



Editor's Introduction



This volume of *Aspasia* is dedicated to Ann Snitow, scholar, feminist, and activist, who passed away in August 2019. Although Snitow was not trained as a scholar of our region, she devoted much of her career and her activism to fostering transnational connections and providing tools for empowering women within the former socialist bloc. After helping to found the Network of East-West Women (NEWW) in 1990, Snitow worked tirelessly to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information among feminist scholars in the East and the West, supporting and encouraging an entire generation in their academic and activist pursuits. It is fitting, therefore, that *Aspasia* is able to honor Ann Snitow's legacy with this volume. As a yearbook of women's and gender history of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, *Aspasia's* mission is to make more accessible the scholarship being conducted within and about the region. By fostering transnational connections, *Aspasia*, like Snitow herself, encourages intellectual exchanges across boundaries, provides opportunities for academic engagement, and expands access to scholarship from regions where such access might be limited by language and other barriers.

The first section in this volume, "In Memorium—Ann Snitow," is devoted to Snitow's legacy, and testifies to the reach of her activism. Following an obituary coauthored by one of *Aspasia's* editors, the section focuses in a broad sense on the impact that Snitow's feminism and activism had on scholars throughout the region. Ioana Cîrstocea's piece examines the continued importance of Snitow's organization, NEWW, and the relationships it helped to foster after the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, highlighting the complexities of feminist organization in postsocialist states and the importance of comparative transnational feminist scholarship. Next, Julie Hemment and Valentina Uspenskaya reflect on the Center for Women's History and Gender Studies in Tver', Russia, providing a lively discussion that reveals not only the struggles, challenges, and successes of conducting feminist scholarship and activism in the region, but also the fundamental importance of the very type of transnational connections and exchanges that Snitow fostered and encouraged.

The research articles included in this volume also reinforce across a broad historical and geographical scope the importance of the transnational and transgenerational exchanges promoted by Ann Snitow. Nicoleta Roman's study of foreign governesses in the former Ottoman province of Wallachia in the early nineteenth century shows how Romanian elites, both old and new, sought to enhance their social status by hiring foreign women to educate their children. These transnational infusions contrib-



uted to the creation of new Romanian class and national identities, as governesses transmitted Western ideals to their students while also adapting to the realities and demands of the local context. Working in both private homes and state-sponsored institutions, governesses served as role models for young women and shaped the next generation of Romanian teachers. Similarly, Magdalena Kozłowska investigates the transgenerational connections that shaped and influenced the female members of the *Tsukunft*, the youth organization of the Jewish socialist Bund Party, in interwar Poland. Describing the examples—historical and contemporary, foreign and Polish—of activist women provided in the *Tsukunft* press, Kozłowska examines how these models provided young women with the tools to live, organize, and resist when real-life examples were in short supply.

Olena Haleta's discussion of Sofia Yablonska's travel writing adds another dimension to the broader theme of transnational exchanges. In the early twentieth century, this Ukrainian woman from the borderland region of Galicia lived and worked in Morocco and China. The memoirs and travelogues she published documenting her trips reveal a confluence of gender, national, and colonial perspectives and outlooks that inspired her readers to re-evaluate their own stereotypes and ideas about cultural identity. Haleta shows how Yablonska created a unique genre in Ukrainian literature that situated her outside the established canon but allowed her to place gender at the center of her narratives. The article also includes a number of fascinating photographs taken by Yablonska herself during her travels. The next article shifts the focus to post-World War II Slovenia, as Polona Sitar explores the ways that women positioned themselves within their social milieus through their dress. Drawing material from oral histories, Sitar highlights the fluidity of social class in socialist Slovenia as women negotiated, defined, and challenged ideas about social status. Slovenia's proximity to the West enabled greater cultural borrowing than in other socialist countries, and consumerism played a central role for the emerging socialist middle class. Sitar identifies both geographical and generational shifts as Slovene women used dress not only to define their own social status, but also to question authority and gendered social expectations.

The influence of transnational exchanges is also apparent in our final selection for this volume, Agatha Schwartz and Tatjana Takševa's comparative investigation of wartime rape in Germany and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Using published memoirs of German women raped during World War II and oral histories conducted with Bosnian women raped during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, Schwartz and Takševa illustrate the connections between the two experiences. They find that despite the temporal and geographical distances separating the two instances of wartime rape, women's memories and discourses surrounding their experiences have mutually shaped and reinforced each other. Not only did the Bosnian experience reignite the trauma that the German women endured, but interest in German women's experiences provided Bosnian women with a language to describe their own trauma and a path toward healing and reconciliation. Schwartz and Takševa conclude that transnational comparisons of wartime rape raise awareness of the treatment of survivors and the need to integrate their narratives into official discourse and memory.

As always, this volume contains an extensive selection of book reviews and comparative review essays. These reviews reflect the diversity of language and discipline in which the scholars of the region work, and bring otherwise inaccessible scholarly works to a broader audience. In keeping with the journal's mission to promote intellectual exchange, the volume also includes two letters written by scholars in response to recent critiques of their work.

On June 6, 2020, we received the sad news that Marina Blagojević Hughson, professor at Belgrade University, passed away. We collectively mourn her untimely and premature death. She was a beautiful critical mind, always ready to question the conventional wisdom, a leading feminist scholar in and of our Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe (CESEE) region, a regular author and contributor to *Aspasia*, and a collaborator with many on our editorial board. For some of us she was more than that: a sincere friend of long standing. Her passing leaves a void in the field of women's and gender studies in CESEE that will not easily be filled. We conclude this volume with a tribute to her life and work, prepared by her colleague and friend, Biljana Dojčinović.

As we prepare this volume for publication, the transnational connections and exchanges fostered by Ann Snitow seem even more precarious, and crucial to maintain, as we negotiate the new realities of the COVID-19 global pandemic. University closures and travel limitations have effectively curtailed the physical movement of scholars for research, while online teaching and gatherings have shown both the opportunities and limits of technology for transmitting knowledge and building relationships. As we sit isolated and under quarantine, the international intellectual exchanges that define the legacy of Ann Snitow have become even more important for preserving our scholarly communities and networks. *Aspasia* itself is the product of the hard work and dedication of its international editorial board and its vast array of transnational contributors. We hope, therefore, that this volume of *Aspasia* provides some inspiration in this time of crisis and shows that the intellectual bonds built over many years between East and West remain strong and vibrant.

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