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The Sophie Mentored Research Project: Red Vienna Sourcebook and The Critically Annotated Collected Works of Elisa von der Recke

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Rob McFarland and Michelle S. James

Acknowledgements:

Without funding there would be no Sophie project, which is why the first item in this report on the Sophie activities during 2017 must be an expression of our gratitude to both the ORCA office and to the College of Humanities, on behalf of the faculty members involved, and particularly, on behalf of the many students whose lives have been enriched in numerous ways by their Sophie work. We are aware of the many projects vying for your attention and funding, and are particularly grateful for the support you have given this project over the years. Your grants have enriched the education and scholarship of over 150 students who have been directly employed by the project, as well as numerous others who have been involved in Sophie scholarship through classes, ORCA projects, Masters theses, Honors theses, capstone papers, and internships. In addition, your generosity has enhanced the research and learning of thousands of individuals across the world who regularly make use of the online Sophie Digital Library (http://sophie.byu.edu).

Part 1: Sophie’s Red Vienna Sourcebook Project


Project Overview:

With the help of six undergraduate students working in the “Red Vienna Lab” of the Sophie Mentored Research project, Prof. Rob McFarland was able to find, digitize and submit over 300 German-language texts for consideration for inclusion in the Red Vienna Sourcebook, a critical edition of original documents from the Red Vienna period (1918-1934). The Red Vienna Sourcebook will appear with Camden House publishers in 2019 in German and English editions. Part of the cost of the publication of the book is being covered by the City of Vienna as a part of the celebration for the 100th anniversary of the founding of the First Austrian Republic and the rise of the Social Democratic government which brought about the fascinating experiment with municipal socialism that has come to be known as Red Vienna.

The texts submitted by the Sophie researchers entered into competition with hundreds of other texts that were submitted by researchers from around the world for consideration for inclusion in the Red Vienna Sourcebook. The goal of the Sophie researchers was to provide texts written by women to be included in the sourcebook. The texts that the students submitted were reviewed by an editorial board made up of 23 scholars from Harvard University, the University of Vienna, UC Berkeley, UNC Chapel Hill, the University of Missouri in Columbia, Karl Eberhards University in Tübingen, Washington University in St. Lewis, the University of Chicago, and several other institutions. The final version of the Red Vienna Sourcebook contains 252 texts, and about one tenth of the final selections either came directly from the Sophie Project’s “Red Vienna Lab” or were included due to the influence of the texts submitted by our students.
One example of the contributions of the Sophie researchers is a text by the music critic Elsa Bienenfeld which appears in the “New Music” chapter of the Red Vienna Sourcebook. This article was chosen to represent the influence of Arnold Schönberg, who was arguably the very most important Viennese musician during the Red Vienna period, and most influential composers of the 20th century. Our students discovered the Bienenfeld article, which consists of her review of Schönberg’s first Viennese performance of Pierrot Luniére, his iconic Modernist composition for soprano and chamber ensemble. This spectacular find by our students does not only serve the Red Vienna Sourcebook well, it also serves to place Bienenfeld back into scholarly discussions of the Viennese music during the 1920’s. This is the entire purpose of the Sophie Mentored Research project: to find women’s voices that played important roles in historical, aesthetic or scientific discourses and to make their works available to modern scholars. The students who participated in the projects are named in the acknowledgements of the book.

**Project Mentor:**

Professor Rob McFarland has mentored dozens of students over the years as a part of the Sophie Mentored Research project and the ORCA Mentored Research Grant program. For many years, he taught the campus-wide workshop for students who were applying for an ORCA Grant at BYU. He is the co-editor the Red Vienna Sourcebook along with Ingo Zechner, the director of the Ludwig Boltzmann Historical Institute in Vienna, and Georg Spitaler, a researcher in Vienna’s Society for the History of the Workers Movement (VGA). This ca. 900-page book is a critical edition of original documents from the so-called “Red Vienna” period after the First World War when the city of Vienna embarked on a daring experiment of municipal socialism. The sourcebook contains hundreds of documents, all of them annotated and translated into English for use by American scholars. Professor McFarland’s specific duties as editor include negotiating with the publisher, editing all of the English translations, and co-authoring the volume introduction, timeline, and bibliography. He is also a chapter editor and for three chapters of the book: Americanism, Religion/Secularism, and Jewish Life and Culture, and he curates, edits, introduces and translates the texts in those chapters. He is also translating two additional chapters about Austromarxism and National Socialism in Vienna. Dr. McFarland Over the course of the MEG project, Prof. McFarland worked closely with the students as they identified the most compelling and historically useful articles. Prof. McFarland gave feedback on the students’ drafts of article summaries and overviews, providing them with models and corrected drafts. He trained them to upload the selected articles and finished summaries/overviews to the database of the Red Vienna Sourcebook project, and invited the students participate in conference calls with the editors of the various chapters to discuss the merits of the various articles that were submitted.

**Mentored Student Researchers and their Accomplishments**

Over the course of this MEG project, Prof. McFarland has worked closely with Sophie researchers Christopher Taylor, Gina Ballard, Kemery Dunn, Elisabeth Allred, Joshua Savage and Blake Taylor. In their virtual “Red Vienna Lab,” The students developed their reading comprehension skills using the difficult Gothic alphabet, learned about the historic discourses and personalities of the Red Vienna period, and scoured Austria’s magnificent ANNO online Newspaper database to find articles, op-ed pieces, book and film reviews, manifestos, reportages, and polemic discussions written by Austrian women. The students first focused on newspapers that were central to the Social Democratic project of “Austromarxism,” such as the Arbeiter Zeitung, Der Kuckuck and Der Ausruf. After searching through the Austromarxist newspapers, students searched through the Neue Freie Presse, the Neues Wiener Journal and other newspapers that represent the middle-class opposition movement in Vienna. They also looked at those newspapers and journals that vehemently spoke out against the programs of Red Vienna, including the Catholic press, the conservative nationalist press, and the ultra-right wing press that sympathized with the emerging Nazi party in Germany.

The team of Sophie researchers identified thousands of article-length texts, read them carefully to determine their quality and potential contribution to the Red Vienna Sourcebook, narrowed down the
number of texts to approximately 300, and then wrote summaries of each text and posted them in an online databank used by the 23 chapter editors of the Red Vienna Sourcebook. The process of finding, selecting, and commenting on the articles was a herculean effort that required an excellent knowledge of German, and the researchers compiling the Red Vienna Sourcebook were amazed by the volume and quality of the work by the student researchers.

Description of the Red Vienna Sourcebook:

In the current blockbuster German TV series Babylon Berlin, available in North America via Netflix, viewers are introduced to the tumultuous years between the two world wars, a period in German history referred to as the Weimar Republic. Critics have praised the series for its relevance to our present time, for its episodes show the power of dark populist forces as they undermine a fragile democracy and the rule of law. While Weimar-era Germany and its history, art, and culture make a fascinating backdrop, the period does not inspire much hope for our present-day political and cultural woes: most of the idealistic ideas and plans of the period fell victim to Germany’s political instability.

A fascinating contrast can be found in the Austrian capital of Vienna. After the First World War the former imperial city elected a stable Social Democratic majority. Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, “Red Vienna” (as it was derisively called by its critics) became the site of successful large-scale experiments in public housing, hygiene, and education, while still maintaining its world-class contributions to music, literature, art, culture, and science. Though Red Vienna eventually fell victim to fascist violence, the era left a rich legacy that has the potential to influence our own tumultuous time.

Inspired by the successful Weimar Republic Sourcebook (1994), our Red Vienna Sourcebook will provide English-speaking scholars and students with original documents from the interwar period, carefully curated and translated into English and provided with thorough introductions and commentaries. The book’s thirty-six chapters include primary works from canonical names such as Sigmund Freud and Arthur Schnitzler but also introductions to lesser-known figures such as sociologist Käthe Leichter or health policy pioneer Julius Tandler. These documents will appeal to researchers in such diverse areas as economics, architecture, music, film history, philosophy, women’s studies, sports and body culture, and Jewish studies.

Why Red Vienna? Why a Sourcebook?

The 2008 financial crisis, the current erosion of parliamentary democracy, and the increasing power of populist parties recall the period between the two world wars. While the downfall of the Weimar Republic has become a horrifying symbol for a certain historical fatalism prevalent in contemporary scholarship, Red Vienna (Rotes Wien) suggests a hopeful alternative, a different historical path at a time before fascism had triumphed.

The relatively short epoch of Red Vienna begins with the municipal council elections of May 4, 1919. It brought the Social Democratic Workers’ Party (SDAP) an absolute majority in Vienna in the first elections to have been held with universal male and female suffrage. It ends in the Austrian Civil War in February 1934. Red Vienna, whose name was originally coined as the battle cry of political opponents, has retrospectively come to represent the possibility of a successful social-political countermodel that was later violently destroyed. The internal fissures and contradictions of Red Vienna resonate with contemporary questions and debates and raise issues that are now almost forgotten. Public housing, health care and welfare, culture and education were financed by a radical tax system that favored the poor and burdened the rich – a tax system that discovered luxury as a source of income instead of rejecting it outright. Indeed, the existence of Red Vienna depended on the existing relations of production rather than overturning them. The betrayal of the revolution bemoaned by Marxist critics, however, opened up the possibility of a redistribution of public and private roles. The refugee crisis after the collapse of the multi-ethnic Empire in World War I, the formation of a new Europe of nation states, the
financial and economic crises of the young and conservatively governed Republic of Austria, and the establishment of a new consumer and leisure culture shaped this urban experiment.

Red Vienna may therefore be considered a model for strategies of urban economic crisis management, the re-democratization of urban space or the politics of residential building and urban planning. It provides one set of answers about how to build a city without slums and ghettos, how to ensure health care for all, and how to create a socially transparent system of education. These questions remain pertinent today, although they are audible as distant echoes from a time when the political will to change and the forces of enlightenment entered into a fragile alliance with one another.

While the term “interwar Vienna” suggests a teleological development inevitably leading from one war to the next, Red Vienna may be understood as a space of possibilities with an open ending. Rather than simply forgetting the promises of the past, The Red Vienna Sourcebook investigates their meaning in the past and present: what do they tell us about historical possibilities, political struggles, the continuities and discontinuities of history, as well as its fulfilled or unfulfilled emancipatory hopes?

The Red Vienna Sourcebook will include a constellation of influential texts that are thematically connected with the Red Vienna movement, major contributions to the political, social and scientific discourses of that period. The Sourcebook will restrict itself to texts published between 1919 and 1934. Red Vienna is understood in its broadest sense as an alternate epochal term including various aspects of Vienna’s cultural life, and the Catholic forces that constituted an alternate “Black Vienna” as well as the “Brown Vienna” of the National Socialists. We believe these other political movements are best understood in their dynamic relationship to Red Vienna.

Through the lens of the primary texts, the conflicts of the era will become visible in sharp relief. The selection of texts will be oriented around canonical concepts (e.g. architecture, health, education, women’s rights, religion, political consensus and conflict, ethnic and cultural diversity). The book will privilege shorter texts and edit longer documents to clearly acknowledge the omissions and enable specialists to return to the primary sources in German.

**Part 2: The Critically Annotated Collected Works of Elisa von der Recke**

**Publication:**

Michelle Stott James (Ed.) The Critically Annotated Collected Works of Elisa von der Recke. (Vol 1 Manuscript ready to send to publishers, project proposal currently under review by multiple publishers)

**Project Overview:**

With the help of this MEG grant, Prof. Michelle S. James and a team of students continued the process of completing Volume I of a 5-volume E-book project: The Critically Annotated Collected Works of Elisa von der Recke. Recke’s writings, presented as a complete collection for the first time in this edition, cut across several fields of study, such as Literary, Cultural, and Area Studies, Religious Studies, History, Women’s History, and Music, though they provide much material of general interest as well. Each volume consists of German-language primary documents published by Recke and those surrounding her, accompanied by an extensive critical apparatus in English. The primary documents have been fully transcribed into modern script, and have been repeatedly proofread in order to ensure accuracy of presentation. In addition to critical notes provided in individual texts, each volume is accompanied by a file of annotations which can be accessed from the text through hyperlinks. A particular highlight of the collected works appears in Volume II, which contains Recke’s exposé of the notorious charlatan Cagliostro, and texts from the ensuing newspaper debate in which Recke was embroiled. Volume IV in the collection presents a number of musical settings of Recke’s poetry, written by various composers. These have all been
carefully transcribed into modern music notation, and are accompanied by a professional-level recording of a selection of these songs in mp3 form.

Project Description:

Though most of her works have now vanished into the dust of libraries, during her life, as an author, traveler, social luminary, and salonnière, Elisa von der Recke (1754-1833) stood at the crossroads of European history and culture. Born in the Duchy of Courland (now Latvia) to one of the oldest German-speaking noble families in that area, Recke was positioned at the intersection between the conflicting intellectual discourses of religion and rational Enlightenment; between intellect and sentiment (Empfindsamkeit); between the noble class, to which she belonged, and the bourgeoisie, whom she preferred; between her German cultural heritage and the political heritage of Courland, linked as it was to Poland and then Russia; between traditional views of a woman’s role and her own endless intellectual striving.

Because of her central position in the culture of her time, Recke’s writings impart a wealth of insight relevant to gender, political history, religious history, philosophical history, travel, and culture. They provide a vivid first-hand glimpse into the complex cultural, historical, and intellectual milieu of central Europe, as spanned by the 77 years of Recke’s life. Throughout her adult life, Recke sat in the circles where German intellectual life was being generated. As a result, her writings reflect the flowering of art and literature at the critical juncture when the Enlightenment outlook was transforming into Empfindsamkeit and the Romantic spirit. They disclose the vigor of the rising middle class, set against a frankly critical view of the traditional noble lifestyle. Honored by Catherine the Great of Russia for her enlightened service in “the Cagliostro affair,” Recke corresponded with people as varied as J. W. Goethe, Schiller, Bertel Thorvaldsen, Beethoven, Giacomo Casanova, J. K. Lavater, Anna Louise Karsch, Friedrich Nicolai, Jean Paul Richter, and Johanna Schopenhauer. The collected letters and contemporary descriptions supplied by this edition show many sides of Recke as an author, salonnière, social leader, and thinker; they openly discuss her gifts and her limitations, reporting both positive and negative responses from the people who surrounded her.

Project Mentor:

Prof. Michelle S. James is the founder and director of the Sophie Digital Library and the Sophie Mentored Research Project. She has mentored over one hundred “Sophies” (as the student researchers are called) over the years, collecting a library of student theses, articles and papers that discuss and evaluate the contribution of women to Germany’s cultural history. Prof. James oversaw all of the student mentoring in the Recke project. With the exception of money used for supplies such as photocopying, postage, permissions, and the purchase of out-of-print books, all funding in 2017 was applied to student wages. As outlined in the Mentoring Environments Grant proposal, the predominant focus of the work during 2017 has been the five-volume Critically Annotated Collected Works of Elisa von der Recke. Volume I of the critical edition is the most significant, and therefore has taken the most time, because it includes the introduction to the entire collected works, a chronology and biographical sketch of Recke’s life, a bibliography of primary and secondary works connected with Recke, a photo gallery, and an essay detailing portraits and busts of Recke, in addition to the critical annotations to the texts. With a project this large (Volume I contains over 2,000 pages), it has taken endless hours to bring the project to the point of completion. However, at this time, the part of Volume I which could be successfully undertaken by student researchers is essentially finished.

Mentored Student Researchers and their Accomplishments

With the help of MEG funding in 2015 and 2016, under the direction of Dr. James, Gavin Grant oversaw the preparation, editing and proofing of the texts for Volumes II and III, which is a far less extensive task
than was involved in Volume I. During 2016 the work of text preparation was pushed forward by Taylor Blanchard, Elisabeth Allred, Gwyn Kutschke, Kate Carr, Brock Mildon, Tatiana Rudolphi and Mason Price. Gavin also followed the template established by Alec Down in putting Volumes II and III into Ebook format. Brock and Taylor carried on the work of preparing the file of words to be annotated for Volumes II and III. In doing this, they followed the system established for Volume I, and drew wherever possible on the annotations already completed for that volume. David Seay, who has extensive musical training, pushed forward the work, begun in previous years by Tara Austin and Aubrey Hatch, of transcribing the musical settings of many of Recke’s poems for Volume IV of the collected works. In addition, he and Tyler Boehmer prepared a professional-level recording of a selection of the Recke songs, which will likewise be included with the finished version of Volume IV.

Now that we have templates formed, have mastered the process of InDesign formatting and E-book production, and have made decisions concerning numerous details of formatting and presentation, we have been able to produce Volumes II and III with much more rapidity and ease than was the case with Volume I. Because of this, the MEG funding in 2017 allowed us to focus on Volume IV of the collected works. The tasks which we accomplished during 2017 are as follows:

The Sophie research team almost completely finished the work of formatting, correcting, proofing and reproofing all of the texts for Volume IV, following the system established for Volume I.

- Elisabeth Allred, Tatiana Rudolphi, and Kemery Dunn continued to compile the annotations for Volumes II and III, drawing wherever possible on the annotations already completed for Volume I.
- Gavin Grant and Tatiana Rudolphi finished formatting any unformatted primary texts belonging in Volume IV as an E-book, and then moved on to format the texts for Volume V.
- Kate Carr, who has training as a musicologist, completely proofed, corrected, standardized, and formatted in the Sibelius program all of the transcribed music for Volume IV.
- Gina Fowler, who has experience in genealogical research, corrected, completed, and developed final formatting for the Recke genealogy which Dr. James had previously compiled.
- As a side note, Robert Sowby, Mallorie Guerra, Margaret Ebeling, David Mann, Nathan Conder, and Luke Swenson have all completed their ORCA projects, and Carrie Cox completed her Master’s thesis, by preparing introductions to several different sections of the Recke Collection: the general introduction to the edition, Recke’s portraits, memoirs, travel writings, Cagliostro writings, and religious poetry, and significant texts written about her. These are now ready to be edited and included in their appropriate volumes.
- During her professional development leave and the following spring/summer, Dr. James made extensive progress toward completing all of the introductions and scholarly annotations belonging to Volume I.
- Dr. James, who had already researched E-book publishers and their requirements, revised the E-book proposal, and developed a short preliminary proposal which she began sending out to potential publishers.

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