

**Jie-Hyun Lim / Karen Petrone (Hrsg.):
Gender Politics and Mass Dictator-
ship. Global Perspectives, Mass
Dictatorship in the 20th Century,
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan,
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Reviewed by
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This edited volume provides its readers with a comparative framework for understanding the role of mass dictatorships in the twentieth century. Indeed, it offers a rare transcontinental analysis of the relationship between subject/citizen and state in democratic, socialist, communist and fascist regimes across the last century. The substantive chapters focus, in particular, on the modern mass political regimes in Europe and Asia, including Britain, China, Germany, Japan, Korea, Poland and the Soviet Union. This book, one in a collective series on mass dictatorship in the twentieth century, is edited by both the General Series editor, Jie-Hyun Lim, professor of Comparative History at Hanyang University in Seoul, South Korea, and Karen Petrone, Professor of History at the University of Kentucky. Its focus is on gender and mass dictatorship. Petrone and Lim do a careful job of contextualizing this book on gender within the larger project on mass dictatorship.

The volume begins with a series introduction, which describes how the project challenges a variety of central assumptions about the workings of mass political societies. These assumptions include conceptual

dichotomies, such as: “tragic victimhood” versus “heroic resistance”; or coercion versus consent; tropes that have become truisms within scholarship on the twentieth century. A Vaclav Havel quotation is used in order to emphasize how comparison can illuminate subtleties. “The line did not run clearly between victimizer and victims. Rather it ran through the individual” (p. 1). This observation reflects the goal of the series as a whole, as well as this volume on gender. The authors wish to challenge long held assumptions about how individuals navigated their way through the challenges of twentieth century modern mass political regimes. Moreover, the studies in this collection highlight how mass regimes were never “tightly sutured machine(s)”, and that, indeed, there was always space for individual agency as a means of navigating the system (p. 14).

In organizational terms, the book has four parts and an overall series introduction. The first section is the most overtly theoretically informed, conceptually minded and comparative in approach. In the first essay, the two editors, Lim and Petrone, introduce gender as the main frame of analysis and focus of this impressively transnational volume. By using the lens of gender, the editors highlight scholars’ ability to challenge long accepted categories, including the meaning and functioning of mass dictatorships and the role of individuals and groups in creating and sustaining these political regimes. While there is no space to comment on each individual chapter, I will only pause on a few overall. After the editors’ contribution, there are two conceptual and comparative essays by Barbara Einhorn and Claudia Koonz. Einhorn presents a comparison of fascism and

socialism in regards to gender policies and ideals. Einhorn writes that even though in theory in Germany there was an exclusive gender ideology which insisted on women's role in "children, kitchen and church" and in the socialist societies of Eastern Europe, there was a system of equality set up, in each case, in fact, there was no consistent practice of gender equality. (p. 34-36) This theme of the interplay between ideas and realities repeatedly emerges throughout the individual chapters in this excellent collection.

The next three sections are organized around twentieth-century European and Asian periodization schemes: interwar era; age of empire/colonialism and the time of post-colonialism. The first of these sections offers the readers a truly comparative look at European examples of the era of mass society. Together these essays on Soviet Russia, Britain, and Germany illustrate quite clearly the degree to which mass politics and mass society blurred the lines of democracy and dictatorship. Sangsoo Kim, in one of the few chapters on a democratic society, describes how the government attempted to maintain and control the empire through a gendered ideology, in this case, masculinity. This notion of gender discourse as regime control inspires the conclusion that there are "subtle linkage" between democracy and dictatorship (p. 86-87). In this section we also learn about the fascist movement in Britain in these years, and the attempts of the Soviet state to remake gender ideas. In her contribution, Petrone takes on the long debated question of the degree to which women, and women's work, were transformed by the emancipatory promises of the Stalinist regime in the 1930s. Her consideration

to these questions reflects her nuanced approach to sources and debates. Ultimately, we learn that individuals interacted with official ideologies in a variety of ways and that there is no single result. Exploitation and empowerment were not dichotomous and could coexist within individuals and within group experiences. The final contribution to this section is by Alf Lüdke, who traces the narrative of visual representations of male bodies in Germany over much of the twentieth century, with an emphasis on the Nazi and the Communist eras. What is most fascinating about this account is how Lüdke fluidly moves between representations of ideal masculine types and the realities of social and economic, and political life. This chapter, I would venture, serves as a model of methodological grace, as the author moves between visual approaches and social and political ones.

The third and forth sections take on the hierarchies and relationships so integral to the processes of the creation of gendered narratives within the interaction between colonial centers and peripheries, both during and after colonization. These sections focus more substantively on countries and relationships between centers and peripheries in Asia, most notably Japan and Korea. The authors deploy a wide variety of sources in their attempt to understand how gender operates within Japanese and Korean societies. Kyu Hyan Kim, for example, uses magazines and publications that extol the reconfiguration of the Korean family to explore whether, in fact, women were marginalized or coopted by the Japanese colonists. This creative use of sources leads to the conclusion that modern Japanese women supplied the discourse on family to Korean women in the early twentieth cen-

tury, and in turn, Korean society emulated these norms. The New Korean Woman was constructed, in part, by male intellectuals; but ultimately, as a result of Japan's extreme focus on processes of modernization and industrialization, the Japanese colonial regime preferred the modern woman to the traditional one. Similar interpretations appear in the remaining chapters of this section. Within colonial history, these authors collectively show us, the notion of a binary between victim and perpetrator does not work. The final section on the postcolonial world takes on three new countries, including China, South Korea and Poland. In the only stand alone article on communist eastern Europe, Malgorzata Mazurek, in her contribution on Poland in the 1970s-1980s, looks to the dynamic between the state and citizens to understand changing gender expectations and experiences. She argues that during the Lodz strikes, the Polish socialist state extended its social welfare net unevenly and women were striking for their state benefits (rather than for the availability of more consumer goods, as is commonly argued). The author describes how women strikers might have been boxed in by male workers in traditional roles (bring your children to strike), but women themselves embraced both identities and saw them as intertwined. This chapter, like so many in the collection, reframes the historical narrative and ultimately ascribe additional agency to women.

This comprehensive volume offers much to scholars and students alike. Each individual essay could stand alone or could be taught in tandem as they appear. While it is impossible to do justice to each individual chapter in the space of this review,

let me emphasize the rich research and creative argumentation on display in this volume. The only substantive suggestion I am inclined to offer revolves around the nature of the comparative or transnational scholarly engagement in the volume as a whole. While I commend the editors for creating a forum for cross-regional discussions, the project might have benefited from more examples – if such exist – of direct comparisons between the Asian and European experiences of mass dictatorships. Are there, for example, parallels between the gendered nature of militarized culture in Japan, Germany and the Soviet Union? No doubt the differences can teach us much about each case, just as the similarities might allow us to reach a broad consensus that could lead us away from old dichotomies. Such comparative frames might also have allowed more detailed and nuanced discussion of how gender operates within mass dictatorial societies across time and space. Where, for instance, do democracy and dictatorship meet? Yet despite these suggestions, one volume can only do so much, and Lim and Petrone have accomplished a lot. They provide for their readers a coherent and creative scholarly enterprise that gets us one step closer to understanding how gender relationships and ideologies, both masculinity and femininity, transform – and are transformative – within twentieth century dictatorships.