

gelijkberechtiging, die waren geënt op liberale idealen en de emancipatiestrijd van andere minderheden, zoals Joden en etnische groepen. Daartegenover ontwikkelde zich een cultureel-esthetische en rechts-nationalistische optiek waarin homo-erotiek veel breder werd opgevat als een essentieel bestanddeel van relaties tussen mannen in het algemeen en waarin de mannenbond naast het met vrouwelijkheid geassocieerde gezinsdomein gold als de essentiële hoeksteen van sociale, politieke en militaire organisatie alsook van kunst en onderwijs. Deze wijd verbreide voorstelling – invloedrijke denkers als Friedrich Nietzsche, Thomas Mann, Sigmund Freud en Otto Weininger waren er ontvankelijk voor - was verbonden met antimoderne en elitaire cultuurkritiek, nationalistische superioriteitsgevoelens, racisme, antisemitisme, militarisme en misogynie. Tegelijkertijd laat Tobin ook mooi zien dat de twee perspectieven niet altijd gescheiden waren, maar dat met name literatoren, zoals Mann in zijn *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912), deze ook met elkaar confronteerden en onderwierpen aan ironische relativering, waardoor de dubbelzinnigheid van de Duitse omgang met homo-erotiek nog eens extra werd aangezet.

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Julie Peakman, *Peg Plunkett, Memoirs of a Whore* (London: Quercus, 2015) 240 p.
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Julie Peakman produced a well written and well informed biography of a famous Irish courtesan, based on the woman's memoirs, which were published before her death at the end of the 18th century. As a historian of prostitution myself, I would have preferred to have had access to this interesting manuscript through the publication of an edited source, rather than a biography that omits most of the original text. However this was not the aim of the author, who chose to write a biography of Peg Plunkett for the general public and this book therefore does not fall under the scientific (and sometimes tedious) frame of academic writing. The reading is pleasant and the story of Peg Plunkett, the daughter of a good-middle class family living in the surroundings of Dublin in the 18th century, although punctuated by dramatic events, is well written and, as mentioned by the author, 'entertaining'. Although the memoirs seem to be genuine, one cannot but be amazed by the similarities in Peg Plunkett's life with other figures living of prostitution issued from 18th-century literature. The author mentions these similarities at the start of the book but a more in-depth analysis of these tropes in 18th-century literature (especially with Defoe's characters, such as Roxana, but also Cleland's *Fanny Hill* and some of Sade's depictions of prostitution), that can also be found in Plunkett's life episodes, would have

been welcome. Indeed, Peg Plunkett suffered various misfortunes in her youth very similar to what was usually imagined and described by literary authors: physical or psychological violence from a family member, the falling in love, elopement, pregnancy, death of a child, abandonment of the lover, the woman's decision to make a living through high-class prostitution, her successful entry into the elite's world and ending with the woman's final collapse from her position in society and her being infected by venereal disease. Even Peg Plunkett's friendships sound familiar to who has read Defoe's work. These similarities do not infer that the memoirs were fictive but a comment from the author (who is a specialist in prostitutes' biographies) would have been interesting.

The author gives the readers a good insight into what the life in Dublin and in its countryside was in the 18th century, and the descriptions are supported by a set of nice illustrations. The author's background and training as a historian is revealed in the fastidious work she completed in researching not only Peg's life, but also the people she met during the 50 or 60 years (her birth date is unknown) when Peg was alive. The indicative bibliography at the end of the book is particularly relevant and useful for anyone who wants to have an overview of the works on prostitution in history. Julie Peakman makes a point in contextualizing Plunkett's story and the references to the legislation and regional/national events that had marked, to a certain extent, Plunkett's life add useful information for the period. She also offers the reader a view of Plunkett's opportunities when facing hardship (for instance regarding the caring of a child or the possibility for her to move to her sisters' or to elope with a man). Peakman discusses these options and tries to include a sort of 'risk assessment' view on Plunkett's life. This approach to a courtesan's life is engaging and it forces the reader to consider the opportunities given to women in this situation. The physical risks incurred by women in Dublin, in the countryside or even in their own home have not been neglected and reveal how women had to manage their life in relation to the violence they could suffer. This book is an interesting read for the general public and provides enough references to the reader who wishes to explore certain topics further. As far as historical biographies go, Peakman's book is very well informed, however its value as an academic study on prostitution in the 18th century is limited. Because of the format chosen, the author cannot enter into historiographical debates over, for instance, the presence of women in court and their possibilities to get redress from criminal and civil courts. As such, the author tends to oversimplify certain issues, and sometimes reduces the level of women's agency to the bare minimum, giving the impression that Peg Plunkett bore the colours of women's liberation in a way that was not as uncommon as portrayed by the author.

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