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REVIEW ESSAYS / NOTES CRITIQUES

Women's Lives Under Socialism

Sarah Ashwin

Anna Hillyar and Jane McDermid, *Revolutionary Women in Russia, 1870-1917: A Study in Collective Biography* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000).
Sheila Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine, eds., *In the Shadow of the Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).
Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Gender after Socialism: A Comparative Historical Essay* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).

IN THE LAST 30 YEARS the social sciences and humanities have been transformed by a growing awareness of the importance of gender. The interest shows no sign of abating: the books under review were by no means the only gender-related volumes dealing with Central and Eastern Europe published in 2000. Collectively, the three volumes deal with the period 1870 to the present day, with a hiatus from the beginning of World War II to the fall of communism. But, since Susan Gal and Gail Kligman's contribution on post-communism inevitably reflects on the character and legacy of "mature socialism," between them the books can be said to span the rise and fall of the communist experiment in Russia and Eastern Europe.

Their aims differ somewhat. The goal of *Revolutionary Women* was to write a "collective biography" of female revolutionaries in the period 1870-1917 in order

Sarah Ashwin, "Women's Lives Under Socialism," *Labour/Le Travail*, 50 (Fall 2002), 261-73.

"to understand their motivation and assess their role, without sacrificing their individuality." (2) The editors of *In the Shadow of the Revolution*, meanwhile, have brought together the testimony of women ranging from aristocratic intellectuals to Soviet tractor drivers from the period 1917-41. While they do not believe that "there was any single 'women's experience' of the revolution," they consider that the "range of women's experiences ... can usefully be considered apart from those of men." (viii) That is, they think that the life stories of women have something particular to contribute to the understanding of the Russian revolution and its aftermath. Gal and Kligman have the most ambitious project, that of exploring "how the discourses and practices of gender play a major role in shaping the post-1989 reconstitution of states and social relations in East Central Europe." They claim that attention to gender leads to a "deeper analysis of how social and institutional transformations occur." (3) Thus, two of the books focus on women as a category and their roles and experiences, while the other considers social transformation from a gendered perspective. Although these projects differ, they share the assumption that examination of gender differences — whether through excavating the hidden history of the second sex or through a direct focus on gender dynamics — makes an important contribution to the understanding of societies and historical change.

Before turning to examine the books individually, it is instructive to consider their collective contribution to our understanding of gender relations in the former Soviet bloc. The history of revolution and communism in Russia and Eastern Europe is especially fertile territory for specialists on gender and women, since the Bolsheviks rejected the public/private distinction that had generally underlain the exclusion of women from social and historical analyses. The Bolsheviks' attempt to obliterate the meaning of the distinction by rendering private life public is not surprisingly examined by all the books under consideration in one way or another. Anna Hillyar and Jane McDermid make it clear that the Russian revolutionary movement had been prone to asceticism from its inception, and that its adherents were apt to privilege the public over the private and the collective over the individual. The authors lament the fact that biographical and autobiographical accounts of female revolutionaries contain few details regarding their personal lives — their marriages, relationships, and children — and concede that the accounts of the lives of the officially-recognized heroes and heroines of the revolution are "curiously devoid of ... soul." (160) Virtues such as steadfastness and toughness are celebrated, while intimate concerns are ignored. In some cases this may be put down to the bias of official biographers, but in many others it appears to reflect the priorities of the revolutionaries themselves. For example, the Menshevik revolutionary Eva Broido abandoned her son and daughters in 1904 in pursuit of what she called "liberty, real life and revolutionary work." (174) As the authors show, "real life" for most revolutionaries was public, collective life.

Sheila Fitzpatrick similarly finds that the typical autobiography of women between 1917 and 1941 "deals more with public matters than with private." (3) "They

remember their lives and structure their narratives in terms of great public events — the revolution, the Civil War, collectivization, the Great Purges, and the Second World War — rather than the personal milestones of marriage, childbirth, divorce and widowhood." (4) As she argues, this may partly result from the fact that these women had the misfortune to live in interesting times, partly from the need of many of them to structure accounts in line with the dictates of the censor. But, it may also reflect the success of the Bolsheviks in promoting the idea that individual gratification should be sacrificed in the interests of the collective. As Jochen Hellbeck has argued, "to a large extent revolutionary politics centered on creating revolutionary selves, on making Soviet citizens think of themselves and act as conscious historical subjects." (341) He shows how diarists of the Stalin era struggled with themselves to shake off petty domestic and intimate concerns in the interests of the plan, the struggle, of "real life." In this they were attempting to live up to the ideal propagated by their political masters in which individual interests were not simply subordinated to, but merged and became inseparable from, those of the collective.

The Bolshevik emphasis on the interests of the collective had an important gender dimension that is well captured in the autobiographies collected by Fitzpatrick and Slezkine. The communist authorities attempted to construct a particular set of gender relations — a triangular set of relations in which the primary relationship of individual men and women was to the state rather than to each other.[1] Women were to serve the state in their role as mothers and workers, while men were prescribed a far more limited role in the Soviet polity. They were expected to serve as soldiers, workers, and managers, while their role as household heads was rendered politically suspect and, ultimately, redundant. The state assumed responsibility for the fulfillment of the traditional masculine roles of father and provider, by affording women access to paid work and according them "protection" in their role as mothers.[2] In this sense, the communist authorities can be said to have appropriated the private role of men (a theme which, as will be seen below, is picked up by Gal and Kligman). In the light of this, it is not surprising that Fitzpatrick finds that if there is a "preoccupying Other" in the autobiographies she and Yuri Slezkine have collected "it is more likely the state than a husband or father."(3) Thus, for example, one of the Stakhanovites notes in an account of herself in a speech to a national Stakhanovite meeting that "I became … an orphan at that time, but Soviet power, the party and Comrade Stalin took the place of my father; the kolkhoz [collective farm] became my home." (336) Meanwhile, another communist heroine of labour gave this account of receiving her honorary diploma:

My heart was full of both joy and sadness at the same time. I was happy because my dear Soviet Power had not forgotten my many years of hard work and had singled me out, even

[1]Sarah Ashwin, "Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia," in Sarah Ashwin, ed., *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (London 2000), 1-2.

[2]Ashwin, "Gender," 1-2.

though I had already left the ranks. I was so excited that if Soviet Power had been just one person I would have thrown my arms around him and I would have said: "Oh my dear! Thank you for not forgetting an old woman like me. You saw everything and knew exactly what you were seeing ...." (195)

By the 1930s, of course, swooning heroines of labour did have "just one person" to whom to direct their adoration.

The state's colonization of the private sphere is strongly related to another common theme of the books — that of female strength. The work of Hillyar and McDermid underlines the fact that strong Russian women were not just a creation of the Soviet era. Nevertheless, the nature of the gender order instituted by the Soviet state further cultivated female strength and independence, while inadvertently fostering male frailty. As Gal and Kligman point out, while "communism over the years produced for women a surplus of newly configured tasks and images — mother, worker, helpmate, manager — it usurped "head of household" as a masculine image and produced very few alternative pictures of masculinity. What it did offer ... was not linked to men's roles in families and households." (54) It was thus not surprising that within the family the man was relegated to the role of "'big child' ... disorganized, needy, dependent, vulnerable, demanding to be taken care of and sheltered, to be humored as he occasionally acted out with aggression, alcoholism, womanizing, or absenteeism."(54) As Sergei Kukhterin puts it, for men unable to realise themselves in the world of work "there was little on offer."[3] This is reflected in the autobiographies collected by Fitzpatrick and Slezkine where the women tend to present themselves as "morally and even physically stronger than their men." (3) In some of the stories, relationships with men are portrayed as little more than an obstacle to service to the state. For example, Gadiliaeva, a Stakhanovite Bashkir milkmaid, presents her divorce as a step on her road to the success and fulfillment she has found in her work, and identifies the state as her liberator: "Before Soviet power we Bashkir women and Bashkir girls didn't have any rights at all. Only thanks to the leadership of the Communist Party and Comrade Stalin did we Bashkir girls and women become active participants and conscious builders of the new life." (338) In relation to the previous point regarding the primacy of collective goals, it should be noted that while the Communist Party may have liberated women such as Gadiliaeva from their dependence on individual men, it did so in order to free them to become "conscious builders of the new life."

As Gal and Kligman make clear, Communist policies such as the integration of women into the labour force transformed power relations within the family, rendering men in many senses more vulnerable than women. Nevertheless, the traditional gender hierarchy was preserved within the public sphere: men continued to monop-

[3]Sergei Kukhterin, "Fathers and Patriarchs in Communist and Post-Communist Russia," in Sarah Ashwin, ed., *Gender, State and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia* (London 2000), 85.

olize the most powerful and best remunerated positions in the societies of the Soviet bloc. The autobiographies provided by Fitzpatrick and Slezkine provide a fascinating insight into how this gender order solidified during the early years of Soviet power in Russia. On the one hand, activists such as Gadiliaeva were able to shrug off the shackles of the peasant household and achieve independence and satisfaction through their work, but at the same time, other women found that their communist male superiors could be every bit as oppressive as the patriarchs of the old regime. Paraskeva Ivanova, for example, joined the party with a desire to become "a valuable cog in the Great Proletarian Machine for the construction of the future," (213) but eventually left in disillusionment after being seduced and humiliated by her superior, Comrade Ganov. He derided her resistance to his sexual advances, arguing that there was "no place for bourgeois morality in the party," that the family was "obsolete, completely obsolete." (214) The work of Agrippina Korevanova, an organizer of women's activities in a residential cooperative, was likewise hampered by male opponents. First, she was attacked in a dark alley after "our enemies saw that women had begun to rise up." (199) Then, after her recovery, she was faced with the obstruction of the chairman of the cooperative. The women's group managed to open a communal kitchen, but the board impeded the establishment of a laundry and kindergarten. Finally, the cooperative imploded as a result of the bad stewardship of its drunken chairman. These stories highlight the way in which patriarchal relations persisted in the public realm, where men continued to behave according to past norms, even if they occasionally dressed up such behaviour as being part of the struggle for the new way of life. In this sense, what Hillyar and McDermid refer to as the "persistence of peasant patriarchy" (1) within Soviet society can be seen to be a result not of conscious male organization designed to exclude women from power, but rather as the unplanned result of individuals at every level adhering to their accustomed modes of thought and behaviour within a new environment.

The preservation of patriarchal relations within the revolutionary movement is, as will be seen, something that is clearly illustrated by the first of the books under review, *Revolutionary Women.* The authors of this work have painstakingly reconstructed the biographies of nearly 1,200 female revolutionaries, from a variety of sources including autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, document collections, books, periodicals, and archive material. They organize their material chronologically into the three phases of the revolution, 1870-1889, 1890-1904, and 1905-1917. This study in "collective biography" provides details regarding the personal and professional lives of revolutionary women. It has a particular focus on revolutionary women workers, who in previous accounts have tended to be presented as an undifferentiated mass, and deals with women from all the various strands of the revolutionary movement. The accounts of the lives provided in the text (and in a more reader-friendly fashion in the appendices) will no doubt prove very useful to those wanting to know more about women, and especially female

workers, in the revolutionary movement. Tables summarize the origin, education, profession, marital status, and political affiliation of women in the movement, providing clear answers to the questions of who the female revolutionaries were. The book also provides a valuable reference point for those with questions about the nature of women's participation in revolutionary groups.

Unfortunately, the potential of this careful study is limited by the goals the authors set themselves. In their introduction Hillyar and McDermid complain that despite the upsurge of interest in revolutionary women within the last 25 years, often historians' accounts seem to concentrate on showing "why their role was insignificant."(1) In contrast to this, they aspire in *Revolutionary Women* to show that women played an active part in Russia's revolutionary movements. But, despite this intention, Hillyar and McDermid's account confirms rather than dispels the impression that women were "handmaidens of an essentially male revolutionary movement." (1) This is mainly due to the inherent difficulty of the task the authors set themselves — even if women were more than "handmaidens," there is no doubt that men dominated the movement. But Hillyar and McDermid are also not helped by their habit of special pleading. Comments such as "these women show that not every working man's wife was a drag on the labour movement" (57) achieve precisely the opposite effect to that intended, conveying the impression that women were indeed generally backward and conservative.

At another point they bemoan the fact that Nadezhda Krupskaia is "depicted more through the life and work of her husband [Lenin] than as a revolutionary in her own right." (104) But this is hardly surprising. She and Lenin were an effective team, and he was the leader of the party to which she was a devoted and capable servant. Another example of the authors' tendency to protest too much is provided by their treatment of the common roles of women within revolutionary groups such as those of secretary and of keeping, and running safe houses. Hillyar and McDermid are at pains to stress the importance of this work, noting for instance that "Lenin himself greatly valued" the work of secretaries. (19) They likewise lament the fact that "while keeping a safe house is deemed a political act, doing the housework for that house continues to be taken for granted and considered apolitical." (61) Of course, someone had to do the cleaning and cooking in the safe houses, but in stressing the value of this work, Hillyar and McDermid arguably miss the point. That it was left to women to perform these crucial but low-status tasks above all reveals the way in which the gender hierarchy of Russian society was unthinkingly reproduced within revolutionary movements.

The means through which women were confined to their accustomed secondary role within the revolutionary movement is potentially the most interesting element of Hillyar and McDermid's account, but because of their stress on the importance of women they fail to do it justice. This element of the story is revealed incidentally in fascinating asides. Thus, for example, Anna Vol'nova, a revolutionary of the 1880s, was patronized by her husband and his comrades, even though she

declared herself unafraid of any torture that might be inflicted on her for her association with the cause. She burnt her chest with cigarettes in order to prove her point. She was eventually exiled to the Sakhalin penal colony with her husband, where she died. Such stories reveal the barriers to being taken seriously that even the most dedicated female revolutionaries faced. A greater focus on the way in which such determined activists ended up on the sidelines would have considerably strengthened the book. For, as Hillyar and McDermid concede, by 1917 "However essential the part played by women as workers and professional revolutionaries ... men had become even more predominant in both the leadership and the membership of the Bolshevik party." (158) The authors are unable to explain how this happens, however, because they reject the idea of using gender analysis "to explain a negative: for example why there were not more women members or leaders in the revolutionary movement." (159) This is all very well, but through their accentuation of the positive the authors arguably end up in the rather contradictory position of proclaiming the significance of a group they concede to be ultimately marginal.

In the Shadow of the Revolution, meanwhile, justifies its claim to highlight a specifically female side of the revolutionary story, while providing much else besides. The autobiographies, many of which appear for the first time in English, are not only socially diverse, but are also drawn from a variety of genres, including literary memoirs, oral interviews, personal dossiers, public speeches, and letters to editors. Of course, some of these accounts were conceived within the strict codes of Stalinist censorship while others — in particular the memoirs of émigrés — were not subject to political constraint. All, however, provide valuable insights. The Stalinist era was one in which individuals were "expected to refashion their very selves, by enacting revolutions of their souls."[4] Soviet citizens were required to resubmit their biographies at recurrent periods during their lives, and through such processes of self-accounting they were required both to demonstrate and to refine their level of consciousness. Thus, although the life stories provided in the speeches or personal dossiers cannot be seen in the same light as the more private accounts, they do provide a fascinating insight into the process of constructing a Soviet self. The two thoughtful introductions, one by each editor, reflect on these issues, Fitzpatrick focusing on the historical context in which the diaries were written, and Slezkine dealing with the autobiographies as literary texts, arguing that all of them should be seen as "artfully arranged compositions." (18)

As already mentioned, the stories presented reveal a great deal about the relationships among men, women and the revolutionary state, highlighting the various ways in which gender relations were politicized. For example, even those women who played the role of housewife were drawn into the service of the state in the Stalin era. The book includes two sections containing the accounts of members of the

[4]Jochen Hellbeck, "Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-era Autobiographical Texts," *Russian Review*, 60, 3 (2001), 342.

obshchestvennista movement, which was launched in 1936 with the aim of involving non-working wives in voluntary unpaid activity at their husbands' enterprises. As well as being involved in such tasks as smartening up barracks, organizing canteens, and carrying out informal inspection work, the *obshchestvennitsy* were expected to regulate their husbands' behaviour: "good workers were not absent or late and wives had to check this bad practice."[5] This was an ingenious way of bringing even non-working women into the party's ambit, as their accounts reveal. N.P. Ivanova, for example, had been far from an ideal Soviet citizen prior to her involvement in the movement: "I remember how difficult it was to pronounce the new words. Once I got the Control Commission and the Central Revision Commission mixed up. It went on in this way for a long time .... I began to gossip out of spite. It was I, for example, who started the rumor that our women activists who were working in their barracks had brought lice from there."(423) She is redeemed, however, by becoming "absorbed by the work," and at the end of her speech shows herself to be properly integrated into public life: "Now I'm the one reading the newspaper to my husband."(423) The movement also underlined the fact that the care provided to husbands by their wives was not a private matter proceeding from the love between them, but a form of public service. A.M. Poliakova, the wife of a Stakhanovite blacksmith, notes, for example, that "if a wife welcomes her husband home with love and tenderness, if she respects him and talks to him, then the husband will go back to work in a good mood and think only about his work. It is obvious that in this case his labor productivity will increase." (362) The *obshchestvennista* movement thus ensured that even love was mobilized in the public interest. This is just one of the many examples that could have been given regarding the way in which the autobiographies highlight the particular character of the Soviet gender order.

In addition to revealing much about the gender dynamics of the early Soviet period, the book is also a hugely compelling read, containing all the tragedy and drama of a literary classic. Read back-to-back, the stories have the effect of plunging the reader into the dizzying world in which, as the émigré Irina Elenevskaia put it, "the most basic concepts of right and wrong were changing." (135) The juxtaposition of the self-congratulatory accounts of the "winners" (Stakhonovites and the like) with the sombre tales of "losers" (those unfortunate enough to be designated as enemies of the people) heightens this effect, with the former celebrating their happy lives and cheering on the fight against the losers, and the latter mocking the claims of the regime with their tales of hunger, injustice, and cruelty. In this way, the stories show exactly what the forging of a new morality and society entailed.

Most of this is sobering. Princess Sofia Volkonskaia, who rescued her husband from a Bolshevik prison before leaving Russia to enjoy "the bitter fruits of defeat," (165) comments in the course of her tale that "there is no sight so ugly as the human

[5]Mary Buckley, "The Untold Story of Obshchestvennitsa in the 1930s," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 48, 4 (1996), 573.

beast in its moments of triumph," (155) and the stories provide many examples to support this maxim. In the moral flux of revolutionary times, the powerful were given free reign to indulge their worst instincts, and many of the autobiographies detail the tragic consequences of this. One particularly dramatic example is provided by the story of a dispossessed daughter of a so-called kulak (rich peasant), Maria Belskaia. Despite her father's history as a partisan, his industrious family is banished by an envious and incompetent kolkhoz chairman, who eventually brings ruin to a thriving collective farm. They are treated with pitiless cruelty by the village soviet who, after confiscating all their possessions, turn them out hungry and barefoot into the snow. Belskaia is scathing about the "loafers and jealous nobodies" who are the authors of their downfall, arguing that "all they had ever done was to eat people alive through envy and run errands for the enemies of the people." (223) Her story underlines the way in which, in the context of state-sponsored terror, everyday spite and envy acquired the power to wreck lives. "Jealous nobodies" were transformed into a dangerous menace, as the comments of another daughter of a kulak reveal: "In 1929 dad was dekulakized. Even though he had been on the committee of the poor, someone complained that he was rich .... In 1937 the 'black raven' [police van] kept making its rounds. All those who got denounced were taken away." (242)

The stories of the victors, meanwhile, reveal the way in which morality was transformed so that denunciation became a normal, and even heroic, act. Kulaks and enemies of the people became non-people who could be liquidated without remorse. The account of Pasha Angelina, the famous Stakhanovite tractor driver, provides a perfect illustration of the way in which extraordinary acts of cruelty were justified and normalized by the language of class struggle: "the kulaks stood between us and the good life, and no amount of persuasion, constraint or extraordinary taxation was sufficient to move them out of the way .... I also took part in the dekulakization campaign. Those were difficult days filled with tension and fierce class struggle. It was only after defeating the kulaks and chasing them off the land that we, the poor, felt truly in charge." (310-11) Meanwhile, other accounts reveal the way in which pity was discouraged and derided as an inappropriate weakness in times of struggle. Agrippina Korevanova, for example, who comes across as a generally humane individual, nevertheless provides a chilling account of the eviction of "non-toiling" members from a residential cooperative. One of her associates complains that a "tenderhearted" member of the brigade is defending the non-toilers, asking in one case, "Where is she going to go? Why pry into people's souls?" Korevanova reports herself as asking in response to this, "whoever let her join the brigade?" (202) The requirement to expunge sympathy in the interests of class struggle was not easy for everyone: a young student in a different story who was sent to take part in the dekulakization campaign in order to "learn some toughness," (273) eventually committed suicide as a result of what he was forced to witness.

While showing that many people were able to behave with the expected level of severity, these examples also reveal that not everyone was swept along by the regime's Manichean logic. The story of the émigré Valentina Bogdan, one of the "students in the first five year plan," reveals many small incidences of courage and resistance, from her own underground church wedding, to the singing of the dekulakized cossacks heard by her father while he was in prison: "I've never heard such a beautiful rendition of 'Oh Kuban, Our Land.' One cell started singing and the whole prison joined in — the very walls were trembling." (270) Even more impressive are daring comments of one of her fellow students who, during a lecture on dialectical materialism minimizing the role of individuals in history, had the temerity to ask whether the party's extolling of Stalin should be seen as a deviation from dialectical materialism. Likewise, during a lecture on the evils of fascist Italy, she pointed out that the press in Soviet Russia was also controlled by one party. "I guess that is the way that it is: whoever is in power controls the press." (269) She was punished for her audacity by being sent for a year's re-education working at a factory.

Various themes have been picked out for discussion here in order to show the way in which the autobiographies collected in this volume succeed in recreating the texture of everyday life in a period of enormous upheaval. As a result of this success, the book offers richly rewarding reading to specialists and non-specialists alike. It could also be used to enliven teaching on a range of historical topics at a variety of levels — the fact that it contains stories which illustrate the perspectives of both victors and vanquished is particularly valuable in this regard. In short, this book is a gem.

The Politics of Gender After Socialism began its life as the introduction to a companion volume of case studies, *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics and Everyday Life after Socialism*, of which Gal and Kligman are the coeditors. The book primarily refers to Poland, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech and Slovak Republics, and the former East Germany. The chapters examine a number of themes: how public discussions regarding reproduction, childcare and sexuality are used as a means of reconstituting the relationship between states and their citizens; how economic restructuring in the region is impacting on men and women and influencing the relations between them; and how conceptions of gender influence policy formation, and whether gender categories are relevant to civil society and political mobilization.

The book contains many stimulating arguments that go a long way to justify its claims regarding the importance of gendered analysis. For example, the authors' discussion of the way in which reproductive discourses are employed in order to signal the boundaries of nationhood or political communities, and to highlight the nature of the relationship between states and their citizens, clearly makes an important contribution to the understanding of post-communist politics. The authors do not claim any originality in highlighting this issue, but they do usefully draw together different experiences from the region, showing that in virtually all the coun-

tries they consider, reproduction became a bone of contention. The way in which the issue was politicized depended on the situation. The Serbian state, for example, stirred up fears of their nation being overrun by backward and dangerously fecund Albanians (with well-known tragic results), while in Poland the debate about abortion was linked to the wider question of the desirable level of Roman Catholic influence on state policy. In all cases, the debates served wider political purposes.

The third chapter, which considers "dilemmas of public and private," is the most interesting. It contains a stimulating discussion of the public-private distinction in which the authors argue that the exact nature of the distinction varies according to the interactional situation in which it is applied. Furthermore, they highlight the fact that the distinction is "fractal," which means that it is "recursively applicable ... and therefore can be nested. That is, whatever the local, historically specific content of the dichotomy, the distinction between public and private can be reproduced repeatedly by projecting it onto a narrower context or a broader one." (41) This definition serves the authors well in their discussion of the communist era. Thus, for example, they do not fall into the trap of seeing the private sphere as the only site of authenticity in the communist era, but show the way in which public and private were inextricably intertwined. As they put it:

> The nested interdependencies of work, time and materials, as well as the ever-present bureaucracies of state socialism assured that everyone participated to some extent among the "they" who ruled as well as the "we" who suffered .... Everyone was to some extent complicit in the system of patronage, lying, theft, hedging and duplicity through which the system operated. (51)

This chapter also contains a convincing account of the impact of communist state policies on gender relations, the nature of which was outlined above.

The strength of this chapter is the way it combines sophisticated theoretical discussion with concrete examples, and this is a general merit of the book. The weaknesses of the chapter likewise highlight the faults of the book as a whole. These are most visible in the discussion of employment trends in the post-communist era, which is far less convincing than what precedes it. The authors make big generalizations regarding changes in the gender composition of employment without adequate evidence to support their claims, in some cases appearing to base these on small-scale case studies. For example, they aver that social work is a "form of mobility for working class women," which "is becoming an overwhelmingly female profession," and they seem to imply that the claim applies to the region as a whole. (59) It is possible that they are correct, but the only support provided is a reference to one study in Hungary. Their whole discussion of the changing pattern of occupational segregation in the region is constructed on a similar basis, so that it is impossible to be sure of its accuracy. Likewise, the authors assert that "in most countries of the region, women have been experiencing more unemployment than men." While this statement is not wrong, it is somewhat misleading. (56) As Mike

and Hilary Ingham have shown in their careful analysis of Labour Force Survey data from across the region, the picture is far more mixed than is generally acknowledged. In some countries, such as Poland and the Czech Republic, the unemployment rate of women has consistently exceeded that of men, but in others, such as Hungary and Slovenia, proportionally fewer women have been unemployed, as is also the case in Russia and Latvia. Meanwhile, in Bulgaria the proportions have been equal.[6]

It is in failings such as this that the book reveals its origins as an introduction. In an opening statement drawing out the implications of diverse case studies, some speculation is legitimate. In an independent volume, however, more is required. There are various points at which it seems the authors do not have the evidence they require to support their arguments, leading them to resort to the artful arrangement of case study conclusions to conceal the gaps in their knowledge. For example, they illustrate their point regarding the ambiguity surrounding the autonomy and dependence of post-communist women with the example of one Budapest journalist. While they insist that they "do not wish to generalise from a single case," (86) this is in effect what they do, as no other support for the point is provided. Some of the arguments of the book are thus rather tenuous. At the same time, however, the depth provided by the ethnographic case studies consulted by the authors certainly adds to the sophistication of the book: the authors' arguments are always subtle and thought-provoking. Thus, while some of the empirical claims of the book are not entirely convincing (at least when applied to the region as a whole), the book provides a rich source of ideas for future research. As such it will certainly be valuable to both students and researchers of gender studies, area studies, and sociology.

The explosion of gender and women's studies has done a great deal to transform other disciplines, provoking new questions and opening up new lines of inquiry. How far do the books under review contribute to this on-going re-evaluation of what is important and worthy of study? For the reasons mentioned above, *Revolutionary Women* does the least to justify its claim that a focus on women provides new insights into wider issues. Someone not already interested in women's participation in the revolution would gain little from this analysis. *In the Shadow of the Revolution*, by contrast, would engage those without a particular interest in questions of gender, and might well sensitize them to the status of gender as a key organizing principle of the Soviet system. Gal and Kligman's contribution, does, as mentioned above, succeed in showing the importance of gendered analysis to the understanding of the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe. It is rather more successful in analyzing the impact of the collapse of communism on gender relations than it is in demonstrating how the "discourses and practices of gender" are shaping the reconstitution of states and wider social relations in the region. The

[6]Mike Ingham and Hilary Ingham, "Gender and Labour Market Restructuring in Central and Eastern Europe," in Al Rainne, Adrian Smith, and Adam Swain, eds., *Work, Employment and Transition: Restructuring Livelihoods in Post-Communism* (London 2002), 175.

latter is a very difficult task, however, especially since the transformation of the region is continuing apace. The authors have, nonetheless, lit the way for the numerous scholars who will no doubt want to explore this issue further.