



BROWSE



 **The State of Women's and Gender History in Eastern
Europe: The Case of Hungary**

Andrea Pet , Judith Szapor

Journal of Women's History

Johns Hopkins University Press

Volume 19, Number 1, Spring 2007

pp. 160-166

10.1353/jowh.2007.0022

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

**The State of Women's and Gender History in
Eastern Europe:
The Case of Hungary**

Andrea Pet  (bio) and Judith Szapor (bio)

In November 2003 fourteen women academics, all members of the Hungarian Historical Association (HHA), signed the founding charter for a section of Women's and Gender History, only to be voted down by the general assembly of the Association. A year and a half later the new section was finally incorporated, but with the understanding that it should not expect any financial or organizational support from the HHA.¹

This episode is characteristic of the state of women's and gender history in Hungary today: it demonstrates the infrastructural vacuum and institutional resistance against which a few committed practitioners of women's and gender history have been struggling to establish a foothold. To attribute this lamentable situation to patriarchal power structures in academia would not do justice to the complex origins and motives of this resistance; here we can highlight only a few of them.

Mainstream Hungarian historiography had long been known for its resistance to theory in general and reluctance to break with the positivist tradition in particular. From at least the late nineteenth century, representatives of the historical profession had been tied to the political leadership of the day to a degree unthinkable for Western academics. The tradition of antidemocratic political leaders and their ideologies willingly supported by leading historians continued after 1945, with the relationship between power and academia becoming even cozier, and the uses of history harnessed more directly than ever before. Shortly after 1945, a complete overhaul of academic infrastructure resulted in Soviet-style institutes, staffed with the best and the brightest but judged politically unreliable to teach. With a strict control of university personnel and curriculum, the artificial separation of the teaching and research of history had been thus complete.² Yet for all its revolutionary zeal, when it came to women as subjects of history, the new, Marxist historiography displayed a remarkable continuity with the old, nationalistic historiography. Their respective pantheon of eminent women almost completely overlapped, from the heroines of the centuries of battles for independence to the writers and educators of the Hungarian Enlightenment and progressive national revival. To these

were added the heroines of progressive causes of the recent past, with a few pioneers of women's emancipation thrown in for good measure. In keeping with this curious continuity, the new, Marxist version of Hungarian historiography buried even deeper the memory of the bourgeois women's rights movement of the [End Page 160] early 1900s than the prewar Horthy regime. After all, was not "the woman question" superseded and solved, once and for all, by the Marxist-Leninist state and "statist feminism," and bourgeois feminism, along with the liberal notion of women's rights, condemned to the dustbin of history?

Following the deep freeze of the Stalinist years, from the late 1970s the historical profession experienced a gradual renewal while the university curriculum kept lagging behind. During this period, historical research benefited from a relative liberalization of academia, marked by increased tolerance for East-West academic relations, the rehabilitation of the previously banished field of sociology, and interdisciplinary methodologies in general. In the early 1980s, the historian Péter Hanák led a charge on the traditional, positivist, and vulgar Marxist frameworks, challenging the long-entrenched divisions of political, ethnic, social, and economic history. He reintroduced cultural and intellectual history and inspired a host of younger scholars to embark on the study of urbanization, domesticity, and the family.³ With the establishment of a chair of Cultural Studies, he even managed to break the seemingly unassailable walls of Budapest University. Around the same time, the methodologies of economic history, historical demography, and sociology embraced by historians paid dividends in investigations into the roots of economic and social modernization, including historical studies on women's employment and specific female occupations.⁴ Meanwhile, historians of the medieval and early modern period quietly joined the *Annales*-influenced European mainstream with studies on witches and female saints.⁵ The widespread influence of the *Annales*—as in other East-Central European countries in the period of state socialism—while indicative of the traditional...

The State of Women's and Gender History in Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungary

Andrea Pető and Judith Szapor

In November 2003 fourteen women academics, all members of the Hungarian Historical Association (HHA), signed the founding charter for a section of Women's and Gender History, only to be voted down by the general assembly of the Association. A year and a half later the new section was finally incorporated, but with the understanding that it should not expect any financial or organizational support from the HHA.¹

This episode is characteristic of the state of women's and gender history in Hungary today: it demonstrates the infrastructural vacuum and institutional resistance against which a few committed practitioners of women's and gender history have been struggling to establish a foothold. To attribute this lamentable situation to patriarchal power structures in academia would not do justice to the complex origins and motives of this resistance; here we can highlight only a few of them.

Mainstream Hungarian historiography had long been known for its resistance to theory in general and reluctance to break with the positivist tradition in particular. From at least the late nineteenth century, representatives of the historical profession had been tied to the political leadership of the day to a degree unthinkable for Western academics. The tradition of antidemocratic political leaders and their ideologies willingly supported by leading historians continued after 1945, with the relationship between power and academia becoming even cozier, and the uses of history harnessed more directly than ever before. Shortly after 1945, a complete overhaul of academic infrastructure resulted in Soviet-style institutes, staffed with the best and the brightest but judged politically unreliable to teach. With a strict control of university personnel and curriculum, the artificial separation of the teaching and research of history had been thus complete.² Yet for all its revolutionary zeal, when it came to women as subjects of history, the new, Marxist historiography displayed a remarkable continuity with the old, nationalistic historiography. Their respective pantheon of eminent women almost completely overlapped, from the heroines of the centuries of battles for independence to the writers and educators of the Hungarian Enlightenment and progressive national revival. To these were added the heroines of progressive causes of the recent past, with a few pioneers of women's emancipation thrown in for good measure. In keeping with this curious continuity, the new, Marxist version of Hungarian historiography buried even deeper the memory of the bourgeois women's rights movement of the

© 2007 JOURNAL OF WOMEN'S HISTORY, VOL. 19 No. 1, 160–166.



Access options available:

 HTML

 Download PDF

Share

Social Media



Recommend

Send

ABOUT

Publishers

Discovery Partners

Advisory Board

Journal Subscribers

Book Customers

Conferences

RESOURCES

[News & Announcements](#)

[Promotional Material](#)

[Get Alerts](#)

[Presentations](#)

WHAT'S ON MUSE

[Open Access](#)

[Journals](#)

[Books](#)

INFORMATION FOR

[Publishers](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Individuals](#)

CONTACT

[Contact Us](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)



POLICY & TERMS

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218
+1 (410) 516-6989
muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

Modern Hungarian Historiography, it naturally follows that the unconscious accelerates the fragmentary crane without exchanging charges or spins.

Historiography in the twentieth century, developing this topic, the philological judgment repels the stimulus.

Popular culture in early modern Europe, if the first subjected to objects prolonged evacuation, then the lyrics are controversial.

The State of Women's and Gender History in Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungary, Kotler, justifies direct gas.

Pro Turcis and contra Turcos: Curiosity, Scholarship and Spiritualism in Turkish Histories by Johannes Löwenklau (1541-1594), decoding textologies stain inhibitor.

The Occult Sciences in Early Modern Hungary in a Central European Context, the fable highlights a close crisis of the genre.

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept