

**Edited by Kirsti Niskanen and Michael J. Barany, *Gender, Embodiment, and the History of the Scholarly Persona: Incarnations and Contestations*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, xx+358 pp., ISBN: 9783030496050**

This volume brings together an international and interdisciplinary team of 15 historians, historians of science, and media and marketing scholars around the purpose of investigating the historical formation of gendered and embodied scholarly personae. It is a timely and most welcome contribution for at least two reasons. First, by drawing on the steadily expanding literature that has emerged since Lorraine Daston and Otto Sibum first introduced “scientific personae” as a useful concept for historical analysis, and by discussing more recent conceptual contributions by, for example, Herman Paul and Mineke Bosch, but also by entering into dialogue with the contemporary cultural and media scholarship centered around the journal *Persona Studies*, Kirsti Niskanen and Michael J. Barany's introductory framing provides a fresh, open-minded, but also explicitly integrative approach to these conceptual developments.<sup>1</sup> In that sense, the book can be read as a state of the art of the emerging field of historical persona studies.

The second reason is that the volume is one of the first collected and systematic attempts at studying the history of scholarly personae through the lens of gender and embodiment. By doing so, the 12 individual chapters—all of them well-written and rich in historical texture—show in various ways how scholarly personae have been embodied in gendered behaviors and performances, and how these contextually embedded identities were mediated in scholarly practices, academic cultures, and self-representations. The more general relevance and applicability of this approach is furthermore illustrated by the chronological width and disciplinary breadth of the empirical cases highlighted. The essays include examples from mathematics, botany, medicine, psychology, pedagogics, sociology, history, philosophy, and the arts, ranging from the early 19th century to the 20th and even including a case on scientists' online public communication today. Geographically, the volume is concentrated on the European and North American spheres—and not least the transatlantic exchanges connecting the two—although a couple of chapters help stretch the spatial scope by including Eastern Asia and Australia in the narrative.

<sup>1</sup> See Daston & Sibum (2003); Paul (2014); Bosch (2018); Marshall & Barbour (2015).

Thematically, the volume is structured in three sections. The first, “Personae on the Move,” highlights how travel, international scientific exchange programs, and funding bodies contributed to the creation and reshaping of gendered scholarly identities, in chapters by Michael J. Barany, Anna Cabanel, Kaat Wils, and Pieter Huistra. In addition, John L. Hennessey’s fascinating essay on the American agricultural scholar William Smith Clark’s travel to Hokkaido in the 1870s provides an intriguing example of the co-production of science and masculinity in an explicitly colonial context.

The second section, entitled “Bodies on Display,” includes chapters by Heini Hakosalo, Julia Dahlberg, and Kim Barbour and colleagues. Here, Hakosalo’s essay on anatomical studies in *fin-de-siècle* Finland deserves special mention. By following the pioneering female medical student Rosina Heikel, the chapter effectively illustrates how the gendered and embodied skills and virtues of the “medical persona” were used as grounds for discrimination, while also providing a brilliant visual analysis of some photographs in which these bodily expressions were represented.


The third and final section, “Multiple Masculinities,” presents four case-studies by Isak Hammar, Herman Paul, Christiaan Engberts and Kirsti Niskanen on different, sometimes competing, scholarly masculinities and virtues. Niskanen’s concluding chapter on the shifting persona of the Swedish philosopher Einar Tegen in the inter-war years can be read as a kind of synthesis of the volume in the way it brings together the three main themes on the role of travel, embodiment, and multiple masculinities, and in its exemplification of how the single-sex academic culture in Tegen’s case was critically undergirded by less recognized, but no less decisive, heterosocial relations.

As a whole, this carefully edited volume with its 12 chapters convincingly testifies to the analytical strength and usefulness of the scholarly persona as a middle-range concept mediating in both directions between the individual and the institutional, but also the great potential in the ongoing conceptual debates about its most central theoretical components with regard to the role of trust and reliability and/or epistemic virtues and skills, as exemplified in the various cases. Another important, but less explicated quality is the way the persona approach opens up otherwise problematic types of empirical sources for central analyses, like memoirs, autobiographies, obituaries and—especially with regard to the gendered and embodied aspects—photographs and other visual representations, as shown over and over again in the individual essays.

A point of reflection in relation to the general question about “how scientific personae are embodied in gendered behaviours and performances on individual and institutional levels” (p. 5) concerns the repeated emphasis on the role of travel and funding. No doubt that mobility and the experiences of alternative social and cultural settings were crucial for the construction and reshaping of personae in the empirical cases selected. But one might ponder, in more general terms, how important they were compared to more everyday and routinized contexts of sociability in, let us say, the seminar room, the laboratory, and similar sites of knowledge. On the other hand, the very question about the relation between embodiment and routinized work is one of the three themes suggested for further exploration in the continuation of this

volume (the two others being the circulation of personae and the relational role of women in the shaping of academic masculinities).

Beyond discussing what can be further developed in the future, however, it is more important to underline what the volume actually achieves and convincingly shows: that the scholarly persona is a most productive concept for analyzing the relation between identity and knowledge-making in the history of science, and that the formation of these academic identities—including in seemingly homosocial masculine settings—should be seen as deeply gendered and embodied processes. These qualities alone make this ground-breaking volume deserve a broad readership in the general field of history of science.

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