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Female Voices: Review on Éva Antal and Antonella Braidà's *Female Voices: Forms of Women's Reading, Self-education and Writing in Britain (1770–1830)*, Besançon: Press Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2022.

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Review on Éva Antal's and Antonella Braidà's *Female Voices*

Éva Antal and Antonella Braidà were the editors of the anthology called *Female Voices: Forms of Women's Reading, Self-Education and Writing in Britain (1770–1830)*, which focuses on Anna Jameson, Ann Radcliffe, Clara Reeve, Georgiana Cavendish, Hannay Cowley, Helen Maria Williams, Jane Austen, Jane Marcet, Madame de Staël's, Maria Edgeworth, Mary Hays, Mary Shelley, Mary Tighe, and Mary Wollstonecraft. From the *Introduction*, we can learn that the female writers of the time (1770–1830) conspicuously sought to educate their readers by providing them with quality reading. The editors want to reveal how diverse the forms were that British women authors experimented with in the indicated era, and at the same time show what similarities can be discovered between the development of these female writers and their ideas about development.

The fourteen studies in the volume follow each other based on five thematic units. The first section—*Cross-cultural Connections across the Channel*—opens with an essay by Hannah Moss. The author analyzes the work of the French Madame de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), which Moss considers not only a tragic love story, but one that gives an account of the national character of Italy in opposition to Britain. Staël's work was immediately translated into English, and the vast majority of British reviewers believed that the moral views of the Italian woman would have been unacceptable in British society. The main merit of the study is that it shows that the competing receptions and parodies of the work reveal how incompatible it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century for a woman to have a career (even one that involved fame) and a happy private life at the same time.

David García's study is dedicated to Jacques-Henri Bernardin de St. Pierre's novel *Paul et Virginie*'s (1788) translation by the British writer and translator Helen Maria Williams. The author explores the poetics and politics of the translation. The study focuses on Williams' sonnet sequence and its possible additional meanings, which Williams included in the English version of *Paul et Virginie* as part of the narration. Garcia draws our attention to the fact that this translation can lead to questions about, for example, the possibilities of (female) writers and poets during the French Revolution.

Hélène Vidal's essay aims to present the written works of Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire, focusing on the views she reveals in her works on 18th-century education in the context of elite culture. Her three works, *Emma; Or The Unfortunate*

Attachment: A Sentimental Novel (1773), *The Sylph* (1779), and *Zillia* (1782), all present the moral character development of the heroines. From the study, it emerges that, unlike many other contemporary sentimental novels and educational dramas, the writings of the Duchess do not end with marriage, but partly feed on her own life to show what problems elite ladies may have encountered after marriage. In her writings, the motive of self-education can be seen as an escape from fashionable society.

In the second section—*Writing the Female Self and (Self)-Education*—the topic of Dóra Janczer Csikós's paper is the circumambulation of the discursive context in which Mary Hays wrote her work, *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799). Among other things, it shows how *The Lady's Magazine* played an important role in the education of women at that time. Csikó also presents that Hays' writing explores topics such as gender inequality, the harmful consequences of a woman growing up socializing only with men, and how a woman can deal with the absence of sufficient female connection and communication.

Anthony John Harding's study is also dedicated to Mary Hays, but he deals with the author's work entitled *Female Biography* (1803), in which Hays aimed to collect writings by women living in different countries and times. These works are about women and for women. Hays also sought to provide women with an educational resource that helps them develop their talents. The study perceptively represents how Hays, mentored by Wollstonecraft, adhered to the traditions of enlightened women's thoughts while portraying how they could lead without idealizing her gender. She also spoke of the prejudices and abuses they had to experience with their fellow women, which affected those of lower origin even more.

Nóra Séllei deals with Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Séllei reflects on the approach to the female body we can read from Wollstonecraft, and also on the relationship between the female body and the male body, and how the way a woman experiences her body can affect her upbringing and intellectuality. Furthermore, the study covers the intellectual milieu in which the text was born; and tries to point out why Wollstonecraft's approach to this theme was original. In addition, Séllei also talks about the reception of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

Kiel Shaub's paper deals with *Frankenstein*, the first novel by Mary Wollstonecraft's daughter Mary Godwin (later Mary Shelley). Shaub shows how the complex critique of arts-and-sciences culture, which the writer formulates in her novel, can be interpreted as a gender definition of disciplinary relations. Shaub considers it relevant to look at Godwin's education and early work. He reports that Godwin was a regular participant in the public lectures at the

Royal and Surrey Institutions. Seemingly she needed the experience she gained there to write *Frankenstein*, a novel in which the central male characters as men of science dominate the narrative, while the female characters, who can be associated with poetry and literature are located on the margins of the narrative. Based on Shaub's essay, we can see *Frankenstein* as a condemning witness to the emergence of modern science and technology.

The third session was entitled: *Reading and Experiments in Form*. Here, the series of studies is opened by Angela Escott's essay, in which she examines Hannah Cowley's long poem about the 1799 defense of the Syrian city of Acre by Sir Sidney Smith against Napoleon's attacks, and places it in the tradition of contemporary women's poetry. The central question of the study is why an author with such excellent dramatic skills as Cowley did not write a stage drama from this historical episode. In this period, not only the scenery in the theatres improved a lot, but the sound effects too, and they were also able to create lightning effects, which could have made the theme of this current event more sensitive. However, Escott argues that Cowley still used her dramatic talent to write this epic poem, emphasizing the personal impact of this event on the citizens and the moral crises it caused to the community as a whole.

In her essay, Harriet Kramer Linkin aims to demonstrate the consistent commitment of the Anglo-Irish poet Mary Tighe to scholarship and self-education and to what extent this is due to be homeschooled by her mother. Kramer emphasizes that Tighe championed women's education in her self-education and her poem *Phyche*, in her novel *Selena*, and also in her two-volume collection of poems, *Verses*. The study places great emphasis on Tighe's 1831-page untitled diary written in the years before her death, in which we can read her critical comments on 246 Italian works related to self-education. These are complemented by Mary Tighe's correspondence with an antiquarian, Joseph Cooper, from whose private library she borrowed half of the analyzed books. Based on the essay, together, the diary and the 58 letters serve as a rich archive of the serious work Tighe invested in this research and thus in her self-education in the last years of her life.

In Krisztina Kaló's study, we get to know Clara Reeve, an English novelist, who recognized the growing influence of the novel as a genre and then used it to communicate her opinion on many topics. Eventually, she became one of the most influential educationalists of the second half of the eighteenth century. Kaló focuses on her 1791 novel. *The School for Widows*, which, in her opinion, not only gives insight into the condition and aspirations of contemporary women but also masterfully demonstrates a brave but not radical way of thinking of an intellectual woman. Reeve became an authoritative writer at a time when literacy was

primarily a male prerogative. In her three-volume epistolary novel, she focuses on widowed women who survived the misfortunes of their marriages and, thanks to their love of reading and self-education, profited from their widowhood and became worthy members of contemporary British society. Based on the study, Reeve skillfully benefited from the narrative genre (epistolary novel) she chose, as readers could easily imagine themselves in the characters' situations.

Angelika Reichmann deals with Ann Radcliffe's Gothic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Reichmann starts from the fact that many critics believe that Jane Austen's novel *Northanger Abbey* (1818, completed in 1803) can be interpreted as a parody of Gothic novels. (*The Mysteries of Udolpho* also appears intertextually in the novel.) Reichmann also draws our attention to the fact that Austen reformulates the elements of the female Gothic novel that can be interpreted as subversive, and in the education and development of her heroine, we can discover Mary Wollstonecraft's educational principles. Reichmann is trying to demonstrate that, in her way, Radcliffe subverts the male-dominated thesis of the late eighteenth century too. Reichmann admits that the development of Radcliffe's Emily is more limited than that of Austen's Catherine. However, in her judgment, the fact that the eighteenth-century understanding of Bildung does not apply to Emily does not make *The Mysteries of Udolpho* itself an *anti-Bildungsroman*.

The Last section—*Women's Critical and Economic Thought*—opens with Marie-Laure Massei-Chamayou's essay, which shows that through their works, Jane Austen and Maria Edgeworth tried to develop their female readers' insight into the contemporary economy and educate them in the management of money. And this was also important because, in this period, women were often able to learn about current economic situations through fictional stories. While Edgeworth mainly tried to educate her readers on the basic principles of the domestic economy, Austen helped women in the interpretation of material reality. (In Austen's above-mentioned novel, *Northanger Abbey*, Edgeworth's *Belinda* [1801] also appears intertextually, so it is clear that Austen was influenced by Edgeworth.) According to Massei-Chamayou, Edgeworth's and Austen's works testify that they both had an excellent understanding of the symbolic stakes of fashion and marriage as a market. The fact that they had to survive in the economy at a time when there were only a small number of female writers, certainly contributed to all of this. That is why, in order for their heroines to fulfil themselves as women and wives, it was necessary for them to be reliable and sufficiently competent in economic matters.

Alexandra Sippel writes about the educationalist Jane Marcet's *Conversations* (1805, 1816), which contributed to the promotion of education according to the principles of *political economy* among the less educated in England. We have to think mainly of working-class men and middle-class women who had to understand the basic principles of the law of the market. Marcet rejected the view fostered by socialists such as Locken, Smithian and Ricardo that the luxury of the rich caused the deprivation of the poor. She argued that a capital increase would be necessary so that the working population would have a job and suitable living conditions. Sippel emphasizes that Marcet never took part in political activities and did not show any intention to disrupt the established social order. In addition, one learns from the study that Marcet not only wrote books on economics but also took the trouble to author a grammar book for children, in which she made the tasks more interesting by teaching them stories.

In the final study of the volume, Magdalena Pypeć analyzes the Anglo-Irish historian of art and literature Anna Jameson's *Shakespeare's Heroines* (1832), which is both a conduct book and literary criticism from the perspective of feminist dialectics. Jameson seems to have found the diverse and realistic depiction of women in Shakespeare's plays liberating. Pypeć demonstrates how Jameson used Shakespeare's twenty-three heroines to broaden and reformulate the too-narrow possibilities of female propriety, which were popularized in conduct books and literary work at the time, through the analysis of their characters. So, in her work, Jameson not only placed these heroines in the foreground but also voiced her insights on topics such as the legitimization of women's professional training and economic self-sufficiency as well as women's appearance in the public sphere.

Overall, *Female Voices* is a very well-done and informative volume. It is highly recommended to everyone who wants a more comprehensive insight into the (self-) development of women writers of 1770–1830, their works, and their effects on their fellow writers and readers, and also how these authors contribute to relevant contemporary debates. One by one, the studies are interesting and thorough works, and the volume itself is logically structured, so the connections between the essays are clear.