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‘Roses for the Gentlemen’: The ‘question of women’s rights’ in medical studies at the University of Vienna before 1897

Abstract

“To weave husbands heavenly roses in their earthly life” is a poetic analogy of the socio-cultural role of the woman in the 19th century. Women were seen as wives and mothers, and not capable of embarking an academic career. This view was particularly strong in the Habsburg Monarchy. One of the fiercest lobbyists against female medical students was Eduard Albert, a professor of surgery at the University of Vienna. His essay “Women and Medical Studies” (1895) outlined his arguments why women were incapable of studying medicine. The real aim in life of women was “to have children” and “to weave husbands heavenly roses in their earthly life”. However, the real reason why Albert and his colleagues were against women studying medicine was the fear of competition it would open up. Anti-feminism in the medical faculties was born purely out of a defence of potential competitors.

The reactions to Albert’s essay were extremely intense. Numerous controversies in the media refuted Albert’s chauvinistic views, in particular Rosa Kerschbaumer from Salzburg, who, in 1895, was the only female doctor practising in Austria. She had graduated from the University of Zurich, Switzerland, and saw Albert’s essay as a reason why the “question of women’s rights” in Austria needed more discussion. Her wish for Austrian female doctors was to compete successfully with Austrian male doctors in the — “*ars divina*” — as Albert had called medicine.

This paper will go into the discussion between Albert and Kerschbaumer and the role it played in the emancipation of scholarly / medical women in Austria.

(1) Arguments of the “male elite” against women medical studies

In the period of the rising middle classes the Habsburg Monarchy defined a new socio-cultural picture of the woman. She was seen as a tender and weak person, who subordinated herself to men and saw her fulfilment in the education of children. The picture was manifested by writings of acknowledged authorities such as Jean Jaques Rousseau in his educating novel “Emile”, where the “dependency” of women on men was represented as “the natural condition”. Women would “feel, that they are created to obey”.¹ In this milieu, higher education for women was not compatible with the traditional female role model. Female scholarship was considered a “frightening ghost” and was even seen as a threat.²

Exemplarily for this opinion stood Theodor Billroth, professor for surgery at the University of Vienna, who saw too much scientific knowledge as a danger to his daughters’ religious education: “The natural sciences have grown in popularity here in Austria so much, even amongst the female gender”, Billroth explained, “that I understand the fear of the church. If I consider that my Else already knows more plants and animals than names from the Bible, then this education restrains me in the

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¹ Gertrud Simon, “Die tüchtige Hausfrau: gebildet, aber nicht gelehrt”. Das bürgerliche Frauenbild als Erziehungsziel im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert, in: Ilse Brehmer, Gertrud Simon (eds.), *Geschichte der Frauenbildung und Mädchenerziehung in Österreich* (Graz 1997), pp. 32–43, here p. 34.

² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

interest of the church extremely.”³ “Paradise is locked for us...”, wrote the feminist Rosa Mayreder in her diary in 1873, when she was only fifteen years old.⁴

The “male elite” was successful in finding arguments against allowing women to study. Two rules could be summarized as “universally applicable”. First, a woman is “biologically inferior and mentally not qualified for higher achievements” and second, an educated and intelligent woman is “against nature”.⁵ The line of argument most commonly used opposing women to study was scientific. This includes Theodor Bischoff,⁶ professor of anatomy and physiology at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich, stating in 1872 “the mental inferiority of women”.⁷ Motivated by the vehement discussions in the German Reich, Joseph Späth, Rector of the University of Vienna and professor of gynaecology and birth assistance, selected for his inauguration speech on 12 November 1872 the topic “Medical Studies and Women”. For Späth, it was clear that “the social position of women” was a criterion for the culture of a nation. Women have to be “in each regard totally equated to men” and therefore “the temple of sciences” must be opened for men and for women.⁸

Although the Rector stood up for the intellectual equality of women’s rights, it is peculiar that he took over the biologicistic argumentation against women medical studies. Späth quoted “the law of nature”, which would assign everyone “in the Creation to a certain mission”. The “gender difference” would decide the place that fits “each individual [...] according to his or her nature”. The Rector thereby introduced a new issue into the discussion, which was used by him both: biologically and socio-culturally. In his opinion, a man in his capacity would not be influenced by hormones, whereas a woman would depend on them in all of her life phases. Her cycle would be destined for child bearing.⁹ Therefore, it would disagree with “our feeling to see a virgin in her flourishing blossom of youth with a scalpel in her hand ready to ransack the dead bodies!”¹⁰ If the Medical Faculties were opened to women, he, the Rector of the University of Vienna, would stand with a clear “no” against it.¹¹

In the struggle for higher education of women, the Habsburg Monarchy developed a completely individual “facet”. The right for free choice of career and therefore on a choice of study for all citizens, which was assured with Article 18 of the 1867 Constitution, was simply negated. The threatening loss of the civil order by women, who called in their citizen rights, forced educated citizens, to hold an unconstitutional position.¹² The liberal pathologist Carl Freiherr von Rokitansky warned, “to open the competition of women against men”. He derived “the emancipation of women” from the aspiration for

³ Theodor Billroth, “A letter to professor Lübke in Stuttgart, dated Neuwaldegg near Vienna, 16 July, 1868”, in: Theodor Billroth, *Briefe*, ed. Georg Fischer, 5. vermehrte Auflage (Hannover–Leipzig 1899), p. 95.

⁴ Margret Friedrich, “Ein Paradies ist uns verschlossen...”. Geschichte der schulischen Mädchenerziehung in Österreich im “langen” 19. Jahrhundert (Wien–Köln–Weimar 1999), p. 304.

⁵ Sonja Stipsits, “... so gibt es nichts Widerwärtigeres als ein die gesteckten Grenzen überschreitendes Mannweib.” Die konstruierte Devianz — Argumente gegen das Frauenstudium und Analyse der Umstände, die 1900 dennoch zur Zulassung von Frauen zum Medizinstudium geführt haben, in: Birgit Bolognese-Leuchtenmüller, Sonja Horn (eds.), *Töchter des Hippokrates. 100 Jahre akademische Ärztinnen in Österreich* (Wien 2000), pp. 27–43, here p. 30.

⁶ Theodor L. W. von Bischoff, *Das Studium und die Ausübung der Medicin durch Frauen* (München 1872).

⁷ Marita Kraus, “Man denke sich nur die junge Dame im Sezierraum ... vor der gänzlich entblößten männlichen Leiche”. Sozialprofil und Berufsausübung weiblicher Ärzte zwischen Kaiserreich und Republik, in: Hiltrud Häntzschel, Hadumod Bußmann (eds.), *Bedrohlich gescheit. Ein Jahrhundert Frauen und Wissenschaft in Bayern* (München 1997), pp. 139–151, here p. 140.

⁸ Joseph Späth, “Das Studium der Medizin und die Frauen. Rektoratsrede, gehalten am 12. November 1872”, in: *Wiener Medizinische Presse* 13, 48 (1872), pp. 1109–1118, here p. 1109 f.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1112 f. See Regula Julia Leemann, *Chancenungleichheiten im Wissenschaftssystem. Wie Geschlecht und soziale Herkunft Karrieren beeinflussen* (Zürich 2002), p. 42: This “(attributed) incompatibility [of] femininity [and] the children question” would be discussed particularly in these male occupations, in which “doing gender” was part of professional acting.

¹⁰ Späth, “Das Studium der Medizin und die Frauen”, in: *Wiener Medizinische Presse* 13, 48 (1872), p. 1116.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1117.

¹² Birgit Bolognese-Leuchtenmüller, “Und bei allem war man die Erste”. Einführende Bemerkungen zum Thema Frauen und Medizin, in: Bolognese-Leuchtenmüller, Horn (eds.), *Töchter des Hippokrates*, pp. 9–25, here p. 16 f.

“individualism”, which he generally recognized as a danger to society. The pathologist stressed that he “had the most liberal attitudes concerning the modern efforts”, but “the mobilization of women for the fight”, which men led amongst themselves, would alienate the two genders radically. In the search for scholarship, women would lose their femininity and make a harmonious relationship impossible.¹³

With reference to the ministerial order from 2 September 1873, which referred to the legal separation of gender in higher education, applications from women for medical studies were rejected by the Imperial Ministry for Education in Vienna. The explanation was, scientific contents of lectures would have to be transformed completely if both genders were sitting together in the lecture-halls.¹⁴ Karl Lemayer, head of a department of the ministry, mentioned “the social order”, whose guidance “would still rest in the male gender”. If women were to have “a terrain” at the university, it would be impossible to limit it.¹⁵ With a new decree from the Minister of Education, dated 6 May 1878, the ‘question of women’s rights’ was further negated at Austrian universities.¹⁶

(2) “Medical training and practice of women”

In America and many countries of Europe, allowing women to study at university coincided with the pressure applied by the civil women’s movements on the governments of the individual countries.¹⁷ In 1842, Elizabeth Blackwell enrolled at the Medical Faculty in Geneva in the State of New York, “inspired from the glowing thought to open the medical career for the world of women”. After enduring resistance and vehement reactions from the academia, she successfully graduated from the Medical Faculty in 1847.¹⁸ Since 1864, women studied medicine at the University of Zurich and from 1872, in Bern and in Geneva, Switzerland.¹⁹ In 1867, the Russian student Nadežda Prokofjewna Sušlova attained a doctorate in medicine at the University of Zurich.²⁰ As the first female doctor in Europe, she “showed women the way, hungry for knowledge”.²¹ Switzerland had succeeded as the only state in Europe in receiving a republican constitution after the Revolution of 1848. In contrast to the neighbouring monarchies, it further represented the liberal and democratic ideals of that revolution, highlighted by opening up the universities to all nationalities and both genders.²²

Exemplary for this, the eye specialist Rosa Kerschbaumer, mentioned the University of Bern, where she had experienced personally “the holy seriousness of the science”.²³ Kerschbaumer, nee

¹³ Carl Rokitansky, “Abschiedsrede, gehalten am 16. Juli 1875”, in: Carl Rokitansky, *Drei Reden (1844, 1862, 1875)*. Typoskript, geschrieben von Karl Rokitansky, p. 8 f. (Rokitansky-Nachlass, Hand-writings Collection, Institute for the History of Medicine, Medical University of Vienna).

¹⁴ Karl Lemayer, *Die Verwaltung der österreichischen Hochschulen von 1868–1877*. Im Auftrage des k. k. Ministers für Cultus und Unterricht (Wien 1878), p. 96 f.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁷ Ilse Costas, “Der Zugang von Frauen zu akademischen Karrieren. Ein internationaler Überblick”, in: Häntzschel, Bußmann (eds.), *Bedrohlich gescheit*, pp. 15–34, here p. 16.

¹⁸ Rosa Kerschbaumer, “Ueber die ärztliche Berufsbildung und Praxis der Frauen”, in: *Jahresbericht des Vereines für erweiterte Frauenbildung in Wien*. 1. Vereinsjahr, October 1888 – October 1889, 1 (1889), Beilage, pp. 1–16, here p. 8.

¹⁹ Gertrud Simon, “Durch eisernen Fleiß und rastloses, aufreibendes Studium”. Die Anfänge des Frauenstudiums in Österreich. Pionierinnen an der Universität Wien und Graz, in: Brehmer, Simon (eds.), *Geschichte der Frauenbildung*, pp. 205–219, here p. 208.

²⁰ Eduard Albert, *Die Frauen und das Studium der Medizin* (Wien 1895), p. 23.

²¹ Rosa Kerschbaumer, “Professor Albert und die weiblichen Aerzte”, in: *Neue Revue: Wiener Literatur-Zeitung* 6, 44 (1895) pp. 1381–1390, here Separatum, p. 2.

²² Natalia Tikhonov, “Das weibliche Gesicht einer “wissenschaftlichen und friedlichen Invasion”. Die ausländischen Professorinnen an den Schweizer Universitäten vom Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1939, in: *Jahrbuch für Europäische Geschichte*, 6 (2005), pp. 99–116, here p. 99.

²³ “Kerschbaumer, “Ueber die ärztliche Berufsbildung und Praxis der Frauen”, in: *Jahresbericht des Vereines für erweiterte Frauenbildung in Wien*, 1 (1889), Beilage, p. 3.

Raissa von Schlikoff (Slikova), born on 21 April 1851 in Moscow, graduated on 7 July 1876.²⁴ Her first marriage with the Russian Wladimir Putjata ended in divorce, before she started her studying in Zurich.²⁵ The young female physician started her training at Professor Ferdinand Arlt's ophthalmic clinic at the University of Vienna. Several of his attempts, to permit his female assistant to graduate at a medical faculty in Austria, were rejected by the Council of Professors at the Medical Faculty of Vienna. In 1877, Putjata-Slikova married Arlt's assistant Friedrich Kerschbaumer and together they opened an ophthalmic clinic in Salzburg.²⁶

Compared to other cities in Europe, the women's movement for higher education started relatively late in Vienna. Not before 28 October 1888 the "Association for Extended Women's Education in Vienna" was founded.²⁷ The list of the first association members shows, who of the accredited personalities in Vienna supported women studies. The large participation of Jewish families and the aristocracy is remarkable.²⁸ The Viennese association networked with the association "Reform" in Weimar, the "General German Women's Association" in Leipzig and the "Association of Students" in Zurich.²⁹ On 2 April 1889, Kerschbaumer gave a lecture at the "Association for Extended Women's Education in Vienna". It began with a historical review, in which she proved the importance of women in medicine, beginning from antiquity up to the 18th century.³⁰ Kerschbaumer disproved "the most popular objections" from opponents of medical studies for women, like the mental inability of women, because of the "lighter weight of the woman's brain". "Science and experience" would have proved for a long time, that intelligence does not depend on brain mass.³¹ A further argument was the weaker physical strength of women. However, the successful use of female doctors in the American Wars of Secession or the Krim-War in 1877 had proved the opposite.³² A third argument was the incompatibility of profession and family, which was a weak argument, since female doctors in Russia had shown, that they could manage profession and family. These female physicians however, who would not want to marry at all, only showed, that through "higher education and independence", women would be able "to look for and find their luck independently from the man".³³ Emancipatorily Kerschbaumer insured, that the times were over, where "the man carries alone the stamp of esprit on the forehead and is destined to practice intellectual hegemony forever". In conclusion to her speech Kerschbaumer quoted Max Piccolomini in 'Wallenstein': "Give us the space, the goal we will set ourselves".³⁴

Kerschbaumer's speech at the 'Association for Extended Women's Education in Vienna' influenced her own career and the education policy in Austria. In 1890 she was officially recognized as the first female doctor in Austria, even if she needed an imperial resolution for this.³⁵ In 1892, the 'Association' established the first private German-speaking grammar school for girls in Vienna.³⁶

²⁴ Matrikelektion der Universität Zürich, Wintersemester 1872, Matrikelnummer 4383, online under: <http://www.matrikel.unizh.ch/pages/60.htm> (3. Oktober 2006). See *ibid*: After her second marriage ended in divorce, Rosa Kerschbaumer returned to Russia in 1896. From 1907 to 1911 she lived in Vienna again, and then she immigrated to America. There she lived in Seattle and Los Angeles, where she died on 27 July 1923.

²⁵ Jenja Abeljanz-Schlikoff, "Von der Moskwa zur Limmat. Auszüge aus den 'Erinnerungen'. Ein Tatsachenbericht über die Emanzipation der russischen Frau", *Sie und Er*, 22 April to 3. June 1954, p. 31.

²⁶ Friedrich, *Ein Paradies ist uns verschlossen ...*, p. 135.

²⁷ *Jahresbericht des Vereines für erweiterte Frauenbildung in Wien*, 1 (1889), p. 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, "Lists of donators and members-register", pp. 11–14.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁰ Kerschbaumer, "Ueber die ärztliche Berufsbildung und Praxis der Frauen", *Jahresbericht des Vereines für erweiterte Frauenbildung in Wien*, 1 (1889), Beilage, p. 1 f.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁵ Friedrich, *Ein Paradies ist uns verschlossen ...*, p. 135.

³⁶ Marcella Stern, "Gabriele Possaner von Ehrenthal, die erste an der Universität Wien promovierte Frau", in: Waltraud Heindl, Marina Tichy (eds.), *'Durch Erkenntnis zu Freiheit und Glück ...' Frauen an der Universität*

(3) Eduard Albert — a representative of anti-feminism in medicine

In 1894, the 'Association' asked the Board of Education for the legal admission of women to the university.³⁷ Therefore, professors from different faculties were requested to present their advisory opinions. Eduard Albert, a recognized professor for surgery at the University of Vienna, stated his opinion in a publication in 1895. In "Women and Medical Studies" he wanted to prove, with an extreme thesis of character difference and different intellectual efficiency, that women were not suitable for medical studies.³⁸ All important achievements of mankind, all inventions and discoveries, all artistic and scientific achievements were, up to now, "the work of men", the surgeon tried to convince his readers. As far as he knew, women were not present in technical and cultural advancement.³⁹ With this argument Albert leaned on Bischoff strongly. The anatomist was just as convinced, that history would "show not one progress, not one discovery in sciences and arts, nor one new truth, to have ever come from a woman".⁴⁰

In order to exclude women from the scientific production process, Albert specified the woman's real aim in life with "the one and only answer: A woman wants to have children".⁴¹ Due to their emotions, women would not be able to plan rationally and to think logically at all. "The female psyche" would be "different from those of the man",⁴² even if science could not characterize it yet.⁴³ Albert polarized the gender characteristics, by calling the man "the zoon politikon, the culture-animal" and the woman the "child of nature". He would be extroverted, she would be introverted, and it was this complementation which made marriage possible, he explained.⁴⁴ Albert demonstrated the small success rate of women in medicine with the example of female graduates from the military medical academy in St. Petersburg. He reported that from 1872 to 1881, 959 women received medical training there, but less than half of them practised medicine after they graduated. The majority, Albert presumed, married. In fact they would be fulfilling the real duty of women, meaning, "to weave husbands heavenly roses in their earthly life".⁴⁵

Wilhelm Svetlin, director of a Viennese sanatorium, agreed with Albert. According to his opinion, even the blood of a man would show its "decisive position in the social order". He would have "in one cubic centimetre of his blood around a half a million more red blood corpuscles than a woman". Svetlin saw this difference in consistency of blood as further proof for "the bigger [...] efficiency of the man".⁴⁶ The 'male elite' found support in Salomon Stricker, professor for experimental pathology.

Wien (ab 1897) (Schriftenreihe des Universitätsarchivs der Universität Wien 5, Wien 1990), pp. 189–219, here p. 201.

³⁷ Irene Bandhauer-Schöffmann, "Frauenbewegung und Studentinnen. Zum Engagement der österreichischen Frauenvereine für das Frauenstudium", in: *Ibid.*, pp. 49–78, here p. 49.

³⁸ Simon, "Durch eisernen Fleiß und rastloses, aufreibendes Studium", in: Brehmer, Simon (eds.), *Geschichte der Frauenbildung*, p. 206. See Michaela Raggam, "Jüdische Studentinnen an der medizinischen Fakultät in Wien", in: Bolognese-Leuchtenmüller, Horn (eds.), *Töchter des Hippokrates*, pp. 139–156, here p. 140 — Michaela Raggam calls Albert's article a "lampoon", which would have reached "doubtful celebrity as a manual of anti-feminism".

³⁹ Albert, *Frauen und das Studium der Medizin*, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Cit. in: Späth, "Das Studium der Medizin und die Frauen", in: *Wiener Medizinische Presse* 13, 48 (1872), p. 1111 f.

⁴¹ Albert, *Frauen und das Studium der Medizin*, p. 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23 f. See Gabriele Junginger (ed.), *Maria Gräfin von Linden. Erinnerungen der ersten Tübinger Studentin* (Tübingen 1991), p. 98: "In the verses, which had been written into my poetry album by schoolmates and teachers, the most different opinions coincided. For the majority of people, the woman was still exclusively weaving the heavenly roses."

⁴⁶ Wilhelm Svetlin, *Die Frauenfrage und der ärztliche Beruf* (Leipzig–Wien 1895), p. 13.

The pathologist explained that “menstruation and migraine” were the reasons, why women were “clumsy and forgetful”. Under these conditions, a university course would not be possible.⁴⁷

According to Marita Kraus, Albert and his colleagues were against women studying medicine, because they feared young female physicians, aspiring to a career at the university. They did not want them to intrude into a male-domain.⁴⁸ The male professor was considered the personification of a scientist with a similar status as the “medicine man [...] in archaic cultures”. In the “genius cult” of male heroes, women were not intended.⁴⁹ Professors of surgery opposed women, who wanted to enter their “holy halls”, with much more resistance than professors, who represented less established disciplines.⁵⁰ This opposition was intensified by the fact that their sensational pioneer-operations had created an image of ‘Gods in White’. In their opinion, female doctors could devalue the reputation of the medical profession. Anti-feminism in medicine, like anti-Semitism, clearly represents the fear of potential competitors.⁵¹ The competition theory is not only the actual core of what is called the “Jewish question”,⁵² but also the core of the ‘question of women’s rights’ at universities.

(4) Reactions to Albert’s article about “Women and medical studies”

When Albert wrote his article about “Women and Medical Studies”, he aroused enormous interest in the media. Numerous replies disproved his chauvinist opinions. Physicians and educationists explained to the public, where the universities tended in the admission criteria. Kerschbaumer used Albert’s article, although it was a negative criticism on women, in a positive light. On the one hand, the ‘question of women’s rights’ would be discussed more strongly in Austria and on the other hand, it would be proved that even famous professors such as Albert, would not find logical arguments against women studies. In her proof for the success of female doctors, Kerschbaumer relied on exact statistics and literature, which were quoted correctly by her.⁵³

As one concise example, she mentioned the military-medical academy in St. Petersburg, which Albert had described. Starting from 1872, female students were trained separately from male students as “scholarly midwives”, but after their successful mission in the 1877 Russian-Turkish war, they were educated as “doctors”. Kerschbaumer corrected the falsified data used by Albert. From the 959 female students, not graduates, as Albert stated falsely, admitted at the military-medical academy of St. Petersburg from 1872 to 1881, 609, that was 63.5 per cent, finished their medical studies. The exact data from 409 graduates was available. They practiced in the European part of Russia, the Caucasus, Siberia and in Central Asia.⁵⁴ In order to disprove Albert, Kerschbaumer provided a registry statistic which pointed out the fact, that of the 409 practicing female doctors, 185 were single and 191 were married. This proved that “an academically educated and medically trained woman” could handle marriage, family and profession.⁵⁵ In America, Great Britain or Ireland, female doctors had worked

⁴⁷ Bandhauer-Schöffmann, “Frauenbewegung und Studentinnen”, in: Heindl, Tichy (eds.), *Durch Erkenntnis zu Freiheit und Glück ...*, p. 59.

⁴⁸ Kraus, “Man denke sich nur die junge Dame im Seziersaal”, in: Häntzschel, Bußmann (eds.), *Bedrohlich gescheit*, p. 140.

⁴⁹ Jörg Zittlau, *Eine Elite macht Kasse. Der Professorenreport* (Hamburg 1994), p. 180 f.

⁵⁰ Claudia Huerkamp, *Bildungsbürgerinnen. Frauen im Studium und in akademischen Berufen 1900–1945* (Bürgertum, Beiträge zur europäischen Gesellschaftsgeschichte 10, Göttingen 1996), p. 246.

⁵¹ See Peter A. Bochnik, *Die mächtigen Diener. Die Medizin und die Entwicklung von Frauenfeindlichkeit und Antisemitismus in der europäischen Geschichte* (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1985), p. 111: In the history of medicine many moments can be found which have led to “misogyny in medicine, to anti-Semitism, right up to human experiments in the concentration camps of the National Socialism”. The physician Peter Bochnik concludes from his investigations in the history of medicine that, these “aspects of the medicine” were not hybrids of a profession which would raise a “high ethical demand”, but should be recognized as “legitimate children”.

⁵² Robert Hein, *Studentischer Antisemitismus in Österreich* (Beiträge zur österreichischen Studentengeschichte 10, Wien 1984), p. 23.

⁵³ Kerschbaumer, “Professor Albert und die weiblichen Aerzte”, in: *Neue Revue: Wiener Literatur-Zeitung* 6, 44 (1895), Separatum, p. 1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2 f.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

satisfactorily for decades and were fully accepted by the population.⁵⁶ What women were able to achieve in medicine in other countries, could be reached in Austria as well.⁵⁷ Women's studies would not only be an economic and social question, but "in the strictest sense of the word" also a legal question. Kerschbaumer thereby politicized medical studies for women as a demand of the modern "constitutional state". "The power of the idea" would "lead Austrian women to victories". Her wish was that in the future, Austrian female doctors would compete successfully with male doctors in the "ars divina" — the "higher realm of medicine" — as Albert had called it.⁵⁸ As a self-confident representative of the first generation of female doctors, Kerschbaumer rejected the gender role model, expected from the middle classes, and strongly questioned the patriarchal family-structure. In this way, she set an impressive goal for the construction of a new female role model in society and science.⁵⁹

For the German Reich, the symbolic figure of the German women's movement, Helene Lange, took her stand to Albert's article "Women and Medical Studies". She stated with pleasure that this time, the votes against, were actually delivered in the majority by men. Lange interpreted this unexpected over representation of men in the commitment for women in medicine as a "deciding social progress". She mentioned the *Neue Wiener Journal*, which had raised in an inquiry the positions of the most well-known authorities. The summary was a destroying criticism of Albert's publication.⁶⁰ As the author saw women only as a "gender" and not as independent "individuals", his "illusory arguments" against women's studies should not be taken seriously.⁶¹ He had neither seized the existing data and facts carefully, nor had he raised new data about women in medicine. As an ideal example of a counter-statement to "the whole question" of women's studies, Lange mentioned the article of the journalist and physician Moriz Kronfeld, "Women and Medicine: Answering Professor Albert"⁶². The journalist emphasized the achievements of women in art and science, and pointed out their successes, despite difficult circumstances. Therefore it honours women even more, that outstanding men would see "in a woman not only the mate, but also the cultural being". This attitude of objectively thinking men would be the true "profit" of Albert's article on women.⁶³

Kronfeld had asked the question, whether a "surgical authority" had to be a "social one" at the same time. Nobody could expect that a surgeon would understand "the modern question of women's rights".⁶⁴ Although Albert was an expert on women's diseases, he had no idea how to appreciate "the woman as a mental individual".⁶⁵ How could a "professor misogynist" know that the only desire of women is the desire for children?⁶⁶ Albert's arguments against women studying medicine only confirmed his negative image of women.⁶⁷ Kronfeld encouraged the opening up of medical studies to women. His demand was: "Give us female physicians!"⁶⁸ It would not be "in the sense of a gracious *Alma Mater*" only to have "sons", she will welcome "daughters", too.⁶⁹ Kronfeld's roll call was strengthened by Emanuel Hannak, director of the first girls' grammar school in Vienna. He saw the woman as an

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁹ Ingrid Arias, "Die ersten Ärztinnen in Wien. Ärztliche Karrieren von Frauen zwischen 1900 und 1938", in: Bolognese-Leuchtenmüller, Horn (eds.), *Töchter des Hippokrates*, pp. 55–78, here p. 56.

⁶⁰ Helene Lange, *Professor Albert und das medizinische Studium der Frauen*, Separatum (1895), pp. 145–148, here p. 145.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁶² Ernst Moriz Kronfeld, *Die Frauen und die Medicin. Professor Albert zur Antwort. Zugleich eine Darstellung der ganzen Frage* (Wien 1895).

⁶³ Lange, *Professor Albert und das medizinische Studium der Frauen*, p. 148.

⁶⁴ Kronfeld, *Die Frauen und die Medicin*, p. 3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

individual with equal rights and chances.⁷⁰ To give young, medically interested women only the right to be trained as midwives or nurses would be an injury to the rights of women.⁷¹

(5) The generation of Baroness Gabriele Posanner von Ehrental

On 2 April 1897, Baroness Gabriele Posanner von Ehrental received a doctorate from the Medical Faculty of the University of Vienna, when she was thirty-seven years old. To celebrate her seventieth birthday, the *Neue Wiener Tagblatt*, interviewed her on 27 January 1930. Possaner reported that she had kindly asked for a nostrification of her Swiss diploma at the University of Vienna, after graduating from the Medical Faculty of the University of Zurich in December 1893. However, the Constitutional Court rejected it.⁷² Not until she got permission from His Majesty Franz Joseph I, was she allowed to repeat the doctoral exams in Vienna, even though she had already completed it successfully in Switzerland.⁷³ Possaner mentioned “famous university professors, who refused to examine a woman”. The surgeon Albert had to be fetched from his flat first. Stricker and Hermann Nothnagel, professor of internal medicine, tried to reject examinations of female students and to prevent the nostrification of her Swiss doctorate. The reason, that was always given, was that a woman does not possess “at all the mental abilities for higher education”.⁷⁴ The nostrification of Possaner’s doctorate continued to energize the discussion about medical studies for women in Austria. On 3 September 1900 they were approved by law in the Lower House of the Austrian Reichsrat.⁷⁵ Prussia had to wait till 1908. Retrospective of her own career path, Possaner encouraged the decision to become a doctor to all women:

I do not believe that a woman can lose the eternal-femininity by her profession as a physician, because the eternal cannot be lost.⁷⁶

The first female physicians in Austria had entered a domain, structured like all political institutions around 1900 “after male needs and experiences”. Eva Kreisky calls this male environment of the university “a sedimented or encapsulated masculinity”.⁷⁷ The natural sciences, medicine and law were “preferred places of sexist male presence”. Painful discriminations shaped the memories of the first graduates of these studies, but at the same time they developed successful mechanisms of delimitation and self confidence.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, in the history of medicine, the ‘question of women’s rights’ may not be reduced to a history of “the suppressed gender”, stresses Sabine Schleiermacher. The experiences of female physicians should be seen “in their relationship with both: women and men”. Only in this way “could difference and equality” be made visible.⁷⁹

⁷⁰ Emanuel Hannak, *Prof. E. Alberts Essay. Die Frauen und das Studium der Medicin, kritisch beleuchtet* (Wien 1895), p. 11.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷² “Die erste Ärztin Wiens. Besuch bei Frau Medizinalrat Dr. Possaner”, in: *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* vom 25. Jänner 1930, Abschrift, p. 3.

⁷³ Stern, Gabriele, “Possaner von Ehrental”, in: Heindl, Tichy (eds.), *Durch Erkenntnis zu Freiheit und Glück...*, p. 207.

⁷⁴ “Die erste Ärztin Wiens”, in: *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* vom 25. Jänner 1930, Abschrift, p. 2 f.

⁷⁵ Simon, “Durch eisernen Fleiß und rastloses, aufreibendes Studium”, in: Brehmer, Simon (eds.), *Geschichte der Frauenbildung*, p. 210.

⁷⁶ “Die erste Ärztin Wiens”, in: *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* vom 25. Jänner 1930, Abschrift, p. 3.

⁷⁷ Doris Ingrisch, Brigitte Lichtenberger-Fenz, “Feministin. Wissenschaftlerin. Feministische Wissenschaftlerin? Ein wissenschaftshistorischer Rekonstruktionsversuch”, in: Christina Lutter, Elisabeth Menasse-Wiesbauer (eds.), *Frauenforschung, feministische Forschung, Gender Studies: Entwicklung und Perspektiven*. Materialien zur Förderung von Frauen in der Wissenschaft 8 (Wien 1999), pp. 41–93, here p. 57.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁷⁹ Sabine Schleiermacher, “Ärztinnen im Kaiserreich”, in: Christoph Meinel, Monika Renneberg (eds.), *Geschlechterverhältnisse in Medizin, Naturwissenschaft und Technik*. Im Auftrag des Vorstandes der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Medizin, Naturwissenschaft und Technik (Bassum–Stuttgart 1996), pp. 217–224, here p. 222.

(6) Conclusion

Compared to other countries in Europe and to America, the legalization of medical studies for women in the Habsburg Monarchy turned out to be an extremely lengthy and complicated process. One reason for this was that the patriarchal society held on to the traditional civil picture of a woman for a long time. Thereby, it locked out equal rights for women in their private and working lives. The democratization process, which universities of other countries in Europe and America had carried out for a long time, failed in the Habsburg Monarchy. The dominance and admiration for scientifically oriented medicine, led to an unquestioning transmission of the biologicistic terminology on the explanation of social processes on society.

With the increasing liberalization of the society in the last third of the 19th century, the entrance of women to universities and to medical studies could not be prevented anymore. Professors, who had separated from the patriarchal world view, stood up for equal rights of both genders and supported them thereby. Their rate of success in medical studies for women should be considered more strongly in historical research. Strong networks were created by male and female physicians, once medical studies for women were finally allowed. They contributed to the international success of the Viennese Medical School.