

Male Fantasies: Volume 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History

Klaus Theweleit, Barbara Ehrenreich, Chris Turner (Translator)

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First of this two-volume work providing an imaginative interpretation of the image of women in the collective unconscious of the fascist "warrior" through a study of the fantasies of the men centrally involved in the rise of Nazism.

Male Fantasies: Volume 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History Details


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From Reader Review Male Fantasies: Volume 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History for online ebook

Naomi says

This book is a fascinating and completely engaging sociological study of Freikorps sexuality.

Chris Tempel says

So far it is about journal entries from Freikorps members analyzed for content about girlfriends, wives, women, fantasies, and realities. Very well written and impactful, this book extends a bridge for feminists and communists, who may know their commitment to these politics on a personal level, to link with anti-fascism.

Miriam says

This lengthy exposition of the lives of German men focuses on the Freikorps. Theweleit perceived their relationships with women and sexuality as being built on a foundation of misogyny and fear. He rejected the interpretation of male violence as an outgrowth of frustrated sexual desire or repression, arguing instead that the violence was itself an innate part of male desire, an end which they actively sought to achieve. Thus, male violence was not a substitute for, but rather an attack on, sex and femininity. Theweleit saw this as an important aspect of Nazi ideology, particularly in regards to its self-definition as an oppositional force to Bolshevism; both Bolshevism and femininity were seen as the embodiment of the untidy and disorderly aspects of human existence.

For alternate interpretations, see Herzog's *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*.

Mirza Sultan-Galiev says

Great.

Esteban del Mal says

[Full disclosure: I only read the first section of this book, as it considers the male fascist regard for women; I only perused the second section]

A psychological study of protofascism that, in my humble estimation, is hit and miss.

The author bases his analysis of the Freikorps (the militaristic form of German fascism under the short-lived and tumultuous Weimar Republic) on a reading of their "literature." I find this sloppy and wish he'd have relied more on historical instance in making his argument instead of subjecting his readers to the lurid details

of pre-Nazi pulp fiction. (Is the work of Danielle Steel reflective of the state of American feminism? C'mon.)

However, he does a good job of demonstrating 1) the shortcomings of a Freudian analysis of fascism, and 2) that protofascists (and hence, the lineage of said protofascists) didn't just dislike women -- they hated them because they are (and, I'd wager, remain) terrified of them.

Although there's a Walter Benjamin sighting, for my money Wilhelm Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* is a more insightful book into the psychology behind fascism (and Reich is one of Theweleit's targets), and *Frontsoldaten* by Stephen Fritz better demonstrates just how universal "fascist" prejudices were in Germany leading up to and during World War II, even among non-Nazis, and shows how Hitler and his band of brigands merely gave form and expression to nascent intolerance.

Kevin says

Structure of facism as sexual origination. Discusses idealized females that drive patriotism, and the whore imagery that unifies invasion strategy. Includes chapters on Lola Montez and VD.

Incredible. Showcases militarism fetish.

Hadrian says

No review here. See Volume II.

Chelsea Szendi says

The ecstatic mingling of Freud, Guattari, Deleuze, and Reich, decorated with many unattributed and undated images, marks this as a work riding high on the academic euphoria of the 1970s, before the buzzkill 1980s.

Not only did I enjoy reading Theweleit, I wish that I could write the same book. But I can't. For one thing, Theweleit already wrote it. For another, nobody gets to use Freud like that anymore. And, lastly, the trend of psychoanalyzing historical subjects got lost somewhere in the disco snow.

I'm making light, of course. Like disco snow, academic fashions have been rewarded with returns. The more serious issue is how to proceed in a manner inspired by Theweleit but also in a post-Reichian (although still Deleuzian... Well, I prefer the term "Deleuz-ional") world. In particular, a problem with, and the underlying and inexhaustible inspiration for, Theweleit's topic is that it is soooo big and soooo embedded in layer upon uneven layer of post-Enlightenment capitalist societies. The topic of gender and the various roles of women -- defined and desired as bodies bound to class -- guides Theweleit down every rabbit hole. By the 434th page of Volume One, I had to remind myself that this book opened with analyses of Freikorps literature. It spiraled up and away from that with dizzying rapidity, but I cannot say that the journey was unpleasant.

ainsley says

...the fuck? Too much Freud. And do these things hold true for, say, Italian fascism?

Risa says

it reads like a masculine Vanity Fair for academics. It's disturbing, sexy, and sex-disturbing.

Willow L says

"The success of fascism demonstrates that masses who become fascist suffer more from their internal states of being than from hunger or unemployment. Fascism teaches us that under certain circumstances, human beings imprisoned within themselves, within body armor and social constraints, would rather break out than fill their stomachs; and that their politics may consist in organizing that escape, rather than an economic order that promises future generations full stomachs for life. The Utopia of fascism is an edenic freedom from responsibility. That in itself, I think, is a source of "beauty in the most profound distortion." Meanwhile, communists and the left in general still stubbornly refuse to accept fascism's horrifying proof that the materialism they preach and practice only goes halfway. The desiring-production of the unconscious, as molecular driving force of history, has never entered their materialism—an omission that has had (and still has) tragic consequences."

ryan bears says

this book has some scary pictures and it gave me nightmares.

Michael Tolkin says

I love this book. Explains many things.
