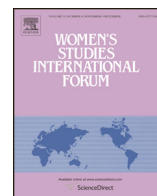




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Book review

Tales of loving and caring, G. Weiner, 2016 author HOUSE, London, 2016, 179 (ISBN 978-1-5246-3508-4(sc), ISBN 978-1-5246-3509-1(hc), ISBN 978-1-5246-3507-7(e)).

Gaby Weiner has written a range of very influential books that have changed the way we see, understand and analyse gender relations in the sociology of education and beyond. Her last book, *Tales of Loving and Caring* is different however. It emerges from the depths of her heart to unravel her family stories and yes, they are many! But in telling the stories of her family Weiner also tells stories of war, migration and persecution, during the catastrophic wars that shook Europe and the world throughout the twentieth century.

The book is beautifully crafted and written and offers the rare experience of scholarly academic work minus the dryness of academic writing conventions. The different stories that are narrated revolve around a photograph of Weiner's wedding in North London in 1963. There are many more photographs in the book, but the wedding photograph becomes the centre piece of the whole book as it simultaneously reveals and hides family truths, lies and other secrets. The photograph also brings together the two main protagonists of the book, namely Weiner's mother and father. Reflecting on this photograph, Weiner follows her parents' trails across Europe in turbulent times and narrates the extraordinary moment of their amorous encounter in London. Love, war and politics are tightly interwoven in the stories of the book that span across several countries: Austria, Poland, Belgium, Ukraine, the UK and the US. Weiner moves around these countries both literally and metaphorically as she works in archives, fights with authorities, struggles with memories, her own included, and negotiates with family members, both close and estranged.

The author brings together micro and macro histories and structures in the tradition of the personal troubles/public issues sociological imagination. Without tiring the reader the author shows the long, careful archival research that underpinned the writing. The book is also carefully contextualised in the historical periods that frame its events, as well as

in the socio-political and cultural discourses and practices of its geographies and times. Although Weiner's parents are indeed the protagonists, their stories are embedded in the web of human relations and communities they emerged from. In mapping this web of cross national, multi-lingual and multi-cultural contexts, Weiner also writes family and political genealogies from a feminist perspective, that is not exactly militant, but rather contemplative and at times ironic.

The overall result is an excellent book that can be read by a diversity of audiences, including academics interested in life history and archival research, undergraduate and postgraduate students in the wider areas of social sciences and the humanities, but also the wider public interested in issues of how people's lives have been affected and shaped by grand historical events, as well as by the dominant political and cultural ideological systems, the 'isms', as the author defines them, of the twentieth century. But beyond showing peoples' lives as the effects of discourses and practices, the author also highlights the possibilities that were opened up by people's actions and interventions, both individual and collective in the form of the twentieth century social and political movements. The themes of the book are also in dialogue with current concerns and critical problems that arise from the deepest refugee and humanitarian crisis in Europe after the second world war. It shows the importance and value of being open, of protecting human and civil rights and of loving the world, in the Arendtian spirit of the *amor mundi*.

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