

**Anja Schüler.** *Frauenbewegung und soziale Reform: Jane Addams und Alice Salomon im transatlantischen Dialog, 1889-1933.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004. 391 S. EUR 44.00, gebunden, ISBN 978-3-515-08411-6.



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In *Frauenbewegung und soziale Reform*, Anja Schüler undertakes the delicate task of writing a dual biography of two significant women in social-welfare reform. Her goal is to illustrate the close parallels between the development of the American and German systems. Her subjects, Jane Addams and Alice Salomon, are well-known in the history of social welfare for students on either side of the Atlantic. The comparison of their personal lives and professional careers provides a different perspective on both social welfare reform and the women's movement at the turn of the century. The end result is not so much a dialogue between the two women's histories as it is a balancing act of two nearly similar tales taken in hand individually.

The book is divided into two distinct halves, with the first half of the work devoted to Jane Addams (1860-1935) and the second to Alice Salomon (1872-1948). Social welfare work is the nexus at which Addams and Salomon meet. Both women were well-educated daughters of comfortable middle-class origins, and they decided the traditional path of marriage and children was not going to make sufficient use of their education and

interests. They chose to devote their lives to social welfare work, with Addams opening Hull House in Chicago in 1889 and Salomon founding the Mädchen-und Frauengruppen für soziale Hilfsarbeit in Berlin in 1893 and the Soziale Frauenschule in 1908. They saw this work as a useful application of their education as well as an opportunity to relieve the hardships of the modern urban industrial working class. Salomon most definitely admired and emulated Addams, while Addams willingly acknowledged Salomon as her German counterpart. Both women took active roles in the international women's movement after the turn of the century. They were not strong voices in the women's suffrage movement, seeing the right to vote as not much more than something that would bring a feminizing, nurturing touch to the development of their respective state's welfare systems and to the public realm in general. Neither Addams nor Salomon looked to professional social welfare work as paying careers for middle-class women, nor did they wish to see women moving into the harsh realm of political participation. Their attitudes illustrate the concepts of Karen Offen's "relational feminism" and Jean Quataert's "reluctant feminists," in which middle-

class, reform-minded women are seen as less interested in political or legal equality and more interested in extending women's traditional social and civic roles into the public realm.[1] Their perspective on social welfare reform fits the paradigm of gendered difference put forward by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, among many others.[2]

During and after the First World War, Addams and Salomon encountered criticism for their continuing connection to the international women's movement. Addams's pacifism, which stemmed from her Quaker upbringing, and her dedication to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom served to distract and detract from her work in the settlement movement. Salomon's desire to continue in the international movement ran counter to most mainstream German women's organizations during and after the war, when support for the war effort curtailed the ambitions of many of Germany's social and political reformers. Her internationalism also cost her the possibility of a leadership role in the development of the social welfare system following the war as well as in the Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine, the umbrella German women's organization. Yet for both, the costs they incurred did not outweigh the importance they placed on their international associations. Schüler does not offer critical analysis of the decisions to support unpopular positions during the war or to only reluctantly support greater political activism for women. One might wish for a consideration of the cost of these choices for the causes that Addams and Salomon did support, in particular the professionalization of social welfare work and the greater involvement of their respective states in creating welfare systems.

The dual biographies break little new ground regarding Addams and her social welfare commitment or Salomon and her role in German developments. They draw heavily from existing biographical sources and especially Addams's and Salomon's autobiographies, *Twenty Years at Hull*

*House* and *Charakter ist Schicksal*, respectively. [3] The work, however, does make extensive use of archival material to show just how international women's political and social activism was at the turn of the century. The "finishing tour" Addams made where she first visited Toynbee Hall in England, a similar trip made by Salomon to England, the many trips between Europe, the United States, and Canada for international conferences, and particularly the correspondence between women throughout Europe and the United States illustrate a side of the women's movement and of the development of social welfare systems often overlooked in studies focused on individuals, single states, or individual organizations.

One focal point of the book is the impact of state structure on the welfare programs that Addams and Salomon could create. Schüler's discussion of "weak" versus "strong" states, again drawing on Koven and Michel among others, compares the United States with Germany and presents an integral difference that deserves greater exploration. The challenge for American social welfare was the lack of a federal commitment because of the less centralized American system, while the challenge for the German welfare structure was a state that was too centrally organized, limiting the actions of local organizations. It is a paradox that Schüler does not adequately examine. However, there were additional barriers to Salomon's success, including the *Vereinsgesetz*, which prohibited political organization for women, and Salomon's Jewish origins, which would not be ignored despite her conversion to Christianity, especially after 1933. These were critical problems that Jane Addams did not have to face and limited Salomon's ability to fully realize her ambitions. The external hindrance of state structure was critical for both women while the political and legal limitations in Germany were of tremendous significance for Salomon. These obstacles needed more critical analytical attention than Schüler provides.

This work is a good introduction to the transatlantic "dialogue" found in the women's movement and social welfare reform. The biographies are too short to give much sense of the women as individuals, but this can be offset by reading either's autobiography. The intent of the work is to bring to light the cooperation and close working relationship shared by German and American women and to suggest that the international women's movement had greater influence than has been noted in the past. This work could easily lead to further examination of the issues raised by Schüler, in particular the impact of state structure on social welfare systems on either side of the Atlantic.

#### Notes

[1]. Karen M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); and Jean Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

[2]. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

[3]. Salomon's autobiography has recently been published in the original English: Andrew Lees, ed., *Character is Destiny: The Autobiography of Alice Salomon* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004). Wolfgang Ayaß reviewed this text for H-German, see <<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=223221106922238>> (July 2004).

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