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Naomi Andrews, *Socialism's Muse: Gender in the Intellectual Landscape of French Romantic Socialism*, Lanhan, Md.: Lexington Books, 2006. 210 pp. \$66.00 (hb). ISBN 10-0739-108-441.

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Ambivalent Feminism: Romantic Socialism, Gender, and the Individual.

In *Socialism's Muse: Gender in the Intellectual Landscape of French Romantic Socialism*, Naomi Andrews brings her readers into a complex conversation that touches on individualism and egoism, on the nature of humanity, on governing society and, of course, on what gender has to do with all that. We are long since past the era when the romantic socialists (mockingly called “utopian” by Marx and others) are seen as simply wacky diversions from the true path of socialism. Nonetheless, the socialism of the 1830s and 1840s often remains a parenthesis in discussions of nineteenth-century French thought. *Socialism's Muse* demonstrates clearly how central these discussions were not only to contemporaries, but also to the development of political thought throughout the nineteenth century and, most important for Andrews, to the hopes of feminists.

The book is divided into three unequal parts. The first, and briefest, introduces the romantic socialists and sets them in their context of the 1830 revolution and early industrialization. The second, most extensive section, uses detailed intellectual history of Andrews' chosen theorists to argue that gender was central to the ways that romantic socialists constructed their vision of a better world. The third looks at what this gendered vision meant for women and politics in both practical and personal terms. The feminism of romantic socialists is not new ground, and Andrews draws well on the work of those who have come before her, including but not limited to Claire Goldberg Moses, Leslie Wahl Rabine, and Michèle Riot-Sarcey.^[1] Andrews take a different tack, however. The originality of this book is in her refusal to segregate romantic *socialism* from romantic socialist *feminism*. Andrews argues convincingly that the driving vision of romantic socialists, their “definition of a good society,” can be understood only in gendered terms (p. xvii). Her goal in this text is to explicate that vision and explore its consequences.

Part I sets the scene first by exploring the 1830 revolution as the catalyst for the development of republican and socialist opposition. Socialists, like workers and others, were disappointed in the July Monarchy's failure to offer any solutions to what they saw as key social and political problems. In reaction, Andrews argues, socialist intellectuals became disillusioned with politics in general. This, combined with the new urban spectatorship focused on the working classes, helped guarantee that it would be the social, rather than the political, which became the focus of their new bid for change.

Chapter two then turns to the early socialist milieu. Disappointed by the Orleanist regime, romantic socialists offered a critique of contemporary society, and especially of individualism, that challenged the social, economic, and moral values of the time. Socialists, most particularly the influential Pierre Leroux, saw humanity as an interconnected whole that had been fragmented by individualism, liberalism and, perhaps, capitalism. Socialism would establish more equal and charitable relationships among the parts of that whole. Andrews explores these issues briefly, but her main interest is in the question of how they treated gender. The “social landscape” of early industrialization, the disruption of increasing

numbers of migrant industrial workers, and especially the numbers of single working women, ensured that workers and women would be the key to socialist theories. She gives a brief but cogent summary of the Saint-Simonian movement's ideas on gender, and particularly their breakup, which was partially precipitated by Pierre Enfantin's new and too-liberal (for most) ideas on gender, and goes on to argue that Saint-Simonian concerns in many ways "set the agenda" (p. 33) for the socialists she will consider in the rest of her book. The rest of the chapter introduces the socialists whose writing Andrews mines as sources of socialist visions. Among them the best known is social and political theorist Pierre Leroux; others active in socialist circles were sculptor Simon Ganneau; writer and later occult leader Alphonse-Louis Constant (known in his occult years as Eliphas Levi); writer Alphonse-Esquiros, and the lesser-known Louis-Jean Baptiste de Turreill. Andrews also includes in her sources the Abbé Chatel and Auguste Guyard, the latter a follower of Turreil, both minor figures but who wrote directly on gender.

In Part II Andrews offers intriguing explorations of the ways that male romantic socialists used idealized versions of the feminine to think through their critique of society. These are original and insightful readings that open up the complexity and sometimes irony of the romantic socialist view of gender. "Women" and "woman" functioned very differently in their thought, and it was the generic, abstract "woman" rather than flesh and blood women, who was most important to these thinkers. Andrews shows how romantic socialists' vision of woman came essentially from her reproductivity—woman was often also "Mère" (the capital letter included) and, if she was the source of love and harmony, she was also only that; not an individual or a thinker, but a collective source of emotional good. Socialists nuanced Catholic images of Mary and Eve to discuss women's place in the new society. While they rejected the idea of Eve as a source of female guilt, they kept Mary up on her pedestal as mother of humanity. Thus though they rejected the limits of the Eve/Mary dichotomy, they failed to imagine women as sexual, independent beings. "Woman" was "ultimately defined by her sex rather than ... her membership in society" (p. 64). Andrews concludes that for these socialists, women's role remained almost wholly relational.

Ironically, women both represented Humanity and were excluded from it. Both Pierre Leroux and the Abbé Constant imagine "woman" as playing the mediating role between individuals. For Leroux, Humanity as a whole is that very interrelatedness of individuals. Once humans reject their focus on the egoism of individuality, all will work together for the good of all. As Andrews puts it, "humanity is the web of ties in which each individual is suspended, supported, nurtured" (p. 88). This leads these socialists to conclude that humanity is essentially female. Unfortunately, this leaves the contrast to humanity, individuality, to be essentially male. If "woman" is humanity, relational, then women are not individuals and there is no space to recognize their diversity as individual people. Women, because really seen as only part of the abstract whole of "woman," could not be seen as plural and diverse, as men could be (p.65). By idealizing "Mother Humanity" socialist writings "underscore the degree to which the whole enterprise of individualism was already in the 1830s and 1840s understood in gendered terms" (p. 90). Andrews' argument here draws on but also supports and furthers that of Joan Scott in *Only Paradoxes to Offer* (1996). Scott argues that French political thought framed the individual as male. Andrews illustrates that social thinkers too shared this same gendered assumption of the individual as male and only male.

This argument could be even stronger if Andrews had fully situated her view of the romantic socialists in the overall canon of nineteenth-century gender history. Her footnotes make it abundantly clear that she knows this literature inside and out and is influenced by it in her readings, but she could explore more explicitly for the reader, for example, how this relationality relates (if I may) to the "relational feminism" so aptly described by Karen Offen.[2] If being seen only in relational terms here makes it impossible for women to act and demand rights as individuals, why does this rhetoric work so well later in the century?

Romantic socialists offered a new conception of gender as well—that of the androgyne. Imagined in

response to and rejection of the fragmented, masculine, liberal individual, this androgynous ideal was both one being and two, the seamless and harmonious joining in complementarity of male and female. The androgyne symbolized unity in diversity. Andrews' analysis of the androgyne neatly emphasizes the ways in which even socialists' attempts to overcome individualism were rooted in a deeply-held belief in individual sexual difference as essential and insurmountable. Thus the androgyne, in order to be the perfect being, must bring together within itself both the masculine and the feminine. Romantic socialist visions of androgynes remind us of the hopeful imagination of the 1830s and 1840s. Pierre Leroux reimagined Eve as pre-existing Adam, and as an androgynous being already containing both masculine and feminine essences. Thus humans were originally both male and female. Both Leroux and Constant saw the androgyne as the source of social harmony; an androgynous society would have moved beyond economic competition, allowing all to benefit from the bounty of the earth. Yet Andrews is quick to recognize that as far from contemporaries as some of these imaginative flights seem, romantic socialists, like their contemporaries, saw sexual difference as a salient, even the salient characteristic (p. 106). The androgyne functioned perfectly to symbolize harmony and unity against the fragmented individual of emerging liberal politics. For the gender historian, the androgyne illuminates how gendered thinking intimately shaped political and social reform efforts.

Part III shifts from elucidating romantic socialist thought to analyzing its repercussions. Adèle and Alphonse Esquiros serve as an example of the failure of romantic socialism to create equality on the practical level of one individual couple. Andrews recognizes that only so much can be gained from the evidence of one couple. She refers to David Harvey's work on Noëmi Cadiot-Constant Rouvier and her husband Alphonse-Louis Constant, whose marriage also failed after 1848, but doesn't explore whether the reasons are the same.^[3] Given that this chapter is quite short, she might easily have made the comparison more extensive in order to carry her point.

Andrews shines in chapter six, when she more fully engages the gendered assumptions that structured and limited the visions of women socialists proposed. She clearly demonstrates that each of these thinkers was caught in the binary of essential sexual difference assumed by contemporary culture. Andrews asks whether the feminism of male romantic socialists can so easily be seen as such when we consider their inability to confront or overcome the gendering of the individual as male and only male. It was not just practical limitations that kept socialists from fulfilling any of the promise of their rhetoric that women should be the equals, rather than the slaves, of men. Instead it was the very ways in which they theorized gender. By building a utopia in which women remained abstract, mothers rather than political actors and for the sake of society had to be excluded from the messy individualist realm of politics and political rights, the socialists limited their ability to fight for feminist causes and the impact of any rhetoric calling for rights for women as political individuals.

Socialism's Muse is a sophisticated intellectual and gender history of a select set of romantic socialists. By using a panoply of minor socialists, as well as major player Pierre Leroux, Andrews avoids the limits of studying a leader or "school" and instead shows how socialist ideas worked as they permeated society. However, this is indeed a motley assembly of socialists. Leroux needs no justification; his influence and ideas were widespread and broadly acknowledged. Alphonse-Louis Constant was also somewhat of a figure in Paris, although perhaps more famous for his post-1848 incarnation as an occultist. Several of the others, as Andrews puts it, have been placed on the "lunatic fringe of socialism (p. xix). She admits the disparate nature of this group but argues that "politically significant commonalities emerge from reading them together, all of which cluster around questions of gender (p. 44). Given that the writers are chosen specifically for their emphasis on gender and feminism, a tension arises between Andrews' claims for the specificity of these socialists—whose view of gender was more central to their vision of society than others—and the generalizability of Andrews' argument based on the fact that "all socialists, whether republican, *illuminé*, or androgynous(!), were operating within a rhetorical framework dictated by the individualist ethos they were trying to negate" (p. 45).

I came away from the book convinced of her arguments, but I would have liked her to situate them in the context of other romantic socialists. Certainly popular associationists like Louis Blanc or Cabet did not explicitly share the same vision of gender. Did their shared struggle against an individualist ethos mean that implicit gendered meanings came to bear on other socialists? I think it likely that they did, but Andrews does not take us there to find out. On the other hand, if socialists not examined here, such as Jeanne Deroin, used the androgyne to argue for changes in women's status, how did her use compare to that of Leroux or Constant? All authors have to choose their boundaries, and the fact that I am intrigued enough to want more on these questions certainly speaks to the strength of Andrews' work. The book would have benefitted from taking on these questions more directly, especially that of the ways in which female romantic socialists used themes similar to male romantic socialists.

This is an exciting book. It is also, occasionally, a frustrating book. There is a wealth of material in the footnotes. Apart from the introduction, it is mostly in footnotes that we find Andrews' discussions of how this work fits into larger questions of feminism, politics, and gender in the nineteenth century as a whole. In many cases, this material could have been profitably brought into the text and engaged more fully. Andrews is impeccable in her strict insistence on not recapping the work of others. She pays readers the compliment of assuming they know the works of others, and does not ask them to spend time in reviewing work they already know. She scrupulously leaves the reader to make her or his own connections and conclusions. While in many ways admirable, this also tends to underplay the way Naomi Andrews is engaging larger debates. An uninformed reader might think this book limited to the narrow issue of a few romantic socialists, without recognizing the complexities and challenges Andrews brings to our sometimes rosy vision of the feminism of romantic socialists. Andrews' work upsets the view that romantic socialist feminism was an early step on the road to contemporary feminism, and that it was only politics that kept it from working. By example, this work insists that as historians, feminists, and theorists, we have to be willing to do the hard work of taking apart feminist (or other) theories in order to understand the way outcomes can be overdetermined by unspoken but clearly held gendered assumptions.

Socialism's Muse adds a new dimension to our understanding of the interconnectedness of gender, individualism, and politics in nineteenth-century France. It takes a slice of French socialism and shows its relevance to major debates in women's history and the history of feminism. It also very clearly demonstrates the links between theory and praxis, between gendered assumptions and the political actions of those who hold them. Socialists in 1848 failed to act as and for feminists because they had failed all along to truly think in feminist terms. They were incapable of imagining a world where diverse women acted in diverse ways to better their own conditions. Naomi Andrews' exploration of the margins of political thought nicely illuminates the centrality of understanding gender in order to explain the politics of the past.

NOTES

[1] Goldberg Moses was pivotal in introducing romantic socialist feminism to the canon of feminist history. Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984); Goldberg and Leslie Wahl Rabine, *Feminism, Socialism and French Romanticism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1993); Michele Riot-Sarcey, *La Démocratie à l'épreuve des femmes: trois figures critiques du pouvoir, 1830-1848* (Paris: Albin-Michel, 1994). Andrews does not cite Riot-Sarcey's later book, *Le Réel de l'utopie* (Paris, Albin-Michel, 1998), which challenges the separation between social and political in the "utopian" socialists.

[2] Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs* 14/1 (1988): 119-157. Offen's influential article argued that French "relational" feminism offered a strong position for women to insist on their social and political importance.

[3] David Allen Harvey, "Forgotten Feminist: Claude Vignon (1828-1888), revolutionary and femme de lettres," *Women's History Review*, 13/4 (2004): 559-583.

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