages, voting rights, health care and abortion. Gjurgjan underlines that the position of Women's Studies has to be understood "within this dichotomy of the socio-symbolic" (220) as the establishment of the discipline occurred in the 1950s, but these disciplines functioned as instruments of communist propaganda. Gjurgjan comments on some advances of the 1980s brought about by the exposure of women to feminist conferences, but which "changed drastically in the 1990s" to a discourse where women "were once

again seen as national heroines, mothers and nurturers”, with limited rights with regard to birth control. The period following the war brought about changes, which led to the Women’s Studies development in both academic institutions and the popular media.

The next section of Northern Europe, comprises the contribution of Mia Liinason “A Semi-Outsider’s Point of View: The Institutionalization of Gender Research in Sweden”, Elina Valovirta and Joel Kuortti’s sub-section on “Moderate Finnish Feminism: From a Struggle for Equality in the Welfare State to Diverse and Established Gender Studies” and also Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė’s account on “Lithuania: Pioneering Women’s and Gender Studies in the Post-Soviet Baltic Republics”. The story of the establishment of Women’s and Gender Studies in these three countries shares a common feature, that they are somehow success stories, but with slight differences. Lithuania boasting in 2015 a woman president and 34 women MPs (277), Gender Studies Centres within four universities, founded between 1993 and 2003, Women’s and Gender Studies courses and seminars that are part of the curriculum developed in close connection with English and American literary studies, yet Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė advocates for a dissemination of research findings in the field of Women’s and Gender Studies in order to address existing issues of gender inequality or the absence of laws protecting women’s rights. Finland having managed to introduce a module on Women’s Studies as part of the “mandatory general education portion of the Faculty of Humanities” (251) as early as the 1980s, a larger degree of institutionalization occurring in 1988 and in 1995 the Ministry of Education and Culture decided “to grant eight five-year professorships to Women’s Studies departments in Finland”, which later became permanent, yet the strong presence of Women’s Studies does not so much occur within English departments. Finally, Liinason acknowledges the success of the institutionalization of Gender research in Sweden, but she underlines that the issue of cultural conflict is not addressed “because it defies Sweden’s self-image as [...] an international defender of human rights”, as a “woman-friendly and (gender) equal” country (228). Moreover, Liinason also brings into discussion the effect of state support for gender research and criticizes “academic feminism for mixing claims on equal opportunities in the universities with the content and organization of the research” (240) leading again to a marginalization of critical voices.

Finally, the last section on South Eastern and Eastern Europe brings into discussion the situation of Women’s and Gender Studies in Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Armenia. Aleksandra Izgarjan and Dubravka Djurić explain how “the anti-war and anti-regime activities shaped

women's studies in Serbia, but reciprocally, women's activism and women's studies also shaped the Serbian political scene and continue to do so" (322). Izgarjan and Djurić also draw attention upon the fact that although the English Department has had the "highest number of courses integrating various aspects of Women's Studies" (318) and that Centres for Gender Studies within major universities and NGO's were founded, the Centre's graduates cannot use their degree when seeking employment.

Ana Karina Schneider and Corina Selejan discuss the situation of "Anglicist Women's and Gender Studies in Romania: Between Persistence and Resistance" and soon explain this title by stating that the "general opinion is that there is not a strong feminist movement [in Romania], nor any need for one" (327) and what is more, that "there is an unshakable sense that feminism is an alien importation, largely of Anglo-American extraction" (328). In spite of a newly found voice of feminists in the 1920s, a period when "women began to refer to themselves as feminists" (333), the "state patriarchy" of the communist regime brought about discrimination and limitations for women, laws only seemingly forbade discrimination and promoted equality, but these were not enforced. Thus in the 1990s "scholars proceeded to embark on a recuperative project" within Anglo-American Studies. Although Schneider and Selejan bring to light the most important achievements for the field of Anglicist Women's and Gender Studies in Romania, they also admit that the Research Centres, the courses on gender studies offered by major universities, the MA programmes and the Gender Studies publications are the result of the commendable efforts of a few individuals; in the mid-1990s "only 7 out of 30 universities offering philology study programmes" in the country offered lecture courses in feminism and gender studies. In spite of all acknowledged efforts of Romanian scholars, Schneider and Selejan conclude their survey by echoing Mihaela Miroiu or Reghina Dascăl's claims that although Romania's figures "look good by and large [...] Romania is not one of the 'women-friendly' countries, nor is its culture amenable to gender issues" (349).

The situation in Armenia as presented by Seda Gasparian and Gayane Muradian in "Armenia: Ancient Traditions, Upheavals and the Beginnings of Anglicist Women's and Gender Studies" places the establishment of Women's and Gender Studies at the beginning in the context of a "transitional patriarchy [...] apprehensive [of the field] and its institutionalization" (397); the Centre for Gender and Leadership Studies was only recently founded (2013) in the Yerevan State University, the "most prestigious HE institution in the country" (398).

Discussing the current state of Women's and Gender Studies in Bulgaria, Milena Katsarska in the sub-section "The Other Frontier: Anglicist Gender Studies in Bulgaria", underlines that similarly to other former-communist countries, the establishment of the Women's and Gender Studies coincides with the process of democratization and is only two decades old in spite of previous feminist struggles in the 19th century. Bulgarian scholars "have been active contributors to the production and circulation of gender and gendered discourses in English and Bulgarian, for domestic audiences across institutional boundaries as well as for international audiences" (384) which led to changes in the traditional philological curricula in English Studies, and the mapping of current course syllabi. Moreover, the demographics within the English Studies departments reflect a highly feminized field, with women also occupying "decision-making [positions] on departmental policies [or] post-doctoral promotion procedures" (385).

Renate Haas concludes the volume by underlying the intention of bringing "greater visibility to the Continental achievements for the enrichment of international exchange" (405), within individual countries and within the field of English Studies of individual countries. She therefore observes that Women's and Gender Studies show great dependence on "the general conditions under which they are practised: the political, economic and cultural development, education systems and academic traditions" (405). As such, Haas launches an invitation to reflect on a re-orientation of English Studies and the new roles these may occupy. Moreover, Haas comments on the predominantly low numbers of grade-A women from the academic staff in European countries and proceeds to build an inventory of possibilities of institutionalizing Anglicist Women's and Gender Studies in fields of research and teaching (421), concluding that "without a higher degree of institutionalization too much is left to individual initiative, idealism and self-exploitation" (421).