

GENDER STUDIES

Vol. 1 No. 6/2007

GENDER STUDIES

Vol. 1 No. 6/2007

Gender Studies

**Revista de Studii de Gen a Centrului Interdisciplinar de Studii de Gen al
Universității de Vest Timișoara**

ISSN 1583-980X

GENDER STUDIES

Editor: Reghina Dascăl

Language consultant: Stuart Elford

ADVISORY BOARD:

Haleh Afshar - University of York

Pia Brînzeu - University of the West, Timișoara

**Joan Kennedy Taylor - National Coordinator of the
Association of Libertarian Feminists, USA**

Hildegard Klein - University of Málaga

Krystyna Kujawska-Courtney - University of Łódź

Isabel Marcus - State University of New York, Buffalo

Hortensia Pârlog - University of the West, Timișoara

Nóra Séllei - University of Debrecen

**Ann Stone – Co-founder of The National Women’s
History Museum in Washington, D.C.**

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

All correspondence should be addressed to:

Reghina Dascăl, Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies,

English Department, University of the West Timișoara

Blvd. V. Pârvan, no. 4-6, 300223 Timișoara

Phone/fax (+ 40) 256 452 224; e-mail: reghina_dascal@yahoo.co.uk

CONTENTS

Through the Lens of Gender. Sites of Gendered Representation and Discourse

LELIA CHILĂRESCU The Sexual Identity and Orientation of the
Mass Media /

SMARANDA ȘTEFANOVICI The Representation of Women in Films /

Women Writers Subvert the Canon

VLADISLAVA GORDIĆ PETKOVIĆ The Character and Setting
and NATAŠA KARANFILOVIĆ in Women's Writing /

ADRIANA RĂDUCANU Outer Mobility, Inner Becoming in *Jane Eyre* and *The
Autobiography of a Turkish Girl* /

BOŽENA KUČAŁA The Strange Case of the Double Woman: Rewriting the
Victorian Classic /

OLIVIA BĂLĂNESCU Touching the Untouchable: Issues of Gender and Caste
in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* /

The Conundrum of Gender

ANDREA KRISTON Treacherous Desire in William S. Burroughs's *Queer* /

KORINNA CSETÉNYI Female Masochism in Stephen King's *Gerald's Game*/

Gender, Culture, Society

CATHERINE MACMILLAN	The Feminine in the Culture of the Ancient Britons /
REMINA SIMA	Encouraging Women to be Learned and Wise /

Visions of Power/Powers of Vision

ANDREEA ȘERBAN	The Fascination of the Female Body /
ANEMONA FILIP ALB	Look Who’s Talking: Gendered Discourse in Margaret Atwood’s <i>Backdrop Addresses Cowboy</i> /
REGHINA DASCĂL	Christine de Pizan’s Engagement with the ‘Male Gaze’ /

Women in a Changing World

DIANA ELENA BONCESCU	The Modern World and Women Presidents: the Beginnings /
MAGDALENA ROIBU	Rhythm and <i>Bulz</i> /
DIANA DĂMEAN	A Feminist Critique of the European Constitution /

About the Authors /

**Through the Lens of Gender. Sites of Gendered
Representation and Discourse**

THE SEXUAL IDENTITY AND ORIENTATION OF THE MASS MEDIA

LELIA CHILARESCU

University of the West, Timișoara

Intentionality

One of the social constructions of the media system is the sexual orientation of the members of the audience. In this paper, I want to reveal the complex nature of mass media's sexual identity and orientation. I will briefly present the characteristics of some most common and popular representations in the mass media of "alternative" sexual identities and orientations, thus offering a perspective of their history and evolution.

Introduction

The creation of meaning regarding human sexuality is extremely simplistic, reductionist and discriminatory. The media represents the categories as clear-cut realities. You can be either heterosexual, meaning "normal", or homosexual, meaning perverse, morally degenerate and pathologically ill (Dyer, 1993).

First of all, this discriminatory policy of constructing identity and difference reduces everything about a complex individual to a sexual deed, to his/her sexuality. Second, this reductionism includes an unapologetic stigmatization of people who are "alternative", of homosexual or bisexual orientation.

Early References

Let us first consider a few facts about what the perception of sexual identity and sexual orientation was throughout different periods of history. Let us begin by discussing some of the first opinions and attempts to define and classify human sexology.

Not long ago, it was usual for the non-heterosexuals to be perceived as a different sex, the third one. They stopped being woman or man, but, according to German sociologist Magnus Hirschfeld, they were considered "an intermediary sex" (Dyer, 1993).

This famous pioneer – from the beginning of the 20th century – in the sociology of sex (or what is more popular terminology today as founder of sexology or a "gender studies pioneer"), he was convinced that homosexuals belonged to a third biological sex (named "Urnings"¹ by the German lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs) which stood midway

between male and female, both mentally and physically. He even created a theory of sexual intermediary stages of different individual cases. Although this hypothesis was eclipsed by Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory and even if his hypothesis is now discredited and ignored, the research tradition on sexual taxonomy he began is still popular.

The media of early times included statements from so-called "doctors" condemning onanism² (the infamous publication *Onania*, was distributed in American colonies, but also the publications of Swiss and English medical practitioners Tissot and Acton) and puritanical moral lectures from officials, especially in capital cities (Paris, London, Amsterdam), concerned about a "network of sodomitical subculture". It also included reports about the arrests of mollies³, rakish libertines⁴, pederasts⁵ and sodomites⁶ in the above-mentioned cities.

The images depicted in the mainstream newspapers or magazines of those times made no clear statement about the sexual identity/ sexual orientation of their subjects. In addition to being non-represented by the media, non-heterosexual acts were forbidden (except for some French liberal policies, which, in 1791, removed all criminal laws pertaining to private sexual behaviour between individuals) even punished according to law (the English Buggery Law⁷ and the German Paragraph 175⁸). A few deviant journals and the behaviour of some writers, aristocrats, even members of the Royal family shocked the opinion of the media public once in a while.

The 20th Century

The first half of the 20th century held the common opinion of condemning homosexuality as a disease. Many newspaper articles and TV programs condemned it publicly. A CBS journalist proclaimed in 1967: "homosexuality is a mental illness which reached epidemiological proportions". Many television stations used to air numerous "documentaries" and interviews with face-obscured homosexuals confessing their illness and sins, shot through pot plants (video documentary *Off the Straight and Narrow: Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Televisions*).

However, the first ground-breaking gay drama, portraying no stereotypes, *That Certain Summer*, was released in 1972. It was the story of a teenage boy who had to deal with his divorced father's homosexuality. But it was also acknowledged as the first made-for-television film to tackle in-depth the subject and complexity of homosexuality as part of the life of a middle-class white adult individual.

Later, in the eighties, The American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders and the gay community started to be a constant presence on the TV news. Gay characters were more and more frequently represented in the media programs, too. However, their image turned from non-representation to misrepresentation as they were highly stigmatized. The gay personages were depicted as negative characters and the reason for crises in the family unit, as they brought problems. Even if they provoked some sympathy, at the end of the show/ movie/ series/ theatre play, the problem was solved through their death. So, they were considered more as some sort of temporary crisis, nothing more (video documentary *Off the Straight and Narrow: Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Televisions*).

At the end of the '80s, the gay culture broke open in an outburst of vivid exuberance and colourful brightness with a spectacularly attractive body-culture, with famous outrageous disco bands such as The Village People, with enthusiastic cheers from fans for hits "In the Navy", "YMCA", "Go West", etc. and with the joyful popular musical comedy *Can't Stop the Music*. These media representations were definitely not problematic or challenging, but limited in the spectacular and superficial appearance of "gay disco image".

With this new popularity to mainstream shows, movies and series, the gay parade flourished. It even advanced its movement to promote "gay power" and "gay politics" as its members were becoming increasingly conscious of their "queer" civic, cultural and political influence to the dismay of American puritanical conservatives.

The late '80s and early '90s brought the end of "gay exuberance" because of the spread of a terrible epidemic: AIDS. The media, concerned more about not disturbing conservative advertising, reported inaccurately the newly-discovered virus, its impact and spread. Accordingly, a major drama struck the gay community, associating perpetually the gay movement with the deadly virus. Gay people became totally defined by the disease; everything about the gay community became an HIV story and vice-versa (video documentary *Off the Straight and Narrow: Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Televisions*).

Numerous movies were made dealing with this topic: *Long Time Companion, As Is, And the Band Played On*. One of the first sensitive, revolutionary and most truthful representations of the AIDS victims' humanity was portrayed in *An Early Frost*. Set in the mid-eighties, Michael Pierson (played by Aidan Quinn), a young white upper class lawyer and gay man, is struck with AIDS in the prime of life. He is open about the disease and his

homosexuality for the first time with his co-workers and family, generating an uncomfortable crisis around him. He, and the people around him, must face up to the inevitability of his death and the disease that is killing him. The crisis and the problem is still resolved by his death in the end of the movie (as somehow a punishment for his deviant sexual behaviour).

This movie made way for the much acclaimed and accoladed *Philadelphia*. It is the emotional and tragic story of a successful gay lawyer fired for having AIDS. Andrew Beckett, the afflicted lawyer (played by Tom Hanks) attempts to vindicate himself in court and make an effort to fight for peace, humanity and non-discrimination. In the end, the whole crisis settles upon ethical principles and justice, but at the price of Beckett's death.

The gay characters gained some complexity towards the end of the century. They started to be depicted as multifaceted individuals. The standard typology was that of an (almost) perfect individual, with only one flaw as compensation: his/ her "alternative" sexual orientation. Except for the already-mentioned movie, we could also cite *Serving in Silence: The Margarethe Cammermeyer Story*. This motion picture portrayed the true story of Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer, a decorated officer (played by Glen Close) and her legal challenge to her involuntary discharge when she admitted she was homosexual. We are dealing again with the story of a perfect individual, of a moral hero fighting against the hypocrisy and paranoia of the military regarding homosexuality.

The Contemporary Period

Modern-day times have acknowledged the past discrimination against homosexuals in the media. This is the period of political correctness, of human rights activism, of affirmative action and so on. In fact, the postmodern media seem to depict and stigmatize the present discrimination against homosexuals. The global mass media seem to have discarded past stereotypes associated with gayness. In contrast to the past representations, first of all, homosexuality is visible; second, today's images of homosexuality are not conventional or stereotypical.

There are a lot of shows, movies, series and theatre plays depicting gay characters. They are no longer dying, they are no longer negative characters, they are no longer fighting for any cause. However, they are not really depicting the genuine culture of gayness.

Homosexuals are said to be profound, creative, hypersensitive geniuses, nature-related artists (Dryer, 1993). Nothing of the above is depicted on TV or other mass media. The TV series *Will and Grace* displays four superficial, rich, civically, politically, culturally and socially unconscious, uninvolved urban individuals. Two of these characters (the male ones) are gay, they are acting as gays, but not as gay representatives. With the exception of some accidental minor “gay” issues discussed briefly and superficially, there is no tackling of the values, customs and lifestyles of the homosexual community. Could this series and other similar ones be considered as “queer series”?

The much acclaimed movie *If These Walls Could Talk 2* presents a trio of stories about lesbian couples in three different decades. Regarded as world-shattering, staging an uncontested bright lesbian world image, Ellen DeGeneres and world-wide sex symbol Sharon Stone, it offers some insight into some typical troubles of the lesbian communities over the past 40 years. However, due to the limitations of the medium itself, these representations are still superficial and somehow insincere and artificial.

The insightful, witty and funny show, series and talk show of *Ellen* (DeGeneris) tried to set up a positive truthful image of modern-day homosexuality. She tried to “fight” the prejudiced bigotry with sharp laughter, to end and prevent the discriminatory hatred, narrow-minded paranoia and the reductionist stereotypes with light and witty humour. However, it seems to have been too controversial and too open-minded for the declaredly unprejudiced media, so it was cancelled in spite of its huge popularity.

The contemporary media try to avoid challenges, in spite of their assertion of claims to be non-discriminatory and they try to limit the display of the “queer culture” to a superficial “gay chic” approach. In spite of all its claims, the representation of any concrete homosexual intimacy faces extreme consternation and dismay. There seems to be a very strict specific policy of not displaying any bi- or homo-sexual private acts on TV. Although it is accepted theoretically, the genuine, sexual and social practice is still highly stigmatized.

Contemporary Media in Romania

Romanian mass media are highly prejudiced. Few references are made about the sexually “deviant” practices. Even when there are some representations of “alternatively” oriented individuals, there is also indignation, even hatred! These characters are portrayed

as dangerous social outcasts, indecisive teenagers, mentally ill individuals even as criminals, guilty of their own flaw and illness.

Only one secondary character of a Romanian series is presented as gay. Remus, from “*Secretul Mariei*”, aired by the private TV station Antena 1 (advertised as very unconventional, modern Romanian authentic soap opera) is the unique Romanian gay character on TV. He is part of a dangerous sexually-depraved and corrupt underworld; he is also the reason for a divorce, but an overly too flat and simplistic presence in the series as the best friend and confident of the main character, Maria.

Even if it is not directly related to the issue of homosexuality, I should also mention above all the famous national rage against the tantra yoga guru and founder of MISA, Gregorian Bivolaru. This clearly portrayed the hatred against any sexually deviant behaviour, hatred which was initiated and endorsed, supported and sustained with the assistance of the media, which inaccurately reported the whole illegal prosecution.

Another famous case is the announcement and the coverage of the gay parades organized in this country: groups of furious workers attacked the participants and numerous religious groups marched contesting and haranguing their rights! The lack of proper sexual education facilitates these prejudiced representations and the increasing hatred and bigotry, as one of the angry workers – who were attacking the gay parade, shocked and disgusted by the deprecation of homosexuality – scolded and confronted a journalist who “was calling him a heterosexual”!

Conclusions

My personal opinion is that television and other mass media – before being able to depict any “alternatively sexual oriented” individuals – need to undergo profound changes. It is impossible to display the real complex nature of a previously stigmatized individual in a stereotypical system.

The media is also recognized for its excessive superficiality and reductionism in displaying any reality of the world. This feature is heightened when it addresses prejudiced subjects. Issues and realities (especially after they have been constantly stigmatized, stereotyped and discriminated) cannot be reduced to a simple mask of a TV character!

Notes

¹ In 1864, Karl Ulrichs coined this term to refer to males who are sexually attracted to other males. Ulrichs believed that although an Urning is born with male sex organs, he is psychologically a woman, and is thus attracted to men. The term was gradually displaced by the words “homosexual” and “invert” because psychiatrists preferred them (<http://www.gayhistory.com/rev2/factfiles/ff1897.htm>).

² This term for masturbation was widely used in 18th century medical books like *Onania* and Tissot’s *L’Onanie*. The term comes from the Biblical story of an unfortunate man named Onan (<http://www.gayhistory.com/rev2/words/onanism.htm>).

³ The term originates from the British *Molly dancing* (most associated with the Plough Monday), during which the village dressed-up ploughboys would tour around the landowners, offering to dance for money. Each group was composed of at least one Molly – a member dressed up as a woman. In the 18th century a ‘Molly house’ was a tavern or private room where homosexual and transgender males could meet and also find possible sexual partners. Found in most of the larger cities, Molly houses were a precursor to the modern gay bar. Patrons of Molly houses (who were called “Mollies”) often dressed in women’s clothing, took on female personae, and affected effeminate mannerisms and speech (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molly_house ; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molly_dance).

⁴ Abbreviation of the archaic ‘rakehell’. A man of dissolute morals, reputed for his masculinity and virility, a seducer, a heavy drinker and gambler. The term referred to a promiscuous libertine overly fond of liquor, women, and boys (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rake>).

⁵ Pederasty as an educational institution for the inculcation of moral and cultural values, as well as a sexual diversion, was practiced in Ancient Greece and Rome. As idealized by the ancient Greeks, pederasty was a relationship and bond – whether sexual or chaste – between an adolescent boy and an adult man outside of his immediate family, often a teacher-student relationship. Pederasts are not related to paedophiles, on the grounds of age and sexual consent (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pederast>).

⁶ Sodomites are sexually deviant individuals, those who engage in sodomy. Usually limited in usage to male homosexuals, but heterosexuals who engage in oral or anal sex are also engaging in sodomy in some jurisdictions (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sodomites>).

⁷ The term originated at the turn of the second millennium as applied to a group of heretics who taught that the material world is irremediably evil. These heretics, many from Bulgaria, were accused of widespread sodomy by the church in addition to their deviation from doctrines endorsed by the Pope. The Bulgarian heresy, or *bougrerie* in the French of the time, became synonymous with “unnatural” sexual practices. When the word was adopted in England, it became “buggery”. In English law, the term referred to the crimes of anal intercourse between men, or sex between man and beast. The practice of buggery was made a capital crime under Henry VIII and remained so until 1861 when the penalty was reduced to imprisonment from 10 years to life (<http://www.gayhistory.com/rev2/words/buggery.htm>).

⁸ King William I imposed the legal code of his native Prussia on all the German states. Among others, the conservative code included Paragraph 175, a law that forbade sex between men (<http://www.gayhistory.com/rev2/factfiles/ff1871.htm>).

References:

Dyer, R. 1993. *Seen to be Believed: Some Problems in the Representation of Gay People as Typical*. New York: Routledge

Off the Straight and Narrow: Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Televisions - Video Documentary

Gay History [Online]. Available: <http://www.gayhistory.com> [2006, May]

Wikipedia [Online]. Available: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki> [2006, May]

THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN FILMS

SMARANDA ȘTEFANOVICI

“Petru Maior” University of Târgu Mureș

When the issue of the way women are represented in films came first to be talked about, there was an idea that struck those interested. Namely, throughout the entire history of film woman had a constant representation, that of being a sign. She was nothing more than a simple presence on the screen; everything man was not, thus becoming a *non-identity*. More than that, women needed the help of men whatever they did, and when they did something wrong, it was, of course, the men who came to straighten things up. Bearing in mind all these things, Anneke Smelik stated:

The sign ‘woman’ can be analyzed as a structure, a code or convention. It represents the ideological meaning that ‘woman’ has for men. In relation to herself she means no-thing, women are represented as ‘*not-man*’. The *woman-as-woman* is absent from the text of the film. (*Feminist Film Theory*)

Next, women came to be considered as being a myth and consequently there were all kinds of representations of women but most of the time they were mothers or wives. This all the same a step forward from the previous concept, in that films are no longer presenting a reflection of a certain reality (i.e. that of representing a *woman as non-identity*), but it has the ability of constructing, of building, a certain ideology on reality.

There are many actresses both in the USA and Romania who have risen to the top of their professions but this is not the focus of this paper. Neither will I deal with several films of a given category. The analysis has in view the position women have in *society*, as it is reflected in films. This very term of *society* proves to be the starting point for a short contrastive analysis between the concept of woman as it is perceived in the two cultures, the American and the Romanian.

The Reflection of Women in American Films

It has generally been taken for granted that through the history of film, women have gone through more changes than men. This was mainly because the *social norms* have changed for them in a more rapid manner. At the same time, it is commonly known that at first, the world of films and society in general were “preaching” the image of a

woman who was supposed to stay at home, obey her husband, be rather a non-being, the shadow of her man. She was not allowed to leave her domestic sphere. This attitude started changing with the gradual passage of time. Thus, starting from the 90s, the image of the woman has changed. She is more powerful, more self-reliant. The contemporary woman is highly conscious of her *self* and of the place she has in the world, even though it is a world built mostly around men. What is of equal importance is the fact that she no longer feels the need of being *subjected* to men.

Later I will exemplify some of the roles women have played in the history of film and the way these roles have changed or remained the same over time.

The most widespread image of woman has always been that of a sex symbol, an embodiment of beauty and passion, e.g. Joan Crawford, embodiment of Jazz Age sexuality – “The Women” (1939); Marilyn Monroe, the most international sex symbol of the 20th century – “All about Eve” (1950); Katherine Hepburn, noted for her unique combination of timeless beauty and fiery passion – “The Trojan Women” (1972)

Mirroring the American social reality of the time, the woman appeared in films first as a sweetly beautiful romantic character, playing supporting roles in films focused on male characters, e.g. Olivia de Havilland – “Gone with the Wind” (1939); later, in more challenging roles – “Lady in the Cage” (1964); Meg Ryan in “Top Gun” (1986), “Inner Space” (1987) and “The Presidio” (1988).

Throughout the history of film, women have appeared in supporting and lead roles. They have been both angels and villains. They have been signs, non-identities, mere shadows of men, as well as women with full personalities, able to stand proudly by men’s sides as equals or even surpass them in profession or performance.

Although frail and weak women mostly dominated 20th century American film, we can find timid endeavours of combining weak and strong features in a woman character. Among such cases of strong-willed women we can mention Bette Davis and her role in “Jezebel” (1938); the film, set in New Orleans, Louisiana, during the early 20th century stars her as a strong-willed Southern belle. One night Julie Morrison (played by Bette Davis) wears a red dress at a society ball, which was considered a rebellious act for a single woman at the time. Although she expects that men at the ball will flock to her because of the dress, nothing of the kind happens; moreover, her fiancé breaks off their engagement and leaves town. Morrison lives as a recluse for several years until her fiancé returns. Despite his being ill and married to another woman, she tries to win him back. As

a last attack on woman's frailty and weakness she makes a passionate conciliatory speech in a white dress, and takes full care of him.

The following years witnessed more powerful women, such as: Joan Crawford known for her tough glamour and her inflexible portrayals of strong women determined to control their fate – “The Women” (1939); Mildred Pierce, a mature, although usually fascinating woman, fighting adversity – often personified by the men in her life – through sheer determination and strength of character – “Sudden Fear” (1952) and “Autumn Leaves” (1956); Faye Dunaway, known for her refined appearance and her portrayals of strong-willed women. She established herself as a leading actor in American Cinema with her cool, glamorous portrayal of a bank-robber in “Bonnie and Clyde” (1967).

Women's new complex roles combining traditional features of motherhood and wifehood (the domestic sphere) with the more feminist ones (the public sphere) are obvious in such roles: Kim Basinger – an art dealer (“Nine ½ Weeks” 1986), a photo journalist (“Batman” 1989) or the mother of rapper Eminem (“8 Miles” 2002); Julia Roberts – a reporter who solves a mystery (“I Love Trouble” 1994) or a lawyer who works in a law firm and discovers a cover-up of an environmental problem (“Erin Brockovich” 2000); Michelle Pfeiffer – a high-school teacher (“Dangerous Minds” 1995); Meg Ryan – a military helicopter pilot (“Courage Under Fire” 1996).

Woman has acted as a dark, villainous character ever since she entered the public sphere. On the one hand, she is seen as weak, a victim of man's machinations of all kinds. On the other hand, she embodies the temptress, fallen woman, using men for personal, social, material or professional ascent purposes. Some illustrations would include, e.g., Goldie Hawn, supporting actress as the mistress of a wealthy dentist (“Cactus Flower” 1969); she is a desperate mother running from the law (“The Sugarland Express” 1974) or a scatterbrained girl who enlists in the Army (“Private Benjamin” 1980).

Jodie Foster plays another supporting role, that of a twelve-year-old prostitute (“Taxi Driver” 1976) and then a raped woman (“The Accused” 1988). In 1990 Julia Roberts' performance in “Pretty Woman” catapulted her to international stardom; she plays Vivian, a prostitute who meets and falls in love with a hard-hearted businessman played by Richard Gere; in “Sleeping with the Enemy” (1991) she is a woman fleeing from an abusive husband, while in “Runaway Bride” (1999) she is a weak woman who repeatedly backs out of marriages right before the ceremony.

Another case in point is Uma Thurman who received an Academy Award nomination for her role as an eccentric, cocaine-addicted wife in “Pulp Fiction” (1994). She is often cast as a dark character or villain playing, for instance, an evil botanist in “Batman and Robin” (1997) and a bloodthirsty female assassin bent on revenge in the “Kill Bill” films (2003/2004). Other such roles are interpreted by: Meg Ryan – an alcoholic (“When a Man Loves a Woman” 1994); Kim Basinger - a high-class prostitute (“Confidential” 1997) or an exotic dancer (“Hurly-burly” 1998).

For illustration of the above short survey of the American woman film history, I will refer to three films: “Public Enemy”, “Bonnie and Clyde” and “Thelma and Louise”.

A film like “Public Enemy” (1931) reflects women as being merely naïve beings, who are only meant to serve the physical aspect. The woman now is merely a simple sign.

In this particular film, Ma Powers does not have enough ability to see that her two sons hate each other. Her name of Ma Powers is a highly comical one, and it is in total contradiction with her real character. In a few words, this type of woman is the one that even indirectly has always been denied as representing the real image of woman. She is reflecting a *non-man* character. The film presents an image that women have always tried to spurn.

The 60s presented the film audience with a kind of paradox or dilemma in what women were concerned. They were irresistible, not easy to understand and perhaps most important they had that mysterious sexual attraction which they used to undermine male control. In addition, America was then a violent country which was one important aspect reflected in the films of the time.

“Bonnie and Clyde” (1967) is representative for the way it mirrors the rebellious tone of the 60s and the uncertainties regarding norms of society and dominant values. In the beginning of the film, the audience sees Bonnie Parker (Faye Dunaway) admiring her body in the mirror. Yet, the camera succeeds in getting through her exterior image and mirroring the fact that she feels rather entrapped in a society she totally resents. This is the moment when Clyde (Warren Beatty) comes into her life. As she is standing in her room, she sees him trying to steal her mother’s car. Things start moving the moment he tells her he is a bank robber and could show her a really interesting new life that could challenge her mentally.

Later, the pair are joined by Buck (Gene Hackman) and his wife (Estelle Parsons). They become the Barrow gang and head out through Texas. While in Texas, Bonnie poses

as an interesting woman, who is resting her leg on the bumper of a car, while at the same time she is smoking a cigar and is holding a gun in the hand. Very soon, tensions come up between the two women. Bonnie naturally resents the type of woman Blanche represents and calls her an “ignorant, uneducated hillbilly.”

One aspect is clear in the film: Bonnie is a weak person in the beginning and needs the help of a man to become more powerful and self-reliant. Bonnie’s hatred for ‘the system’ that tries to get control of her life is another aspect present in the film. That is why she takes an extreme position when, for instance, she challenges a police officer. No matter how radically she might behave towards anything that might try to control her life, she is still controlled by the power of love she feels for Clyde; she even writes him a poem. This is where the director of the film clearly lowers the status of woman, such as Bonnie is, although, on a closer analysis, she is in no aspect inferior to Clyde.

All in all, during the 1960s, as indicated by *Bonnie and Clyde*, there was an upsurge in woman’s role, namely she became a central character of the plot, one who was just as capable and omnipotent as the male lead character. It is secure to say that the film helped redefine the woman’s role in crime and action films. It was a kind of ‘awakening’ to life for woman; woman became aware of the fact that a free life meant liberty of thought and action.

Later on, it is with no surprise that we witness the production of other crime-films, such as “*Thelma and Louise*” where at a certain moment Thelma says: “I don’t ever remember feeling that awake.”

In “*Thelma and Louise*” (1991), just as in “*Bonnie and Clyde*”, we deal with the same situation of trying to escape the boring life a typical woman has. Meanwhile, we should not forget the fact that the social context has changed a lot. Thus, both Thelma and Louise are part of the working-class. We have Louise as a waitress working in a coffee shop; she is not happy as she is involved with a musician who is never ever going to be ready to settle down, however much she may kid herself.

Thelma is not pleased with her life either; she spent most of her time in the kitchen quietly, because of her husband’s habit of watching TV all the time. Her husband, a man puffed-up with self-importance as the district sales manager of a rug company, sees his wife as a lower order of life, to be tolerated so long as she keeps her household duties straight and is patient with his irritability. Both decide to go away just as once Bonnie did. Thelma is so frightened of her husband that she leaves him a note rather than tell him.

Things start to go in a wrong direction the moment Louise kills a man who threatens Thelma. Anyway, before their journey is done, these characters will have undergone a “rite of passage”, and will have discovered themselves from what they were once to their real selves (Roger Ebert, “Thelma and Louise Review”).

What is interesting about this film is the new interpretation given to the myth of the mother. When J.D. asks Thelma why she has no children, she answers that God gave her “something special”, and that was Daryl, her husband, who thinks of himself as being a kid. She is thus, we might say, more than a mother, she plays the double role of both a mother and a wife for a grown-up, her husband. She seems to have accepted her condition of being a woman, but this is only a surface aspect. Getting through that fleeing experience, when they try to escape an all encompassing ‘system’, is a step forward in the way women are represented in films. If they fail in the end, it does not diminish their courageous act. Maybe it was too early for women to assume full responsibility for their own lives, rejecting all male interference in their lives. The film is perhaps only meant to represent an appropriate means of escape for two women for whom reality proves too hard; it is a film that shows that there is another reality that is just as powerful as that built by men; it is a society built around women. Anyway, it is a fact that “Bonnie and Clyde”, although it might no longer seem realistic, represented the social context of the time it was created. Moreover, the leading roles belong to two women, both acting natural and sharing the same guiding beliefs, who, although they succeed in being true individuals in the end, are mature enough not to try to go beyond their real natures.

The Representation of Women in Romanian Films

Interesting though it may sound, the Romanian film has had its share of violence. Yet, as opposed to the American and British films, one cannot speak of crime committed by women as such. The basic myth of the woman – that of being a housewife and subservient to her husband features prominently in Romanian films – reflecting the society we live in. This is perhaps the best moment to mention that this is so because of the communist regime. It is true that it gave women the same rights as men, but this was only on paper, and perhaps in some domains of activity. It should be remembered, though, that the phenomenon of domestic violence, for example, was not talked about too much. Thus, it might be said that the communist image of the woman was largely a shiny cover hiding only “waste lands”.

This paper will not deal with films shot during communism as it is taken for granted that those films were greatly influenced by the regime's concepts. For my analysis I will consider some better or lesser known films that have been shot since December 1989. They reflect not only the drama inside many women's souls but also the tensions that arose during the so-much-hated communist regime.

Although sixteen years have passed since the fall of communism, the social reality has only brought more tensions into families. As a consequence, the image of women persists as a myth but it is also true that it has acquired new dimensions and tendencies that are to be found in the images of western independent films. Although social reality has seen great changes, gender issues and the intricacy and diversity of the concept of gender have been far less covered than in western films. There is this brutal transition regime that has not allowed many women and men as a whole to define correctly their place in society, let alone meditate on it. Under these circumstances, one should not wonder that the myth of the woman as mother or wife is still so prevalent in our society. Since nowadays, we are certainly dealing with a more open society, a new image of woman emerged: that of an independent one. By way of illustration, I will refer to some lesser or better known Romanian films.

"Asphalt Tango" (Nae Caranfil, 1993), presents eleven beautiful Romanian girls who dream about glory and easy money and, accordingly, decide to go to Paris in order to dance in cabarets. A very dubious agent and a foreign businesswoman accompany them in the bus on the way to Paris. The jealous husband of one of the girls follows them. He cannot make his wife come back but makes another girl stay with him. The result is a bitter comedy as well as a road movie in which we find both naïve and strong-willed women. We deal with the myth of the daring woman who goes to foreign countries in search of a better life.

The main male character intervenes only to prevent his wife from going away, in order to save their marriage. It is again, as in American films, the society and the social system that shape the character of women as such. They are in desperate need now to succeed in life, to lead a better life. These women, as they are depicted in the film, are no longer in need of a man or of a child. They feel free and self-reliant, and as such, are able to take full control of their lives. Andrei, the main male character is an unlucky husband who finds out at a certain moment that his wife Dora not only wants to leave Romania, but has also been recruited by a foreign agency to work abroad. To get her back, he has to

convince Marion that he needs only one night to make his wife change her mind and return to him. Of course he does not even get close to convincing her.

“Woman in Red” (1997, Mircea Veroiu) has Anne Sage in the lead role, a woman who emigrated to the USA from Romania in the early 1920s. She is the owner of a brothel where one can buy alcoholic beverages and she is known as “the woman in red” who has turned in to the police a famous gangster, John Dillinger. After that she was deported back to Romania. The film depicts her life story: her marriage, the birth of her first child, her divorce, and especially her struggle to survive during the time of prohibition.

“Face to Face” (1998, Marius Th. Barna) casts Maia Morgenstern. She finds out her husband had been an informer for the SRI (The Secret Service) and one of his priorities was to fully report on all her activities (as she is a well-known writer). During the 24 hours the couple try to resolve the problems this discovery confronts them with. Eventually, they manage to understand each other and to go on with their common life.

“The Star-Owners” (2000, Savel Stiopul) is a story of love and survival of a young woman engineer who lives in Romania during the time of “transition”. She works in a factory which is bought by a foreign firm. What with the reorganization of the factory she is laid off. She has a boyfriend, a cynic macho who is involved in some dirty business and tries to manipulate her feelings. She refuses to make the compromises he asked of her but accepts a new relationship with a rich man who finally offers her the stability, love and care, which she fully deserves.

“15” is a film directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu in 2005. Although it is the latest film to be made in Romania, at least by Sergiu Nicolaescu, it proves to be an exciting depiction of the first days of the revolution. It is the story of a man, Marin, and his pregnant wife. He is a sailor and she is a housewife who is helped in her everyday life by two friends. One of the subplots, the one that sets the things off, unfolds latter in time and has a woman actress as the main character: Maia Morgenstern. She is a French journalist who has fled the communist regime. She wants to come back to Romania to find out what has become of the boy that was born during the revolution in Timișoara. She has lost her baby and now she is in search of the child who in the meantime has become a symbol of the revolution.

Basically, one can speak about two plot lines in the film: the first one set in 1989 during the revolution; the second a few years later. The film intends to reflect the bitter truth of the outcome of the revolutionary ideals. The “death” of the woman back in 1989 stands for the death of all the ideals and hopes for a better life. Thus, it might just as well

be said that woman stands for a symbol or myth of death. Not once was it the case for women to be myths for both life and death.

What is interesting to notice is that Maia Morgenstern's character impersonates the beginnings of the representation of woman as a detective but still, she is more of a journalist. She is also a mother in search of her lost child.

The last film, an award-winning film ("Un Certain Regard", Cannes, 2006) I will discuss is "Moartea domnului Lăzărescu" ("The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu") (Cristi Puiu, 2005). It is the "saga" of an ill man moved from one Bucharest hospital to another – actually the crisis of a medical system. Mr. Lăzărescu is an old man who starts feeling sick and calls an ambulance. When it finally arrives, the doctor decides to take him to hospital. In hospital nobody seems to care about him and his health, so the tragic end inevitably comes.

What is relevant to our discussion is the fact that, on his agonizing road, he is accompanied by a woman (a nurse). It is the nurse (Mioara) who knows that he needs medical treatment. She is a strong woman to whom the film-goers feel attracted. As Jay Wessberg writing for *Variety* has noted, "Mioara accompanies the worsening patient throughout the journey, listening to one casually reached diagnosis after another, while putting up with the hospital staff's hostile and patronizing barbs." What is interesting is that, although it is Mioara who is certainly the most helpful character in the film, at no point is she made reference to. The camera is so positioned and the view is so shyly directed that one tends to give her no attention.

An inexpert eye might interpret that as lack of consideration for Romanian women. However, in the Kafkaesque reality of Romania, she represents the powerful woman able to straighten things up. She knows everything, and has the clue to every enigma, even to the misconduct of her colleagues. Around her is silence; it's a magical moment – one of black magic: "Perhaps Puiu is aiming higher, and making a wider statement about human nature – the characters' names ('Dante' 'Remus' 'Lăzărescu', 'Mioara', 'Virgil') would suggest there's at least some degree of historical/philosophical/religious allegory being played out here." (quoted from Neil Young's review on "Moartea domnului Lăzărescu")

Conclusions

Women have always had their place in films. It is now understandable that women have evolved from mere presences to well developed characters, from naïve characters to persons with strong personalities.

Analyzed from a psychological point of view mainly, they have been portrayed as persons defeated by the system they live in. Most of the time, they feel entrapped by the male dominant society. The question that arises is: to what extent is the American woman so differently presented from the Romanian woman taking into account the huge gap between the two societies and social systems. One of the first things that one can immediately notice is the fact that, obviously, the life of the American woman is clearly more complex than the Romanian.

However, paradoxically, in American films, besides complex women there are, much of the time, naïve ones as well. As Faith Whittlesley, the Ambassador of Switzerland said “Remember, Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did, but she did it backwards and in high heels.” On the contrary, Romanian films are dominated by simple, but not naïve women, women that are clearly overwhelmed by the chaotic system they live in. The Romanian woman’s portrayal from a gender perspective leaves a lot to be desired when compared to the American woman, whose emancipation is presented not only in the way she looks, but also in the way she participates in major decisions, and in the professions she performs. The Romanian woman is still waiting for the real social changes that will result in new ways of cinematic representation.

References:

- Butler, J. 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories of Subjection*, Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Ebert, R. 1991 (January 1). “Thelma and Louise” (Review). Chicago Sun-Times
- Katz, E. 2005. *The Film Encyclopedia*. New Orleans: Harper Resource
- Smelik, A. 1999. “Feminist Film Theory” in P. Cook and M. Bernink. (eds.). *The Cinema Book*, second edition. London: British Film Institute, pp 353-365

Films

“Public Enemy”. William A. Wellman (Dir.). 1931.
“Bonnie and Clyde”. Arthur Penn (Dir.).
1967
“Thelma and Louise”. Ridley Scott (Dir.). 1991
“Asphalt Tango”. Nae Caranfil (Dir.). 1993
“Woman in Red”. Mircea Veroiu (Dir.). 1997
“Face to Face”. Marius Th. Barna (Dir.). 1998
“The Star-Owners”. Savel Stiopul (Dir.). 2000
“15”. Sergiu Nicolaescu (Dir.). 2005
“The Death of Mr Lăzărescu”. Cristi Puiu (Dir.). 2005

Women Writers Subvert the Canon

THE CHARACTER AND SETTING IN WOMEN'S WRITING

VLADISLAVA GORDIĆ PETKOVIĆ and NATAŠA KARANFILOVIĆ

University of Novi Sad

The Literary Character: History and/or Theory

Until recent times, literary history and criticism have had little to say about the character. For instance, all that Aristotle's *Poetics* claims about the character amounts to the fact that "artists imitate man involved in action" (Gordić, 1996:99). Characterization is often vaguely described as "the depicting [...] of clear images of a person", "his actions and manners of thought and life", or as the portrayal of "a man's nature, environment, habits, emotions, desires, instincts" (Gordić, 1996:99). Even less has been said about the ways of characterization: the techniques used in depicting characters have been listed in Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature*, but not elaborated. W. J. Harvey (1966:192) accuses E. M. Forster of a "deceptively light" approach to the matter when drawing distinction between 'flat' and 'round' characters. This has, in Harvey's opinion, relegated the treatment of character to the periphery of the attention of modern criticism.

Aristotle sees the character as an agent supposed to perform an action, but not to figure as an independent existent (Chatman, 1978:113). Here we witness another injustice done to characters: even when recognized as basic elements of the literary text, characters are taken only as agents, not as personalities. The views of formalist and structuralist critics are similar to Aristotle's, since they argue that characters are functional. Tomashevsky and Propp, for instance, see the character as a function of the plot: in their opinion, the character simply does what the story requires her or him to do.

However, some structuralist critics have gradually moved away from the functional approach to character. For instance, Tzvetan Todorov admits that a narrative text can either be *plot-centred* (apsychological), or *character-centred* (psychological). In psychological narratives action serves only to depict character, whereas the apsyhological texts focus on the plot, using the character only as one of its functions.

Roland Barthes has gradually shifted from the functional view of character he had adopted in the sixties, to a psychological one, embraced late in the seventies - as can be seen in his book *S/Z* (Chatman, 1978:113-116). His shift in view might be taken as a relevant signal that the character is gradually gaining in importance, since Barthes and Todorov at least admit that in some narratives characters play a more significant role than elsewhere (Chatman, 1978:113-116).

This paper attempts at explaining the ways a character acts within a certain setting. We focus upon the works of women novelists who treat their characters both as functional devices of the plot and personalities dealing with their environment. The

following examples are intended to show both the psychological impact of the setting upon the character and the functional role of the character in portraying the setting.

The Character in the Utopian Setting: the Case of Mirjana Novaković

One of the most remarkable female authors of the contemporary Serbian novel, although not the most prolific, is Mirjana Novaković (1996). Her three books of fiction published so far deal with clashes between female recluses and the estranged society, strongly following in the footsteps of American postmodernists such as Thomas Pynchon.

The literary career of Mirjana Novaković was launched with *The Danube Apocrypha* (first edition 1996), two novellas joined within the covers of a single book for a good reason: with a typically gothic focus upon the uncanny, they deal with the divine miracle. One of them, *The Gospel According to A Thirsty Woman* describes a menacing social and religious turmoil in the near future, where the main protagonist enters a bitter and long battle with the inimical, Orwellesque social setting. It tells a story of a secret female society which is, as Pynchon would have it, “silently awaiting” its Goddess to appear.

The Gospel According to A Thirsty Woman casts a bleak and sarcastic dystopian perspective on a society which advocates equality at the cost of the total loss of identity by its citizens, who are forbidden to use personal and proper names, but obliged to undergo plastic surgery and genetic modification. Advocating faultless physique and a blank mind, the dismal state dubbed Open Society also requires the dissolution of family ties, self-sufficiency and detachment. The story is set in a nameless city, distantly resembling Belgrade with its street plan and traffic connections, but otherwise devoid of flair and identity.

A secret resistance movement comes into the lime-light after the nameless female narrator meets a bunch of female misfits and learns about their nameless goddess, called only She or Her. Their religion is thirst, and the one who calls on the name of the Goddess will become “so thirsty that nothing will ever be able to quench that thirst.” (Novaković, 1996:51). Thirst is an inverted parallel of the Biblical motive, signalling that the followers of Her cult are not meant to be peaceful and content once they have accepted a religion.

The identification of the character precedes the search for one’s identity. Thus in the society of the nameless the awakening starts with confiding your name to your soul mates. At first, the narrator is shocked to hear one of the thirsty women introduce herself:

No one has ever told me his or her name before. I have never been that close to anyone. I have never believed the rumours saying that some people revealed their names to the others. Supposedly, when you love someone very much, and that person loves you too, the two of you can exchange names. But nobody I knew has ever experienced that. The rumours spread, and that's about it (Novaković, 1996:93).

The narrator's transformation will take a turbulent course. Becoming a traitor and seemingly abandoning the Goddess and her creed, she turns into a Judas in order to be a better Peter to her Christ. The all-male death squad called the Human Rights Representatives gets dangerously close to eradicating the tribe of the thirsty, but the creed persists, owing to Catherine. We learn the name of the narrator at the very end, when her wrestling with the demons within and without earned her the privilege to spread the word of the Thirsty Woman. Instead of committing suicide after she betrayed her goddess, Catherine decides to live and tell: "Seemingly it makes no sense to take my leave without leaving an explanation or a message behind." (Novaković, 1996:48). The story that follows is the one we have been listening to all along, both a fable and a testimony. Thus the word of the character defies an inimical social and political setting.

Although Novaković has never publicly sided with the feminist movement, the plot and the characters from *The Gospel* take us back to feminist texts such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, and the belatedly acclaimed *The Yellow Wallpaper*. It is important to note that Gilman had never thought of herself as a feminist either. It was her standpoint of social Darwinism that made her criticise society as androcentric and male-oriented to its core. Her firm conviction that women should be a part of the economic order of the world is advocated in various ways, both in her Utopian fiction about a land of females, and the Gothic story of female frustration and liberation that has become a true feminine gospel.

The Female Malady in a Haunted House: the Case of Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Novaković's alternative history of female networking parallels the seclusion and liberation of Charlotte Gilman's nameless protagonist of *The Yellow Wallpaper*. This story, which needed decades for a breakthrough, deals with the social struggle against male domination, presented through a story of a female patient captured by her doctor who is at

the same time her husband. The story is set in a colonial mansion which has been empty for years. The heroine perceives the house as 'queer' and 'haunted' and her mixed feelings of awe and enchantment echo the reaction to the setting in a typical Gothic novel. However, her room resembles a scary version of 'a room of one's own' which should, according to Virginia Woolf's essay of that name, be a woman's prerequisite for artistic creation. With its barred windows and an iron bed, the room resembles prison and mental asylum: contrary to our expectations, this is not a place to nurse the ailing or control the criminal, but rather a bleak quarter which induces sickness, derangement and madness.

The story gives voice to rebellion against patriarchal society, but it also deals with highly ambivalent issues of maternity and female creativity, seeing these two as inevitably clashing. The main character's fixation upon the yellow wallpaper can be interpreted as her rebellion both against patriarchal society and male-centred writing. The story dramatizes the concept of female captivity, the house and the room symbolizing women's body and her wish to break free from its restrictions. Being treated as an invalid and a prisoner, the heroine has to recover her freedom first. The vision of a female Utopia as a rescue for all the subdued women is yet to come, after the personal conflict is resolved.

Although the husband in *The Yellow Wallpaper* is well-meaning, he is none the less oppressive for all that: the female protagonist is denied reading and writing, allegedly for her own good; in the same way the Open Society denies the right to feel and think. Therefore her fascination with the ugly wallpaper turns into an obsession with a woman captured behind it. The namelessness of the protagonists in the works of Novaković and Gilman signals that the bitter struggle for equality starts with acquiring identity and adopting a name. It is only then that a woman can join hands with other women.

The Setting Prevails? The Case of Emily Bronte

Wuthering Heights has been known as an example of a novel in which setting and mood are closely intertwined, to the extent that the characters become helpless in the face of nature and their own uncontrolled emotions. The novel focuses upon the dynamic and often turbulent relationship between the passion and freedom of the mansion called Wuthering Heights and the socially structured conventionality of Thrushcross Grange. Being large and isolated, also dark and foreboding at times, both houses are reminiscent of a Gothic novel. They both depict isolation and separation, each creating its own galaxy with its house rules.

Wuthering Heights is perched on a high ridge, overlooking a wasteland, and is inhabited by harsh and gloomy characters. This had been the world of passion and ferocity even before it became the property of a demonic lover and a passionate avenger Heathcliff. Throughout the novel, Wuthering Heights has been the stage of passion, both unrequited and unconditional love, harsh brutality, child molestation, violence and greed.

While suggesting the extreme states of mind we encounter in the novel, the name of the mansion also marks the sense of aspiration to something supreme. On the other hand, Thrushcross Grange is a symbol of social institutions and conventional values, the possibility of freedom and happiness for Catherine and her road towards both her femininity and social status. She tries to love both the wild Heathcliff and the mild Edgar Linton, and tries to make both houses her home.

The first indication of Heathcliff's savage personality is found in the opening chapter of the novel when Heathcliff's dogs which attack Mr. Lockwood are called "a brood of tigers" and "fiends" (Bronte, 1992:4). Heathcliff growls in unison with their snarl. Even as a respectable land-owner Heathcliff easily and uncontrollably displays his animal essence. Civilized only outwardly, Heathcliff remains demonic, and the increase of wealth and power never changes his substantiality. His violent images and use of hyperbole, express an impetuous will, that cannot accept opposition and his rhetoric hardens as it gathers momentum to a language of absolute imperatives, his logic depends on a refusal to admit any compromise with passion, any form of mediocrity.

The distinctions between Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights (between Edgar and Heathcliff) parallel the distinction between Catherine and Heathcliff. The isolation of Wuthering Heights represents the isolation of Catherine's heart; the warmth and security of the Grange represent the domesticity and status that Catherine desires.

A Madman in the Attic: The Case of Elizabeth Jolley

Elizabeth Jolley is a contemporary Australian female author whose works have often been interpreted from a feminist standpoint as being committed to identifying and exposing patriarchal mythic structures not only in order to challenge existing patriarchal myths, but also to make it possible to 'reimagine them female'. However, Jolley has never thought of herself as a feminist and although she has been praised for her confident presentation of women and the world they inhabit, some of her novels deal with male protagonists and contain implicit dialogues with or comments on feminist writing.

Lovesong, for instance, clearly challenges feminist works where the discourse of the mother has apparently obliterated the discourse of the father. Her portrayal of the male protagonist, Dalton, and his search for identity, rather than asserting the prevalence of either model seems to emphasize the need of establishing communication between the two.

Moreover, in her novel *Milk and Honey* she takes up the issue of the (im)possibility of gratifying one's desire where the repression of it leads to madness and the expression of it is designated as madness by others. However, while obviously drawing on the habitual setting of such narratives – Gothic or Gothic-like female narratives featuring young, innocent women trapped in isolated castles where all manner of strange things might occur – Jolley situates a male protagonist between his desires and their prohibition whereby she steps out of a strictly female framework. *Milk and Honey* comprises two settings and consequently two narratives, while Jolley by means of a skilful genre manipulation alternates the reader's point of view and leaves him/her in doubt as to the definitive judgement about the characters or their actions.

The novel starts as a family romance, depicting the Heimbachs, a family of musicians, who have fled war-torn Europe for Australia where they have been trying to live as a cultivated European family united by art and by daily rituals betokening love. Jacob, the main protagonist, enters their home and their family narrative as a boarder and a pupil. Jacob's description of the house introduces Gothic elements into the story: "The house reminded me of an Austrian Schloss I had seen once in a picture book, especially the broken steps and the crumbling arches of the courtyard" (Jolley, 1984:11). It is a house of "innumerable rooms in a kind of dark confusion" (Jolley, 1984:14). The Heimbachs' retarded son Waldemar, a grotesquely fat boy, enters the narrative as a real monster dropping a cockroach down Jacob's shirt. Waldemar's notion of play is menace and on one occasion Jacob, fed up with Waldemar's pranks, punches him in the stomach and Waldemar drops lifelessly to the floor. The family never shows any reproach to Jacob or any sadness over Waldemar's death. On the contrary, they approach him with uttermost kindness and care, so that in a few years he is engaged and then married to their daughter, Louise. The Heimbachs become his family, he becomes their son, and their home contains the whole world for Jacob where he is their 'prince', as Leopold, the father of the family, calls him. Jacob's only contact with the outside world is when he goes off at night to play in the local orchestra.

Jacob might have been quite untouched by the outside world if not for Madge, the first violin of the orchestra, who stirs him to sexual passion. Here Jacob enters another narrative – the story about his secret and forbidden love with a married woman who is twice his age. His life becomes a series of contrivances to get away from the house, which he comes to see as a prison, and to see Madge. He is torn by the conflicting feelings of guilt and his passion for Madge, but is unable to quit either of his narratives:

I felt tied to the house, joined to the people by invisible cords. It was by their acts of kindness that they imprisoned me. [...] I wanted all that I had, but I wanted something else as well” (Jolley, 1984:56-7).

Much like Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, who strives to unite her two worlds, Jacob strives to unite his two narratives. In the framework of the Heimbach’s family romance and his love story he appears to be a negative character until one stormy night Jacob, who had grown up believing he had murdered Waldemar, climbs the mysterious attic stairs. Here the Gothic narrative takes over and the value of family love is challenged. The House of Heimbach is revealed as home to the undead, shut away from the world outside, the undead that prey on the living in the name of family love. The Heimbachs, serving the needs of a vulnerable son, have fed a monstrosity without end. Louise, who sets no limits to sisterly love, steps across the threshold of taboo and conceives a child with her brother.

Jacob has allowed the Heimbachs to write him into their story of family romance. Somehow he has been appropriated, and yet never coerced. In their Gothic tale, on the other hand, he had been completely victimized and deceived. His inheritance, which became theirs once he had married Louise, saved the family from bankruptcy and with his involuntary help Waldemar did not have to be placed into institutions. Nevertheless, with the knowledge of Waldemar’s secret life in the attic he continues his secret life with Madge and continues his attempts to synthesize narratives of family romance and sexual passion; he tries to reshape the world to feed his desire. Both, however, come abruptly to a violent end when Jacob discovers Madge’s dead body in the garden, with Waldemar’s false teeth next to it. Jacob, enraged by the murder of Madge which means the end of his desire, changes from a prince as passive as any enthralled maiden, and becomes a monster – aggressive, vicious, destructive. He hurls the kerosene stove and the house is soon

devoured by flames. “The mad laugh came from my own painful twitching mouth” (Jolley, 1984:146), says Jacob, so that madness becomes an expression of protest against the impossibility of satisfying the desire as well as a way out of his contesting narratives.

“Like a bee, jumping, diving into the honey. [...] She dies because of trying to get what she wants”, says Louise’s aunt (Jolley, 1984:135-136). Jacob, caught between his conflicting wishes, is much like the bee. He wants the milk of life coming from the Heimbachs, but he also wants honey, the pleasure that kills; he wants Madge. The question is if the bee (i.e. Jacob) is to be seen as a victim or as an initiator of its own death. The answer depends on which setting/narrative the reader chooses to view his character. In the Gothic setting he is undoubtedly a victim, but in the love story he assumes negative attributes because of his selfish need to retain both Louise and Madge.

References:

- Bird, D. and B. Walker. (eds.). 1991. *Elizabeth Jolley: New Critical Essays*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson
- Brontë, E. 1992. *Wuthering Heights*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited [1847]
- Chatman, S. 1978. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press
- Gordić, V. 1996. “Recent Approaches to the Theory of Character: Some Aspects of Characterization in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*” in *Godišnjak Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu*, vol. XXI. Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet
- Jolley, E. 1984. *Milk and Honey*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press
- Jolley, E. 1997. *Lovesong*. Ringwood: Penguin Books
- Harvey, W. J. 1966. *Character and the Novel*. New York: Ithaca
- Novaković, M. 1996. *Dunavski apokrifi*. Novi Sad: Matica srpska
- Perkins Gilman, C. *The Yellow Wallpaper*. University of Texas [Online]. Available: www.en.utexas.edu/~daniel/amlit/wallpaper [2005, August 19]
- Wellek, R. and A. Warren. 1963. *Theory of Literature*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books

**OUTER MOBILITY, INNER BECOMING IN *JANE EYRE* AND
*THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A TURKISH GIRL***

ADRIANA RĂDUCANU
Yeditepe University, Istanbul

The present paper concentrates on an analysis of two different novels, belonging to different cultures and historical periods. Each is a classic British or Turkish novel, respectively *Jane Eyre* and *Calıkuşu*, and both share the same focus on female characters as the protagonists. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Reşat Nuri Güntekin's *The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl* (the English translation of *Calıkuşu*) will be depicted as half accommodating to and half challenging the gender-focused ideology of the above-mentioned countries and cultures.

Since both Victorian England and Republican Turkey reserved a particular role to women within the context of patriarchal societies and cultures, the aim of the present paper is to argue for the existence of a woman's voice which attempts to acquire identity and shape its own destiny within a pre-established and insufficiently challenged environment. Neither of the two protagonists endeavours to shake the very foundation of a patriarchal order, nor do they propose a revolutionary alternative to it.

Jane Eyre and Feride Nizamettin simply demand the right to be heard and acknowledged as such, without being praised or having to excuse themselves for the act of talking. The present paper also attempts to depict the heroines as the products of their historical and political realities and in this capacity, limited in their achievements, yet extraordinarily innovative. The writers' feminism, far from defiant, refers to the fact that the femininity and identity of the two female protagonists as possible behavioural models are obliged to exist within given discourses and ideologies.

Thus, this type of feminism starts in a liberal tone only to end in a conservative one. In this respect, the evolution of the protagonists from promoters of equal opportunities for men and women (in terms of education, profession, etc.) is tamed into a refusal of a male model of careerism and public achievements as female goals, which denies the patriarchal women's need for intimacy, family and children. Gender-equality is not the answer that the novels provide, since gender-sameness is but utopia. *Jane Eyre* and Feride Nizamettin at the end of their peregrinations, learn, or better said *feel*, that a woman, regardless of how suffocating and oppressive her condition may be, created as such to serve patriarchy, should nevertheless be able *not* to discard her female behaviour, in exchange for a *male* one. Thus, for *Jane* joining her zealous cousin on a civilizing mission to faraway India would not mean *liberation* but self-annihilation. Similarly, Feride, once her journey comes to an end, returns to a traditional role and gives up her profession as a teacher of *many* in order to become the adoptive mother and, implicitly, instructor of *one*.

What the main characters achieve during their journey into and for socialization, albeit one conceived and directed by male dominance, is the final re-appropriation of the self while navigating through the realms of given discourses, and the maintenance and undisputable promotion of a personal voice. Both authors, in spite of their separation in time, space and culture, use the same method in order to depict their heroines, that of diaries flowing into novels.

Moreover, both Bronte and Güntekin allow their protagonists to grow by ascribing them to rites of passage, journeys that encompass a life history. The heroines have to experience different stages, completing and folding into each other in the final version of their becoming. Both novels start with the protagonists' childhoods followed by adolescence, the two ages being connected by the process of acquiring education. Families, or rather, the absence of orthodox families is also an essential feature of the characters' formation, and especially essential to the reaching of a problematic and tiresome womanhood, formed under internal and external pressures. Love, marriage and the criterion of beauty shape the two characters differently and yet in a strikingly similar way; a proof of the archetypal *working* woman that the present paper aims to depict.

Victorian England – Angel inside the House Ideology

Among the many issues with which the complex Victorian era was concerned, the one regarding the role of women in society evoked contradictory positions and created passionate disputes. Writers and critics, some of them women too, completely embraced the *domesticity* concept and seemed to experience an almost perverse pleasure in tracing boundaries and inviolable limits intended to discourage any attempts towards women being engaged in work outside the house.

In *Woman's Mission* Sarah Lewis urges her female readers to “leave to men the grimy life of intellect and action”, offering as an argument for her position the debatable statement today as much as then, “the moral world is ours” (quoted in Fraser, 1988:333). The anonymous author of *Fifty Famous Women: Their Virtues and Failings, and the Lessons of Their Lives* expands even *heroics* from the masculine to the feminine sphere, emphasizing “*fireside heroism*” and explaining it as “the daily endurance of trial, the exercise of self-denial, all the more difficult, because the objects to be gained by them are small, and their surroundings humble” (quoted in Miller, 2002:84, emphasis mine).

Briefly expressed, women were advised to play a domestic role, that of an “Angel in the House” (the title of a poem by Coventry Patmore), which became the key-word for a stifling gender-based ideology. Because of its tyrannizing image, *angel in the house* thus represents an authoritative and inescapable centre for discourse, a landmark that defined the condition of *all* women, the author of *Jane Eyre* among them.

Following the publication of the novel, Charlotte Bronte was almost labelled as an authentic threat to the societal order and peace. Interestingly, many attacks came from other women, such as Elizabeth Rigby, Ann Mozley and Mrs. Oliphant. They all took great pains to dissociate themselves from Bronte and presented her work as belonging to an “unregenerate and undisciplined spirit”, with a voice that seemed “sour, coarse and grumbling, and alien [...] from society and amenable to none of its laws”, fostering “the most alarming revolution of modern times” (quoted in Gilbert, 2000:337).

Jane Eyre's plot may deceive through its simplicity. The heroine is an orphan, of good family, entrusted to the care of her aunt and forced to live with her family in a household that never accepts her. Sent to study at Lowood, a charitable institution, after eight years she longs for a change and finds a position as a governess of a rich man's protégée (very likely his illegitimate daughter) and, in contravention of class restrictions, she falls in love with her employer. The feeling is mutual, but unfortunately, on the wedding day, Jane learns that Rochester, her husband-to-be is already married. Consequently, she decides to leave him and starts a new life as a simple teacher in a remote village. She is reunited with her other set of cousins, and she also refuses a second marriage proposal. In the end, after having realized that she actually belongs with Rochester, she returns to him. Quite conveniently, his wife had died in the meantime, so that Jane and Rochester, at the end of their trials, become man and wife, sharing a happy life.

In spite of the melodramatic accents and the emotional happy-ending, one would commit characterial reductionism in simply assimilating Jane to the Cinderella type of heroine. Her first voluntary departure from Lowood is not connected to necessity in any way, nor is it brought about by villainous attacks or subtle machinations. The protagonist easily obtains a position as a governess, so easily that the much commented upon fairy-tale dimension of the novel is almost deleted, albeit in a way that confirms its modernity.

As Carter explains, even if *Jane Eyre* can be read as some sort of Beauty or wife of Bluebeard, who reaches “an old, dark house, whose ugly, fanciful monster nourishes a

fatal secret”, this arrival is not “the result of marriage or magic”, but the “result of an advertisement she herself had placed in a newspaper”, dictated by her desire to “earn her own living” (1992:162). In Carter’s opinion, Jane Eyre “is only pretending to be a heroine of a romance or fairy tale. She is not a romance figure at all, but a precursor of the rootless urban intelligentsia” (163).

In my opinion, Jane is neither a romance figure nor a sharp opportunist; the complexity of her character resides in the fact that she is a balanced mixture of these, without either of the two hypostases annihilating the other. Indeed, personal restlessness, desire for change and new opportunities drive her away from Lowood where she earns a respectable living as a teacher.

However, her departure from Thornfield is caused by different reasons. In her lover’s house Jane undergoes an intense identification process initiated by Rochester himself, who continuously *names* her in an attempt to come to terms with her mild yet resolute personality. Alternatively, Jane is labelled as “a wild, frantic bird” (Bronte, 1984:282), “a strange, almost unearthly thing” (283), a “pale, little elf” (287), a “mustard seed” (287), a “girl bride” (287) “walking with a sylph’s foot” (288), a “fairy” (296) and an “angel” (288). All these labels trouble and annoy her, but it is that of an “angel” that she rejects the most, as it appears as the most stifling and destructive for her true Self:

I am not an angel, I asserted; and I will not be one until I die: I will be myself. Mr. Rochester, you must neither expect, not exact anything celestial of me – for you will not get it, any more than I shall get it from you: which I do not at all anticipate (1984:288).

Demonstrating unusual determination and self-respect, once Rochester’s dark secret of attempted bigamy is established, Jane starts on her pilgrimage again, in a sublime gesture of self-preservation, “through deliberation” (Gilbert, 2000:363), in order not to replicate the fate of Celine Varens, Clara or Giacinta, the ‘loose’ women in Rochester’s life.

After leaving Thornfield, Jane re-commences teaching in a modest village school for girls. Gradually, her multiple avatars as an educator, the personal dissatisfaction at the spectacle of uniform dullness that her pupils offer, dissolve as she learns to discover virtues and potential for improvement under unpolished, uninviting and repulsive masks. Bronte depicts Jane’s remarkable intellectual achievements in such a manner that the

reader has little doubts that Jane travels through life aided by intelligence and determination, rather than beauty.

Morton is the last but one stage in Jane's journey, the place where she miraculously becomes financially independent via the inheritance left by the uncle from Madeira and where she discovers a surrogate yet benevolent family, in her Reed cousins. At the end, stronger after experiencing a variety of moral and physical evils, Jane returns to Rochester, now crippled and half-blind and marries him. As if trying to erase any conflictual reading of the novel, Bronte makes her heroine leave the arena of gender struggle and retire, literally and figuratively, to the woods, at Ferndean. There, however, she is not alone, but next to a man, her husband, equal and a partner. This is a strategic retreat that becomes a life-philosophy in feminist reading, promoting and sustaining the same conventional institution of marriage and the same role of woman as wife and biological mother.

Kemalist Republican Turkey – Angel outside the House Ideology

The ideology of early Republican Turkey was heavily influenced by Ziya Gökalp, “arguably the greatest intellectual figure” (Arat, 1999:127) who elaborated the theory of Turkish nationalism, later to become the focal point for Kemalist ideology. According to Gökalp, the Turks had to concentrate on their own ancient past, a sort of Eliadic “illo tempus” and therefore the common point of all social ideologies. The centrality of women played an important role in the elaboration of this theory, since women were considered the preservers of pure, unspoilt Turkic values. As stated by Gökalp:

The ancient family and sex morality of the Turks, which had reached high standards, is completely lost today. Under the influence of the Iranian and Greek civilizations, women have been enslaved and have sunk to a low legal status. When the ideal of a national culture rose among the Turks, the revival of, and return to, these traditions, was inevitable. It was for this reason that feminism in Turkey developed along the rise of nationalism (quoted in Arat, 1999:132).

It seems obvious that the strategy of presenting the then still new and high in demand European rage for feminism as the essence of ancient and pure Turkish life, along with nationalism, established the foundation of Kemalism. The modality in which it could be achieved was by breaking down the barriers between Turkish individual elite and the

masses, an ideal fictionally rendered in *The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl*. Göle claims that “as far as the principle of nationalism was concerned, it fundamentally relied upon the populism of Anatolia in opposition to the elitist cosmopolitanism of the Ottomans” (1998:62). Mostly, the idealized figure of the Anatolian woman was seen as instrumental in the formation of a national consciousness aiming towards Western civilization, but keeping its traditional clothes. As stated by Atatürk:

It is always they, the noble, self-sacrificing, godly Anatolian women who plough, cultivate the land, fell firewood in the forest, barter in the marketplace and run the family; and above all, it is still they who carry the ammunition to the front on their shoulders, with their ox-carts, with their children regardless of rain, winter and hot days (quoted in Göle, 1998:64).

However, as Şirin Tekel argued, this “state feminism”, apparently noble and generous in its attempts to define a gender and through it, a nation, often led “to the emergence of a schizophrenic identity for women” (quoted in Göle, 1998:81). Thus, many early republican women willingly identified themselves with the duty assigned by the state – to politicize the private – and work along with men as teachers, nurses and activists, thus ignoring their own wishes.

In spite of these rather extremist assumptions of duty, *The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl* is a happy synthesis of duty itself (albeit imposed by affective necessity) and personal fulfilment, equally ideological and personal in its message. The novel is built around Feride’s platonic but implacable love for her cousin and fiancé Kemran. One brutal outside intervention – the disclosure of an affair with the promise of finalization into marriage between Kemran and a young woman he had met in Switzerland, and Feride withdraws her love. Actually, she only *imagines* she can leave it behind her when hurt and, betrayed, she departs from Istanbul to start an independent life in Anatolia, working as a teacher. In Güntekin’s novel the *woman* character is depicted as the stable, morally elevated presence, of great spiritual value. Geographically, Feride travels a lot, so much so that this liberty appears somehow forced and inauthentic, fabricated to sustain an ideal with little if any grasp of the social realities and the opportunities for women. Affectively, she is immutable, rock-like, forever anchored in an absolute kind of love.

It is this very duality between the liberty to travel and the duty to stay or to return, in due time (when the education mission reached its maximum under the restrictions of the era) that builds an exceptional female character. Güntekin “builds” Feride on the roads, allows her maturity to ripen while travelling and chooses not to confine her to the precincts of an ordinary, orthodox family *before* accumulating experience. The modality partially suggested by the technique of the picaresque novel is juxtaposed in an organic, natural manner with the classical scheme, modified by the author so as to answer the age’s imperatives.

Thus, in her attempt to “make a living” Feride is *compelled* to travel throughout Anatolia, she is exposed to the most diverse strata of the Turkish society. Her existence temporarily meets ‘others’, each and every one of them with their own story and destiny. The schools to which Feride is assigned are in the remotest and most desolate corners of Anatolia. Her experiences there are more than enough to break the will of the idealist girl who had left Istanbul in the hope of an affective catharsis which is not, by any means, an issue of space.

The first village she stops in, albeit briefly, because she is soon driven away by a complicated series of intrigues, is presented as a universe in itself, where privacy is an alien concept, where everyone knows everyone else and feels entitled to ask, inquire, doubt, promise, lie, an authentic jungle of contradictory rumours, in short a foreign, alien country: “This place is only the size of your palm. Where will you find a place like Istanbul, whose stone and every inch I adore [...] This place is full of chatter” (Güntekin, 1949:126).

Feride, the young Istanbul intellectual woman is shocked by the hostile reality, so different from life in the metropolis. Hadji Kalfa, the friendly hotel keeper offers her the “recipe” for survival and advises her to cover her face and live strictly in accordance with the preservation of *namus* (honour). It is obvious that the social morality, defined by religious rules, is presented as operating mainly upon the regulation of women’s sexuality. The preservation of honour, loyalty to moral codes in relation to women’s sexuality is presented as a *sine qua non* condition of the social order, even more so in the limited space of a village. Since women’s sexuality is regarded as a threat, *fitne*, to the social order, women must be isolated from men and covered by veils. According to Göle:

The basic premise of the Islamic outlook may be summarized as follows: veiling is a

social requirement. The honour of a woman is directly proportional to the distance she is away from 'abuse' or the possibility of sexual harassment. It is veiling itself that ensures the required distance. A look invites lust and causes sedition; a lustful gaze leads to an illicit act – *haram* – and it is illicit to look at a woman if her clothes cling to her body (1998:53).

Somehow paradoxically, Feride learns about the potential dangers of her sexuality not in Istanbul, the cosmopolitan city that is much more relaxed and less inclined towards personal interference, but in traditional, backward, anchored-in-the-past Anatolia. This is the case because this daring, likeable and admirable young woman has her story and her life as a teacher almost exclusively governed by the dictates of her sexuality, by the misfortune of being beautiful. The successive departures, from all the various schools to which she is assigned, are triggered by her womanhood and sensuality. Güntekin himself confesses that his heroine's teaching methods, her knowledge, generally speaking, are not outstanding, nor are they meant to be, since his ideal is to create a "different" character in all respects:

At the time, the merriment and freedom of young girls were not considered a good sign. People had a bad opinion of those girls who were educated in foreign schools or in their own family environment. They were seen as candidates for being bad housewives, bad citizens and bad persons. I wanted to show that little education, merriment and freedom that these young girls, or the Stambulian girls, have, is not something to be afraid of and that when it is necessary, or in difficult moments of life, they can manage themselves better than the most sober ones (Yedi Gün 10, 24 December 1937:251).

Rumours and propositions of all kinds of men trace the pattern of Feride's successive departures and clearly indicate that the portrayal of the "emancipated" woman is sympathetic on the part of the author but still utopian, in terms of its practical realization. The authorial voice embodied by Hayrrulah Bey, the military doctor that Feride accidentally meets, unveils the mystery of the heroine's character and renders the image of an idealist forcibly converted into a practical woman. He can distinguish and criticize, to a certain extent, Feride's odd placement in *Zeyniler*, or rather, misplacement, and destroys the image of the revolutionary young woman, keen on serving her country by means of educating its children. Thus, according to the doctor, this very young "slip of a

girl, cheerful, frank, nicely dressed” (Güntekin, 1949:84), with a remarkable figure, is very unlikely to have come out of sheer devotion to “render service” (84) and suffer in the process humiliations of all sorts.

Indeed, Feride is a unique heroine, especially when compared to some of the best-known female characters of the period. As Deniz Kandiyoti pointed out when referring to the works of Halide Edip Adıvar, one of Güntekin’s illustrious fellow-novelists: “[...] her novels are a telling metaphor of the terms under which women could be accepted into public life in Republican Turkey: as asexual and devoid of their essential femaleness” (1988:46).

Feride, on the other hand, remains until the very end an ideal type of femininity, aesthetically rendered. The alternative names she is given in different places, reminiscent as they are of softness, kindness, a patriarchal woman’s attributes and qualities, sustain this ideal. “Silkworm” and “Gülbeşeker” (‘Rose jam’) disguise Feride’s nature, her personality, her struggle for self-definition, but, at the same time, reinforce remarkable physical qualities. For, notwithstanding her successive ordeals, she is the woman who preserves her natural beauty, breathes sexuality, yet her virtue, virginity and virginity remain untouched until the moment comes for her to assume the role of a wife and future biological mother. Significantly, Munise, her adopted daughter, is not allowed to live, so that in the end the heroine is free to marry the man she has loved all along and have *his* children.

Güntekin, like many other contemporaries of his, places great emphasis on the absolute orthodoxy of a family. An orphan herself, raised by a grandmother and aunts, nursed by a soldier when just a little girl, Feride’s struggle through all her life is to be part of a real family, with no substitutes and unaltered affective availability.

Conclusion

Both *Jane Eyre* and *The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl* are novels that tackle the gender-inspired ideological issues in their respective countries and eras. Both authors compromised with sharp social realities in the case of women, and so did their heroines. This is partly the reason why final judgements cannot be passed on the type of feminism for which they are representative. As mentioned at the beginning of the present study, the initial *liberal* tone subsides into a *conservative* one, easily recognizable when the two denouements of the novels obviously do not surpass the limits of respectable domesticity.

Jane and Feride, in their restrictive environments, succeed, nevertheless, in fabricating their own destinies *inside* patriarchy, *conforming*, even from a stronger position, to the universal role of patriarchal women as carer, nurturer, ultimately wife and mother.

What the heroines achieve, once their peregrinations and their quest for self-definition end, is the right to choose the next episode of their lives. Materially comfortably situated, each of them in different ways (although via *male* protection), they employ their newly gained independence to care for and love a husband. In this renunciation of selfhood, or rather, the re-shaping of selfhood alongside such patriarchal figures as Rochester and Kemran, Both Jane and Feride demonstrate their primordial femininity that cannot be altered by fortunate exterior circumstances.

Their untold stories of potentially altered endings could not have been and *were* not the concern of the two novelists, trapped as they were in their still puritanical, still very conventional ages. *The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl* does indeed, mirror the new ideology and socialization – Kemalism, that made it possible for a woman to circulate “freely” and make a living independently, outside the house, while traditional forces, completely at odds with them, remained at work.

Jane Eyre also encompasses a still weak, fragile tendency towards the creation of a new type of woman, confident, engaged in outside the home activities and therefore willing to diversify and sometimes destroy stereotypes.

The above considered, Jane and Feride, while made possible by the new progressive movements, travel from individual motivations, and the most regressive and conservative ones, such as the wish for marriage and the broken heart that sometimes precedes or accompanies the desired union.

One axiom contains their true story and it is the fact that at least in Victorian England and Republican Turkey, the working woman, far from being a revolutionary spirit, is the woman disappointed in love. Such “representational economy” of the “working woman” seems to belong to a certain literature of transition which explains why, although almost a century apart, *Jane Eyre* and *The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl* are so similar.

References:

- Arat, F. Z. 1999. *Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman*. New York: St. Martin's Press
- Bronte, C. 1984. *Jane Eyre*. Q.D. Leavis (ed.). Middlesex: Penguin [1847]
- Carter, A. 1992. *Expletives Deleted*. London: Vintage
- Fraser, R. 1988. *Charlotte Bronte*. London: Vintage
- Gilbert, M. S. and S. Gubar. 2000. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press
- Göle, N. 1998. *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press
- Güntekin, R.N. 1949. *The Autobiography of a Turkish Girl*. (translated from the Turkish by Sir W. Deeds). Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press
- Kandiyoti, D. 1988. "Slave Girls, Temptresses and Comrades: Images of Women in the Turkish Novel" in *Feminist Issues*, vol. 8, no.1, pp. 35-50
- Miller, L. 2002. *The Bronte Myth*. London: Vintage

**THE STRANGE CASE OF THE DOUBLE WOMAN: REWRITING THE
VICTORIAN CLASSIC**

BOŻENA KUCAŁA

Jagiellonian University, Cracow

Analysing Nabokov's analysis of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Andrew Jefford acknowledges the difficulty confronting anyone wishing to represent the story in an innovative way: it has acquired the status of modern myth to the extent that "the original all-important suspense device has been, paradoxically, utterly annihilated by the very fact of the narrative's own success" (1983:50). Beginning his series of lectures on the book, Nabokov urged his audience: "Please completely forget, disremember, obliterate, unlearn, consign to oblivion any notion you may have had that *Jekyll and Hyde* is some kind of mystery story, a detective story, or a movie" (Jefford, 1983:51).

The two contemporary novels inspired by Stevenson's book, Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly* (1990) and Emma Tennant's *Two Women of London* (1989), require the reader to do the exact opposite: bear the original in mind and relate the modern versions to it. Although they rewrite Stevenson's novella quite differently, they both rely on the reader's knowledge of the hypotext. Any rewritten canonical text demands double reading, which results, as Anne Humpherys says, "in the satisfactions of recognition and a sense of special, even privileged knowledge" (2002:445). The reader's response to the new version is shaped by the perceived interaction of the two texts; the hypertext is inevitably read in the light of its modifications of the hypotext. And it is primarily in order to impose significant modifications on the original that its modern version is produced.

While engagement with the past is a hallmark of much of contemporary fiction, a substantial part of this fiction looks back to Victorianism, possibly because, as Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn speculate, "the Victorians are history at its closest". They suggest that "[t]he desire to combine a representation of the past with issues and concepts that are relevant to the present and future may be why so much of recent historical fiction is set in the Victorian period" (Heilmann and Llewellyn, 2004:142). Robin Gilmour in his article on the Victorian age in contemporary fiction claims that "[t]he Victorian period and Victorian literature offer special opportunities to the novelist today" by virtue of their apparent solidity and unselfconsciousness in their expressions of attitudes. He

distinguishes several categories of modern uses of Victorianism, one of which is “modern reworking or completing of a classic Victorian novel” (Gilmour, 2000:189-190), a category into which the books by Martin and Tennant fall.

Typically, rewritten texts contest the source by rectifying omissions, offering new ideological perspectives, filling in gaps, emphasising and empowering what was originally marginalised and suppressed. Steven Connor notes that in rewriting their literary precedents, “such novels engage with the history of beliefs and attitudes to which those originals have belonged and which they have helped to shape” (1996:167). A classic case in point is Jean Rhys’s polemical rewriting of *Jane Eyre*, giving a voice and history to the madwoman in the attic. Anne Humpherys notes that the issues on which rewriting focuses are normally “those of gender, race, sexuality, and sometimes class” (2002:446).

Such objectives can certainly be detected in both versions of Stevenson’s book. Written by women and narrated by women, both introduce a female perspective and complement or challenge the original by incorporating questions of gender and class. It has often been remarked that the world of *Jekyll and Hyde* is strangely homogeneous: male, middle-class and professional. Jekyll’s establishment is inhabited by several servants, who, except Mr Poole the butler, are shadowy beings, quite insignificant to the story.

Valerie Martin leaves the central problem of the Jekyll/Hyde relationship largely intact, carefully following the stages of Stevenson’s original narrative; the one significant change consists in presenting the events from the point of view of Jekyll’s humble domestics, simultaneously pushing into the background his colleagues, including the lawyer Mr Utterson, a character crucial to the original version. The complexity of the narrative series has been replaced by a much simpler structure, employing only two narratives: the first-person account written by the eponymous housemaid Mary Reilly, followed by an anonymous editor’s afterword which questions her account.

Since Valerie Martin takes it for granted that the story is well-known, she dispenses with the tension-building narrative strategies of the original, instead concentrating on the responses of the housemaid. Although clearly intended to be a copy of Stevenson’s protagonist, Jekyll in *Mary Reilly* comes across as a far less ambiguous character than the original. Constantly cold and sickly, he gloomily broods on the inherent evil of man and seems to have more conventional moral doubts than his literary predecessor. He gives the impression of passively yielding to evil rather than willingly releasing it, as the original Jekyll does. In short, he evokes much pity and little fear.

However, as his actions and words broadly echo the original, Martin apparently had no intention of subverting Stevenson other than completing the perceived gap in his story (cf. Bryk, 2004:205-206).

Unlike Jean Rhys's re-creation of the first Mrs Rochester, who is an unquestionable - albeit speechless - presence in *Jane Eyre*, Jekyll's housemaid is almost entirely Valerie Martin's invention, based on very scanty evidence in Stevenson's narrative. In the original, the reaction of the servants is hardly recorded at all as if they went about their daily duties quite unaware of the strange goings on. This impression is strengthened at the end of the novella, showing the servants completely taken by surprise by Jekyll's disappearance in the laboratory. In the final scene they are depicted huddling together 'like a flock of sheep'. Utterson, although upset himself, in front of the servants keeps up the appearance of perfect self-control. Not only does he not deign to share his anxiety with them, he even takes over the role of their master, in a patronising manner reminding them of their inferiority: "'What, what? Are you all here?'" said the lawyer, peevishly. 'Very irregular, very unseemly: your master would be far from pleased.' " They are duly subdued, except the housemaid who has earlier "broke[n] into hysterical whimpering" and now lifts up her voice and weeps loudly. She is in turn brutally silenced by the butler whose ferocity, in the narrator's words, "testified to his own jangled nerves" (Stevenson, 1992:65-66).

The unnamed hysterical housemaid evolves into the protagonist of Valerie Martin's novel. Martin's construction of the character, although based on nothing more than this perfunctory glimpse, is nevertheless justified by the recurrent pattern of Jekyll's relationships with the other characters that appear to share his condition of duality. Jekyll's double invariably provokes very strong, disturbing emotions in the people who chance to meet him. In the memorable first report of Hyde's gratuitous cruelty, the trampling of the little girl, the witnesses become possessed with overpowering hate and murderous instincts. Just as Hyde is not the opposite of Jekyll but rather resides within him, so "[t]he opposition between Hyde and others repeatedly begins to blur as soon as it is posited" (Garrett, 1988:68).

In his 'Full Statement of the Case' Jekyll ventures the hypothesis that man is not two, but possibly a "polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens". Therefore, although other split personalities may be found among the characters of

Stevenson's book, in their totality they may be seen as testifying to this observation by being all in some way contaminated by Jekyll's incongruity.

The housemaid invented by Valerie Martin becomes yet another of Jekyll's doubles by sharing his condition. There are strong implications in the novel that her own father was another incarnation of the Jekyll/Hyde division. In Mary's mind, the figures of father and master merge; she addresses Jekyll in the same way in which she used to address her father. The text leaves it unclear whether she in retrospect projects her attitude to Jekyll onto her father or vice versa. She treats Jekyll with reverence and devotion which evolves into transgressive, repressed erotic attraction. The split in Mary's personality which was to manifest itself in her adult life was induced in her by her father. As a child she was subject to maltreatment which drove her into hysterical fits. Although as a young woman she is remarkably calm and self-possessed, the experience left a potentially disruptive mark on her personality. She reflects:

Yet I feel that my father put this dark place in me that brings sadness on me unawares, when I should be happy to have my good place and such friends as I have and someone like Cook who can advise me on the way of gardening, and who is simple herself and finds happiness in doing her work and knowing her place. But for me, though I can get past it, there's often this darkness and sadness, unexpected and coming from things that should bring happiness, like the thought of the garden and the working in it with Cook, but then it rises up inside like a blackness and I really am in that blackness where my father left me, with no way out and nothing to do but wait until somehow there's some merciful release and I come to myself again. (Martin, 2004:31)

Jekyll gets an intimation of Mary's inner conflict as he examines her hands, bruised and scarred, contrasting with his own white, delicate, feminine hands. It will be remembered that in Stevenson's text, one of the symptoms of the Jekyll/Hyde transformation is the change in the appearance of his hands. In a comparable episode in *Great Expectations* Jaggers forcefully displays Molly's hands in order to prove her criminal proclivities.

In her double role as character and narrator Mary Reilly can be seen as the counterpart of Mr Utterson, who apart from Jekyll is undoubtedly the most important character in Stevenson. There are strong indications in the novella that while his choice of profession corresponds to his desire for order and self-control, he also experiences socially

unacceptable urges. Peter K. Garrett interprets the final scene with Mr Utterson and Poole forcing open the door to Jekyll's cabinet as the final confirmation of his suppressed affinity with Jekyll (1988:69).

Utterson is entrusted with the revealing papers as Jekyll's closest confidant but how he reacts to the truth remains unknown. In Valerie Martin's version, Mary enters the forbidden room after everyone including Utterson has gone. Yet unlike them, on finding the body she has an immediate intuition of the truth. Her reaction is acknowledgement of Jekyll's discovery of man's inevitable duality. Unhesitatingly, she embraces her dead master in token of approval: " 'But you said you no longer care for the world's opinion', I said to him, 'nor will I' " (Martin, 2005:237).

While characters in Stevenson's text express horror and moral indignation at Hyde's deeds, Mary metamorphoses from similar positions into open identification with Jekyll/Hyde. Initially, as a housemaid she is given to keeping order and cleanliness, she also has sound moral views. Her replies to Jekyll's ambiguous questions are commonsensical yet strangely accord with his own secret ideas. Not much is known of how she spent the years between her childhood and adulthood but she seems to be in need of external checks:

And then of how I come to Master's house and found everything so quiet and suited to me, and his ways so like my own that I felt I'd stepped into a harness that fit me at last, and that I could stay safe from the light ways that I have never understood and be valued rather for what I am (Martin, 2004:151).

In fact, unknowingly from the very beginning she utters things that conform to Jekyll's notion of man's self-division.

Although, as has been said, both Valerie Martin and Emma Tennant revise the gender and class of Stevenson's characters, the resulting versions have surprisingly little in common. Whereas Martin in a sense completes the Victorian narrative, Tennant attempts a far more radical rewriting, altering the ideology and moral implications of it. The central problem of the original story i.e. man's ethical dualism has been relegated to the subject of research carried out by one of the characters - Jean Hastie, vaguely reminiscent of Utterson's function in Stevenson's story.

Jean, to whom the work is a spare-time hobby, starts with the working thesis that although due to Original Sin each and all of us are irreconcilably split, we must recognise

our individual responsibility and freedom to make moral choices. The encounter with Jekyll/Hyde undermines her belief in our free will and full responsibility for our actions, bringing her close to Stevenson's inherently Calvinistic concepts.

Yet, despite these considerations, the thrust of Tennant's version is social and political rather than moral. The serious political message combined with elements of social satire accounts for the comment made by the critic Carol Anderson that Tennant's "response to Stevenson's 'master-text' is deadly serious in its gendered themes, yet shot through with satirical humour" (2000:121). Lyn Pykett describes Stevenson's novella as being "among other things, a tale of civilization and its discontents, which conjures up the dark underside of the repressed world of the male professionals (doctors, scientists, and lawyers) who form Jekyll's circle" (2001:207).

In Emma Tennant, (Mrs) Hyde represents the repressed world of the socially underprivileged, whose existence the prosperous entrepreneurial class of the 1980s would rather forget. The modern affluent professional circle in Tennant's book, unlike in the Victorian version, is mostly comprised of women, but the victim of what Jean Hastie in an overtly anti-Thatcherite jibe ironically calls 'our new Victorian values' is also a woman: a single mother, unable to find a job, unable to pay for an attractive appearance and its consequent social respectability.

Whereas the appreciation of Victorian values in the 1980s Britain led to a superficial fashion for nineteenth-century ornamentation ("Lamp-posts, facsimiles of the Victorian originals and insisted on by rich residents of the borough as replacements for the fluorescence of past decades"), Victorianism is covertly restored in its more sinister aspects: class divisions are strictly observed, socially undesirable individuals are subject to oppression, a serial rapist stalks the streets of London. The Jekyll/Hyde division becomes a division between rich and poor, the privileged and the underprivileged.

Instead of the original Faustian scientist Emma Tennant enacts the split personality in two women, Ms Eliza Jekyll and Mrs Hyde, on two sides of the social divide. Another significant departure from the original is the direction of the transformation. In Stevenson, it is the respectable doctor who occasionally releases the abominable Hyde who is part of him. In Tennant's rewriting, poor, ageing Mrs Hyde from time to time by means of drugs turns herself into the glamorous Eliza Jekyll, in order to ensure social survival. Because Mrs Hyde suffers from a sense of self-loathing and self-

estrangement, the condition of self-possession i.e. the momentary transformation into Eliza Jekyll, as Steven Connor says, is “a derived rather than an original effect” (1994:83).

Carol Anderson notes at this point the strongly feminist perspective inherent in this reversal:

The novel directs attention to society’s emphasis on female youth and beauty and explores women’s problematic relationship with the visual, especially the objectification of women by film, photography and the media (2000:120).

Concurring with this perspective are echoes of another doppelganger story, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* - while Eliza Jekyll seems to be magically unaffected by time, the face and body of Mrs Hyde bear signs of ageing and deprivation.

However, it should be noted that the first, original transformation was from Jekyll to Hyde, except that, unlike in Stevenson, it was not sought but forced on the individual by harsh circumstances. Here, too, it is Jekyll that represents for the character her true self. Mrs Hyde recalls:

You can’t imagine what it’s like when your youth comes back – and beauty, and more – and the figure and the quick step to go with it. It only happened gradually at first, but I found out that if I took the pills my friend Marge gets from Dr Ruby from time to time it had some effect on the hormone drug and I could turn – just like that – into the person I had been. Yes, into me! Eliza! Where had I gone? Who had I been? But now – when I wanted, I was me! (Tennant, 1989:113)

Abandoned by her husband and left with two children to struggle on her own in a hostile environment, the woman unwillingly undergoes ‘a terrible change.’ She recalls: “

The hand was grey and wrinkled, and it was like a dead person’s hand, limp and a darkish purple where the grey skin wasn’t puckered by the join of finger and thumb. And – of course – it was my own ageing, defeated, accusing hand (Tennant, 1989:112).

Correspondingly, the murder Mrs Hyde commits is not an act of wanton cruelty or sadistic self-indulgence but a form of revenge. The man she attacks momentarily combines in her deranged imagination all the men who have directly or indirectly wronged her: “The

rapist walked there [...] with the face of my husband and the landlord's long, straight legs, and the slight pot belly of Sir James" (Tennant, 1989:118). The women in the story, apparently sympathetic to her plight, assist Mrs Hyde in disappearance, which is successful escape to the continent rather than self-destruction.

In his insightful analysis of both the Victorian classic and Tennant's novel, Steven Connor argues that in making Hyde a woman Tennant reverses - but paradoxically also reverts to - the Victorian concept of the female as "the inhibiting or corrupting materiality from which the freely self-determining male must extricate himself" (1996:182). He points out that, apart from explicit references to Hyde as an evolutionary throwback, Stevenson's narrative on two occasions identifies him as female, within an implicit ideological framework where woman stands for loss of identity, the non-self, the indefinite, the impure (1994:84). Yet it is doubtful whether Tennant's hypotext allows for this parallel because the psychological and ethical depth of the original has been sacrificed for the sake of satirical engagement with the present.

Where Tennant remains faithful to Stevenson's original is the skilful handling of a complex narrative structure, combining letters, diaries, transcripts and video recordings. Apart from engagement with a particular classic narrative, the writer manifests high self-consciousness in her use of the literary tradition. Before writing *Two Women of London*, Emma Tennant produced another female version of a Scottish doppelganger story, *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. In addition to the explicit use of Gothic and crime fiction conventions, Tennant alludes to the mode of literary rewriting, represented by a classic of this mode, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The butler in Stevenson's narrative, fortuitously named Poole, has been replaced by Tennant by Mrs Grace Poole, the sinister housekeeper in both *Jane Eyre* and its rewritten version.

In view of the divergent outcomes of the two rewriting projects, Gérard Genette's categorisation in *Palimpsests* may be helpful in identifying the hypertextual practices pursued by the two contemporary writers. Valerie Martin's version, which tries to imitate the Victorian narrative, may be termed 'forgery', while Emma Tennant's transformation of the original context justifies the classification of her work as 'transposition' (cf. Genette, 1997:24-30).

While admittedly both of the Stevensonesque hypertexts discussed here in some way or another fail to do justice to the moral and narrative complexity of the original, they are interesting in posing the question of the purpose of literary rewriting. Anne Humpherys

claims that neo-Victorian texts forever change our response to the originals, and our rereading can never be innocent of the perspective revealed by the rewriting (2002:456). This seems true in the case of Valerie Martin's book, making the reader aware of a possible complementary narrative strand. The insertion of the housemaid's account, although not openly invited by the original, is given by it the appearance of verisimilitude. The validity of Mary's story is, however, playfully called into question by the anonymous editor, whose final words describe her diaries as "intended to be nothing less serious than a work of fiction" (Martin, 2004:247).

Emma Tennant's rewriting, instead of completing the original, inserts modern content into the Victorian form. Rather than questioning Victorian ideology, however, the novel targets its late-twentieth century version. Hence it could be argued that the Victorian classic has been used for a modern purpose, without undergoing significant modifications itself.

References:

- Anderson, C. 2000. "Emma Tennant, Elspeth Barker, Alice Thompson: Gothic Revisited" in A. Christianson and A. Lumsden (eds.). *Contemporary Scottish Writers*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Bryk, M. 2004. "The Maidservant in the Attic: Rewriting Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Hyde* in Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly*" in *Women: A Cultural Review* 15:2
- Connor, S. 1994. "Rewriting Wrong: On the Ethics of Literary Reversion" in T. D'Haen and H. Bartens (eds.). *Liminal Postmodernisms: the Postmodern, the (Post-) Colonial and the (Post-)Feminist*. Amsterdam: Rodopi
- Connor, S. 1996. *The English Novel in History 1950-1995*. London and New York: Routledge
- Garrett, P. K. 1988. "Cries and Voices: Reading *Jekyll and Hyde*" in W. Veeder and G. Hirsch (eds.). *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde After One Hundred Years*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press
- Genette, G. 1997. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press

- Gilmour, R. 2000. "Using the Victorians: the Victorian Age in Contemporary Fiction" in A. Jenkins and J. John (eds.). *Rereading Victorian Fiction*. Houndsmills and London: Macmillan
- Heilmann, A. and M. Llewellyn. 2004. 'Hystorical Fictions: Women (Re)Writing and (Re)Reading History' in *Women: A Cultural Review* 15:2
- Humpherys, A. 2002. "The Afterlife of the Victorian Novel: Novels about Novels" in P. Bratlinger and W. B. Thesing (eds.). *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell
- Jefford, A. "Dr. Jekyll and Professor Nabokov: Reading a Reading" in A. Noble (ed.). *Robert Louis Stevenson*. London and Totowa: Vision; Barnes and Noble
- Martin, V. 2004. *Mary Reilly*. London: Abacus
- Pykett, L. 2001. "Sensation and the Fantastic in the Victorian Novel" in D. David (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Stevenson, R.L. 1992. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Stories*. Jozef Falinski (ed.). Rapallo: Cideb Editrice
- Tennant, E. 1989. *Two Women of London: The Strange Case of Ms Jekyll and Mrs Hyde*. London and Boston: Faber and Faber

**TOUCHING THE UNTOUCHABLE: ISSUES OF GENDER AND CASTE
IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS***

OLIVIA BĂLĂNESCU

University of Craiova

Arundhati Roy's single novel, *The God of Small Things*, winner of the 1997 Booker Prize, is an ancient drama played out against a modern background. A banquet for all the senses, the book explores and goes beyond issues of nationality, caste, gender and religion to reveal the core of humanity, in a story that

began thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came. Before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch Ascendancy, before Vasco da Gama arrived, before Zamorin's conquest of Calicut. Before three purple-robed Syrian Bishops murdered by the Portuguese were found floating in the sea, with coiled sea serpents riding on their chests and oysters knotted in their tangled beards. It could be argued that it began long before Christianity arrived in a boat and seeped into Kerala like tea from a teabag. That it really began in the days when the Love Laws were made. The laws that lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much. (Roy, 1997:33).

These laws are inscribed into Indian caste society, and legitimated by tradition and certain religious scriptures which affect basic human rights by dividing social categories in terms of *pure* and *impure*, and so impure as to be untouchable. This paper attempts to draw attention to the relationships between caste ideology and gender relations in the intimate and public spheres of Indian society, as they unfold and collide in Arundhati Roy's text.

The God of Small Things is structured as a series of episodes told backwards, flashbacks from the immediate present to the recent and the more distant past, and shifting in focus from the private world of the subject-self to the outer world of power. The dizygotic twins inform us that "it was possible to read both *Malayalam* and *Madam I'm Adam* backwards as well as forwards" (Roy, 1997:60). Joining the twins' game I will risk brutalization of the structuring of time in Roy's narrative and present a chronology of events. Forwards. The scope and texture of the story can be regained, partially at least, in the discussion.

The central female character, Ammu, eager to escape from her parental Ayemenem house and “the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother” (Roy, 1997:39) marries, in a hurry, the wrong man, a full-blown alcoholic she had met at someone else’s wedding reception. The birth of their two-egg twins, Rahel and Estha, does not alter the pattern of their marriage: drunken violence followed by post-drunken badgering. Domestic violence is a recurrent theme in the novel, as well as in Ammu’s life. She is abused not only by her husband, but also by Pappachi, her father, who often comes from work out of sorts, and beats her and Mammachi and drives them out of their home. Whereas Ammu is brave enough to ask for a divorce, Mammachi had learned to live with this cold, calculating cruelty. Every night she is beaten with a brass flower vase, until Chacko, Ammu’s brother, comes home for a summer vacation from Oxford, and threatens his father. Pappachi never touches Mammachi again, but he never speaks to her either as long as he lives.

When Ammu returns to Ayemenem from Calcutta Pappachi is long since dead. Yet, she has no rights in her parents’ home, being equally despised by Chacko, Mammachi and her aunt, Baby Kochamma. A wretched manless woman whose choice between her husband’s name and her father’s name did not give her much of a choice:

[...] a married daughter had no position in her parents’ home. As for a *divorced* daughter – according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a *divorced* daughter from a *love* marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma’s outrage. As for a *divorced* daughter from an *intercommunity love* marriage - Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject. (Roy, 1997:45-46).

The twins are too young to understand all this. They long for love, unconsciously aware that people dislike them for they are considered “doomed, fatherless waifs. Worse still, they were Half-Hindu Hybrids whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry.” (Roy, 1997:45). The twins’ only friend is Velutha, a low caste carpenter with an engineering mind, hired by Mammachi in the pickle factory.

As a woman who had already been marginalized by family and society, Ammu had little left to lose. People avoided her sensing something wild lurking inside her:

The infinite tenderness of motherhood and the reckless rage of a suicide bomber. It was this that grew inside her, and eventually led her to love by night the man her children

loved by day. To use by night the boat that her children used by day. The boat that Estha sat on, and Rahel found.” (Roy, 1997:44).

With Ammu’s secret night journeys across the river starts the beginning of the end. She commits the deadly sin of falling in love with a Paravan, of transgressing the limits, the borders, the laws of her caste. One rainy night the hideous truth is revealed to angry Mammachi by Velutha’s father. Ammu is locked in her room and the scared children take the boat to go to the History House where they had made a home for themselves away from home, driven by Estha’s two practical thoughts that: “Anything can happen to Anyone” and “It’s best to be prepared” (Roy, 1997:194). The twins agree to take with them Sophie Mol, their bellbottomed, loved from the beginning cousin, who had come to Ayemenem for Christmas with her English mother, Margaret Kotchamma. During their short sail the boat collides with a floating log and capsizes, forcing the children to swim to the shore. Sophie Mol cannot, and the river takes its offering.

The official version of the events that appeared in the local newspapers is that a Paravan kidnapped and murdered Sophie, and had to “encounter” the police. What the newspapers did not say was that Velutha had been beaten to death by the police, and that Ammu had officially confessed her relationship with Velutha, casting unbearable shame upon her family. The mad Chacko throws her out of the house after Estha is returned to his father in Calcutta. Rahel remains behind to grow up by herself in the Ayemenem House, and to endure the pain of her mother’s brief visits: a desperate woman made rotten by illness and illusory dreams of finding a proper job that would enable her to look after the twins. Ammu dies alone with no one to talk to her. “She was thirty-one. Not old, not young, but a viable, die-able age.” (Roy, 1997:161).

At precisely the same *die-able* age, Rahel returns to Ayemenem from America when her twin brother is re-returned. Twenty-three years of silence have emptied Rahel and silenced Estha who refuses to speak. Emptiness and quietness walking side by side. Estha is obsessively concerned with cleaning in a futile attempt to wash off his childhood guilt. Manipulated by Baby Kochamma and frightened by the possibility of going to jail together with his mother and sister, Estha had been the one appointed to identify Velutha as their kidnapper and aggressor. It is by way of Rahel that events are remembered, told backwards with a new, mature insight into the deep layers of their mother’s deadly sin and the twins’ blackmailed betrayal.

Perhaps, Ammu, Estha and she were the worst transgressors. But it wasn't just them. It was the others too. They all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much. The laws that make grandmothers grandmothers, uncles uncles, mothers mothers, cousins cousins, jam jam, and jelly jelly...It was a time when the unthinkable became thinkable and the impossible really happened." (Roy, 1997:31).

Deeply rooted in Indian society and still painfully at work, caste ideologies draw on biological metaphors of stigma and defilement to enable human and spatial segregation, and to render the body a culturally legible surface. Anupama Rao in *Gender and Caste. Issues in Contemporary Indian Feminism* argues that:

Caste is a religio-ritual form of personhood, a social organization of the world through the phenomenology of touch, an extension of the concept of stigma from the facticity of biological bodies to metaphorical collectivities such as the body politic, and most importantly is an apparatus that regulates sexuality. Such ideologies [...] are mediated by the regulation of sexuality and gender identity through the rules of kinship and caste purity (2003:6).

On accounts of taboos regarding touch, low caste Paravans enrol the list of Untouchables. Traditionally, they were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched. Pappachi would not allow Paravans into the house. Thus Vellya Paapen, Velutha's father, can only approach the back entrance of the Ayemenem House. When Velutha himself was eleven, he used to make intricate toys out of wood or dried palm reeds, and offer them to Ammu "holding them out on his palm (as he had been taught) so she wouldn't have to touch him to take them" (Roy, 1997:74).

In Mammachi's time, Paravans were supposed "to crawl backwards with a broom, sweeping away their footprints so that Brahmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan's footprint" (Roy, 1997:73-74). Like other Untouchables, Paravans went to separate schools, were not allowed to walk on public roads, wear shoes, carry umbrellas, or cover their upper bodies. They had to cover their mouths when they spoke so that the people they addressed would not be polluted by their breath. Every aspect of their physicality is regarded as foul and disgusting. When Baby

Kochamma found what Vellya Paapen's Untouchable son had touched, the first thing she said was: "How could she stand the smell? Haven't you noticed, they have a particular smell, these Paravans?" (Roy, 1997: 78).

Caste is generally considered a phenomenon characteristic of Hindu society. Hence, some have regarded conversion as an escape from an oppressive reality, but a closer look at the experience and social practice of other religious groups in India reasserts the idea that caste is not a religious institution, but an institution that structures social relations irrespective of religious faith. In order to escape the stigma of Untouchability, a number of Paravans, Pelayas, and Pulayas converted to Christianity and joined the Anglican Church. Velutha's grandfather, we are told, was one of the many fooled into believing that Christianity provided a way out of a conditioning they have from birth.

It didn't take them long to realize that they had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. They were made to have separate churches, with separate services, and separate priests. As a special favour they were even given their own separate Pariah Bishop. After Independence they found that they were not entitled to any Government benefits [...] because officially, on paper, they were Christians, and therefore casteless. It was a little like having to sweep away your footprints without a broom. Or worse, not being *allowed* to leave footprints at all. (Roy, 1997:74).

Caste unfolds its rules not only irrespective of religion, but also of political orientation. Communism, like Christianity once, seems to offer Untouchables the much longed-for equality status in society. Velutha becomes a member of the Communist party, a card holder, and takes part in marches and demonstrations to demand increased wages for both men and women and the abolition of caste names: "They demanded *not* to be addressed as Achoo *Parayan*, or Kelan *Paravan*, or Kuttan *Pulayan*, but just as Achoo, or Kelan, or Kuttan" (Roy, 1997:69). Although comrade Pillai, an important figure in the local Marxist party, proclaims that "Caste is Class, comrades" (Roy, 1997:281), he refuses to help Velutha to run away. "Party was not constituted to support workers' indiscipline in their private life" (Roy, 1997:287), comrade Pillai informs Velutha, hiding his own personal resentment against the Untouchables.

Another issue related to caste relations concerns women's position and the management of female sexuality in a caste society. "Women are constantly objectified and become instruments in the structures and processes implicated in the reproduction of caste"

(Dube, 2003:223) being representative symbols of the caste, community, tribe and ethnic groups. Arundhati Roy explores in *The God of Small Things* two main themes related to women's role within caste: marriage and sexuality, and occupational continuity.

The maintenance of rules of behaviour and actions specific to one's caste is secured not through individuals but through kinship units, particularly the family and the household. When rules are transgressed and norms of caste broken, the punishment leads to ostracism not of the offender, but of the whole domestic group to which the offender belongs until he/she is disowned by the family. Women's lives are largely lived within familial patterns, and the centrality of the household in their lives cannot be overlooked. Ammu's transgression of boundaries is therefore an act of effrontery to her family, hence Baby Kochamma's false testimony at the police. She insists that her niece was seduced by a Paravan and thus tries to protect the honour of the Ayemenem House. When Ammu goes to confess how things really happened, Chacko asserts his authoritarian position in the caste, and sends her away.

Gender within caste society is thus defined and structured in such a manner that the 'manhood' of the caste is defined both by the degree of control men exercise over women and the degree of passivity of the women of the caste." (Rao, 2003: 254).

In this way, Ammu's crime is double: crossing the limits between upper and lower caste, and challenging her culturally constructed role of obedient and restrained woman. The order in relations of caste and gender is maintained through the use of force, hence the violence against women that is ripe in Arundhati Roy's novel.

On the other hand, "the caste system is premised upon the cultural perception of a fundamental difference in male and female sexuality (Dube, 2003:231). Women of either caste are "naturally" involved in pollution incurred through bodily processes such as menstruation and childbirth. Women are therefore less pure than men, and their "impurity" is enhanced by the kind of polluting tasks that they perform within the family. Low caste women are the most impure because they also deal with others' pollution through their work activities such as disposal of dirt, the washing of dirty clothes, and so on. Since their men, too, earn their living by doing impure tasks the gender divisions within low castes appear to be less unequal.

Moreover, the caste system is based upon a crucial difference between male and female bodies with respect to their vulnerability to incur impurity through sexual intercourse. Women get much more polluted than men since the act affects them internally while men are affected only externally. Leela Dube argues that

The contrast is expressed culturally by likening a woman to an earthen pot which is easily and permanently defiled if used by a polluted person within the caste or by a lower caste person or one of a different religion, and a man, on the other hand, to a brass pot which is not easily polluted and, in any case, can be restored to its original state by scrubbing, washing, and if necessary, by putting it through fire, a purifier par excellence (2003:232).

Symbolically, Pappachi uses only a brass flower vase to beat Mammachi. It is obvious that upper caste women are much more vulnerable to pollution through sexual intercourse than lower caste women, or men of their own caste. Thus, men of dominant castes often have mistresses from lower castes without fearing ostracization as long as they do not marry those women or eat food cooked by their mistresses. There are also institutionalized mechanisms of purification such as ritual baths in sacred waters. If a high caste woman goes astray and the matter becomes public, she is immediately abandoned by her family, and sometimes even killed.

In *The God of Small Things* Chacko has numerous relationships with the women employed in his factory in the name of his “Man’s Needs” (Roy, 1997:168) that must be accepted. “Neither Mammachi nor Baby Kochamma saw any contradiction between Chacko’s Marxist mind and feudal libido” (Roy, 1997:168). On the one hand, he speaks about fighting for the employees’ rights, on the other hand, he has no remorse in sexually abusing the lower caste women who work for him. Mammachi had a separate entrance built for Chacko’s room so that “the objects of his Needs” (Roy, 1997:169) could come and go unnoticed. She would secretly give these women money to keep them happy, convinced that “a fee *clarified* things. Disjuncted sex from love. Needs from Feelings.” (Roy, 1997: 169). The fee was gladly accepted because Chacko’s mistresses had many children and old parents and alcoholic husbands.

By contrast, Ammu’s intercourse union is a totally different matter that demands a severe punishment executed by the holders of power in the Ayemenem House. The boundaries and hierarchies of caste are thus articulated by gender. Ammu herself knows all about it and assumes the consequences, driven by that recklessness and potential of a

suicide bomber that people feared in her. For Ammu and Velutha there was no future, so they stuck to the small things:

Each time they parted, they extracted only one small promise from each other.

'Tomorrow?'

'Tomorrow.'

They knew that things could change in a day. They were right about that (Roy, 1997:339).

When we turn to the material bases of caste, the unequal distribution of resources and exploitative relations of production can be understood through an enquiry into the principles of kinship governing allocation of resources, rights to property and entitlements. In the Ayemenem household, domestic work is mainly done by the lower caste cook, Kochu Maria, while Paravans are employed in the family factory, "Paradise Pickles and Preservers". When Pappachi retired from Government service in Delhi and returned to Ayemenem, Mammachi started making pickles commercially. Although she was almost blind, Pappachi refused to help her "because he did not consider pickle-making a suitable job for a high-ranking ex-Government official." (Roy, 1997:47).

After Pappachi died, Chacko came to Ayemenem and registered the factory as a partnership, appointing Mammachi a sleeping partner. Until then, Mammachi had run her small enterprise profitably like a large kitchen. But Chacko wanted a big business and mortgaged the family's rice fields to raise extravagant bank loans. Almost immediately the financial slide began. Ammu was as much involved in the factory work as Chacko but, as a daughter, she had no claim to the property. "Chacko always referred to it as *my* factory, *my* pineapples, *my* pickles." (Roy, 1997:57). *His* world in which Ammu had no "Locusts Stand I", thanks to the "wonderful male chauvinist society" (Roy, 1997:57).

As it is often the case, women have to be trained in traditional occupations from childhood and have to be accustomed to accept them as their destiny. It is not education, but the necessary skills to do traditional work that tend to make a girl useful in the husband's family. Leela Dube points out that:

It has been found that parents may restrict the education of girls to avoid a potentially uncomfortable situation in which the daughter develops a distaste for the traditional occupation of her caste. (2003:226).

In Arundhati Roy's novel the Kochamma women seem to have no traditional occupation. Although they belong to a family of Syrian Christians, they form a caste that matches the highest Hindu caste of Brahmins since Baby Kochamma's father was Reverend Ipe, once blessed by the Patriarch himself. However, women are denied the right to proper education. Mammachi took her first lessons in violin during her husband's short stay in Vienna for a diploma course. But the lessons soon stopped when Mammachi's teacher "made the mistake of telling Pappachi that his wife was exceptionally talented and, in his opinion, potentially concert class." (Roy, 1997:50). Similarly, Ammu could not go to college because, according to Pappachi, "a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl." (Roy, 1997:38).

Arundhati Roy's story is like a pickle jar that shapes its contents by its very form, reminding us of Salman Rushdie's historiographic metafictional processes in *Midnight's Children* as a "chutnification of history" (1981:459). Chutnification is also an image of preserving: "Memory, as well as fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks." (Rushdie, 1981:38).

In *The God of Small Things* raw materials are transformed, given form and shape, that is to say meaning, by Rahel's recollection of the events.

Estha and Rahel learned how history negotiates its terms and collects its dues from those who break its laws. They heard its sickening thud. They smelled its smell and never forgot it. History's smell. Like old roses on a breeze. It would lurk for ever in ordinary things. (Roy, 1997:55).

The big things are systematically withheld from the story that nevertheless gathers all its strength and sense of tragedy from these small things. On several occasions "only the Small Things were said. The big things lurked unsaid inside." (Roy, 1997:173). Ammu repeatedly refers to Velutha as "the God of Loss, the God of Small Things" (Roy, 1997: 220), that is, the small things he did for Ammu as a child and also for her twins, the small things he talked to her about during their forbidden nights in the History House. The big things needed no words. There was no time for them.

The History House is Ayemenem's own Heart of Darkness. Kari Saipu's house, "the Englishman who had gone native. Who spoke Malayalam and wore mundus. Ayemenem's own Kurtz." (Roy, 1997:52). Ammu's journeys across the river parallel

Marlow's journey into the heart of the dark continent to confront his other self, his savage double, Kurtz. In *The God of Small Things* the History House becomes the heart of dark desires consumed in spite of all the carefully drawn lines of demarcation between castes and taboos of untouchability.

Arundhati Roy's novel, sad, yet tenderly written, makes us live a tragedy long before we can understand it. It is the tragedy of ostracism and excommunication in the implementation of caste laws. In spite of some modern transformations in the relationship between caste and gender, caste is not dead and gender is a live issue. To disarticulate a unified and monolithic patriarchy would mean to revisit issues of labour and surplus and its sexual economies, and to rethink the relationship between ideologies of gender and their material consequences such as the reproduction of gender inequality. It is through gender that boundaries and hierarchies of caste are articulated in Indian society. However, *The God of Small Things* is not an overtly militant novel. Arundhati Roy raises questions without providing keys for effectively challenging taboos. Yet, her writing manages to touch the untouchable, that is, the touching soul of humanity.

References:

- Dube, L. 2003. "Caste and Women" in A. Rao (ed.). *Gender and Class. Issues in Contemporary Indian Feminism*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited
- Rajan, R.S. (ed.). 1998. *Signposts: Gender Issues in Post-Independence India*. New Delhi: Kali for Women
- Rao, A. (ed.) 2003. *Gender and Caste. Issues in Contemporary Indian Feminism*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited
- Roy, A. 1997. *The God of Small Things*. New Delhi: Penguin Books
- Rushdie, S. 1981. *Midnight's Children*. London: Picador

The Conundrum of Gender

TREACHEROUS DESIRE IN WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS'S *QUEER*

ANDREA KRISTON

“Tibiscus” University of Timișoara

The prolific 83-year life of this American guru in literature and not only, cast an immense influence on his generation. William Seward Burroughs's life is in itself subject for a novel.

He was born in a well-to-do family (his grandfather invented the adding machine) who offered him an exquisite education. Burroughs graduated from Harvard in 1936, then did graduate work in anthropology and medicine. Despite his brilliant background, this rebel character preferred to toss it all aside and moved to New York where he involved himself with the criminal petty underworld – apparently just for the kicks. His circle of friends included homosexuals, young intellectuals and junkies who made Bill's acquaintance with benzedrine, morphine and heroin. Later, Burroughs became addicted to hallucinogenic drugs, and he is the first writer in American literature to present drug dependence non-judgmentally as an individual choice.

Not only did Burroughs have problems with drug addiction and heavy drinking. Sexually, he was always attracted to men; during his studies he developed a crush on a fellow student, and in 1940 he spent some time in a mental hospital “after cutting off the end of his pinky finger to impress his male lover” (<http://www.rotten.com/library/bio/authors>).

Burroughs made an exception to his usual homosexuality when he met his later wife, beautiful and brilliant Joan Vollmer. Together, they organized and attended frequent orgies of drugs, sex and intellectual banter. But, on an ordinary day in 1951, after many glasses, Burroughs accidentally killed his wife during a William Tell act. The gun-passionate writer missed the glass on Joan's head and unfortunately shot her. Police investigations are nonetheless remote to Burroughs. Due to the fact that the lawyer who got Bill out on bail ended up killing someone himself, Bill was able to flee from Mexico to South America trying to score for Yage, the strong hallucinogenic concoction.

All of Burroughs's life is reflected in his published fiction of over 29 books. His writings are a faithful rendering of a long satisfied or rather awkward existence, whether it is about his experience as a drug addict, a male body and mind, or simply literary strategies to impress the reader and bring him under the spell of the unconscious. Still, having certain knowledge about the writer's background is relevant when unveiling aspects from his novels.

According to Burroughs, *Queer* was motivated and formulated by the accidental death of his wife in Mexico in 1951, for which Burroughs was held accountable. The novel

centres on William Lee, chronicling a month of withdrawal in South America and his bitter, unrealized pursuit of a young male American expatriate.

In this paper, I want to examine the homosexual love affair in *Queer* (1985) and explain why it is doomed to failure, more precisely to have an introspection into Lee's tormented relationship.

The autobiographical novel analyzes a frustrated homosexual romance between Burroughs and a young man he met in Mexico. Lee, Burroughs's alter ego, feels a strong urge to develop some sort of contact on the sexual level with Allerton, that is why he carries on with frantic methods of seduction towards the young man. As one of Burroughs's features is to have a real background, we find out that Eugene Allerton really existed. His real name was Adelbert Lewis Marker and he haunted the author for almost half a century by his sexual rejection (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>). In *Last Words*, published just before his death, Burroughs had a simple entry underscoring again his obsession: "Last night sex dream of Marker. Ran my hands down a lean young male body. Woke up feeling good." (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>)

This sexual failure can and should be perceived in two ways: mostly 'economic' and less 'romantic'. In both approaches I shall try to advance logical arguments that explain why this affair is doomed. The two approaches are completely opposite to each other, the sensible one presents a Lee for whom life is a bargain, and he is well aware of his goal, so he will do anything it takes to reach it, and the passionate one shows a man capable of doing anything not to lose his most precious treasure. We have thus a love affair between two men, a relationship which places in balance emotions against business, which I shall try to present in parallel.

In order to get a clear picture of Burroughs's rational and capitalist part, we have to take a look at his family background. Born into a family of capitalist inventors, the young boy inherited both the inventiveness and the verbal skill of his ancestors, and both talents are evident in his work. This biographical detail offers evidence that the novelist was born into a family thoroughly imbued with in the capitalist ethos, for whom commercial failure was assumed to be the result of moral defect. So, from childhood, young Burroughs found a taste for business combined with rhetoric skills. Capitalist belief is mirrored in *Queer* also, where Lee lives his love affair exactly as if it were business, without being preoccupied by the other party's feelings.

He conceives everything around him in terms of his interest (or disinterest) in consuming it, viewing the gratification of desire as simply another commodity to be negotiated and purchased; and this conviction precipitates the unsuccessful gay relationship that is central to the novel's plot. (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>)

The very beginning of the novel introduces a Lee who looks for “the feel of contact” (Burroughs, 1985:21). It does not appear crucial with whom Lee shares the contact, as long as he has an audience and is being listened to. *Queer* is pervaded with several ‘experimentations’ for contact that fail because the auditors wanted to get rid of this nosy narrator. In the introduction to the novel, added much later, Burroughs offers some explanations concerning Lee's behaviour.

At the beginning of the *Queer* manuscript fragment [...], Lee seems determined to score, in the sexual sense of the word. There is something curiously systematic and unsexual about his quest for a suitable sex object [...]. On some very deep level he does not want to succeed, but will go to any length to avoid the realization that he is not really looking for sex contact. (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>)

William Burroughs was hooked on strong drugs for fifteen years in his life and so is Lee, his alter ego. Junk explains part of Lee's behaviour regarding the relationship with Allerton. Drugs are definitely an obstacle in the flawless evolution of a love affair. Burroughs explains that junk short-circuits the sex drive and blunts emotional reactions to the vanishing point, depending on the dosage. (Burroughs, 1985:10) Drugs induce hallucinations; and a period of withdrawal (like the one Lee took advantage of) can only exacerbate reactions to the ultimate point. Burroughs compares the withdrawal period to a removed cover that causes the spilling out of everything that has been held in by check. Maybe this clarification written by the author himself as a result of personal drug addiction gives already a clue about Lee's character and his impossibility of restraining himself. Drugs' administration and their revocation cause severe and often uncontrollable pushing reactions upon the others.

The withdrawing addict is subject to the emotional excesses of a child or an adolescent, regardless of his actual age. And the sex drive returns in full force [...] Unless the reader keeps this in mind, the metamorphosis of Lee's character will appear as inexplicable or psychotic. Also bear in mind that the withdrawal syndrome is self-limiting, lasting no

more than a month. And Lee has a phase of excessive drinking, which exacerbates all the worst and most dangerous aspects of the withdrawal sickness: reckless, unseemly, outrageous, maudlin – in a word, appalling – behaviour (Burroughs, 1985:11).

In order to contribute to the downfall of this love affair, Burroughs attributed Lee some behavioural weaknesses to make him easier to bear. Lee is not only hardly addicted to some of the strongest drugs, but continuously mixes them with strong drinks day and night, and seems to always be hotly panting after a young man.

The main character and narrator of *Queer*, disappointed because left alone by a potential lover, finds soon comfort within his mind: “‘I’ll have to look for someone else’” (22). Love, or even a crush on someone is not characterized by an easy abandonment on your possible soul mate. The novel is crammed with similar short sentences that demonstrate Lee’s shallowness due to drugs. Lee’s *idée fixe* of getting laid without any delay becomes embarrassing for all his mates, who start avoiding the otherwise witty and intelligent creature. Parts of the novel introduce a company which becomes suddenly sullen at Lee’s appearance: “ ‘[...] I like the guy, Tom, but I can’t stand to be alone with him. He keeps trying to go to bed with me. That’s what I don’t like about queers. You can’t keep it on a basis of friendship...’ ” (26) Frequent as these fragments are, they find an equal number of passages as reply. They all stand for Lee’s pain and deeply hurt entity.

A first study of the text reveals a marginal Lee, used to drugs and rejected by society for his sexuality. Unable to accept a refusal, Lee struggles for what he believes to own. His mind is not set to take a rejection, that is why his desperate fight makes him embarrassing in everybody’s eyes, he becomes like a teasing parent to a teenage child.

Burroughs’s talent is immense in creating in the reader a sense of pity for this obstinate and ill-tempered narrator. Repelled by society, Lee finds shelter in shops or magazine counters, offering this queer persona some quiet time reading the papers.

In this state of body and mind, he runs into Allerton, a young man. On the spot Lee has the revelation: “ ‘Perhaps I can accomplish something in that direction. Well, *a ver...*’ ” (33) The subject of the new fixation will be submitted to all stages of a relationship. This time Lee cannot lose the match because it would go against his capitalist principle of winner. Immediately as he sees Allerton, Lee decides that he needs him as a sexual companion. It may be either the drugs or his economic doctrine, but Lee has to pursue the means to end. “When Lee was hungry, when he wanted a drink or a shot of

morphine, delay was unbearable.” (33) The strategy Lee adopts is that of a consumer who cannot afford losing the commodity he trades for. In Lee’s eyes Allerton has turned into a commodity and very soon the former will be the trader who owns the merchandise.

The acquaintance and implicitly the conquest phase are on their ways, but Lee easily disappoints his audience by a grotesque gesture. “As Lee stood aside to bow in his dignified old-world greeting, there emerged instead a leer of naked lust” superimposed on “a sweet child’s smile of liking and trust, shockingly out of time and out of place, mutilated and hopeless.” (34) Allerton is “appalled” and decides to keep the distance. Lee notices his equivocal display of desire, and decides to score with a young boy he has met in a fag bar. Contrary to a person who is honestly interested in someone, Lee has not developed a feeling of

obligation to others or of subordination of self to a goal originating outside the self. Hence he does not understand that restraint and deferment of desires may secure success in one’s objectives where indiscriminate or unrelenting pursuit of them may fail. (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>)

Obsessed by this “combination of intelligence and childlike charm”, Lee, after reassuring the relationship, starts the offensive against frustration. He does not consider as a hindrance Allerton’s sexual straightness, moreover, his companion needs to give him a favourable response in the name of economic negotiation. Again, Burroughs’s alter ego acts like a spoiled child whose only god is victory. The days preceding their first sexual encounter are a torture to Lee because

Lee did not enjoy frustration. The limitations of his desires were like the bars of a cage, like a chain and collar, something he had learned as an animal learns, [...]. He had never resigned himself, and his eyes looked through the invisible bars, watchful, alert, waiting for the keeper to forget the door, for the frayed collar, the loosened bar [...] suffering without despair and consent. (Burroughs, 1985:40)

We have again a traditional element in economy, whether in an investor’s sense of saving for something or justified for delayed gratification. Capitalist ethos is about advantage and profit, so Lee invests time and patience in order to obtain sex. The input has to prove the output and be worth it. Allerton is a tool in order to serve Lee’s needs.

The contact Bill Lee needs is not translated in affective terms, even though many fragments speak about his suffering. The rhetorical skills of the narrator facilitate his getting closer to his dream mate. Narrative abilities turn to be a good aphrodisiac at the middle of the 20th century, because Allerton is enchanted by his communication companion. “Lee had conversational routines that Allerton had never heard.” (41)

Despite pleasant company, Allerton cannot stop asking himself what Lee wants from him. He suspects it could be sexual, but rapidly chases the idea to the back of his mind because Lee didn’t seem to show “overt effeminacy”, the ingredient homosexuals display in his opinion.

The monetary facet is compulsory in capitalism. It speaks about wealth invested to produce more wealth, that is why Lee starts the financial offensive against a man unable to pay with the same coin. Material superiority can often be obliging and even embarrassing. Everything begins with a common sense approach to this feeling of inferiority that will gradually grow in Allerton. Lee takes his lover out to repeated drinks, dinners and a theatre play. Immediately after, the dominant Lee feels entitled to his first night with the youngster. “Allerton responded without hostility or disgust, but in his eyes Lee saw a curious detachment, the impersonal calm of an animal or a child.” (54)

Allerton’s acceptance of this first night with a man appears rather difficult to understand, a heterosexual man would not so easily give up his sexual creed. We are tempted to believe that the young boy does not belong to a sexually experimental group, he is an ordinary person with ordinary habits, without perverse ideas he wants to put in practice. But he feels already indebted to his friend, and sells his body.

Besides, the present world rejects a heterosexual man’s desire for the same sex, but during and immediately after World War II, buddy relations “easily slipped into romantic and even sexual intimacies between men that they themselves often did not perceive to be ‘queer’ ” (the novel was written in the fifties, but remained long unpublished).

Marker-Allerton need not have been defined by Burroughs-Lee’s acknowledged queerness because

the fairy stereotype did not outwardly threaten the heterosexual basis of normative masculinity but instead defined queerness in such a way that men could engage in homosexual activity without having to acknowledge as ‘really homosexual’ the queer desire that fuelled it. (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>)

Right after their intimate affair, Lee switches the discussion to Allerton's camera that was in hock. Lee resorts to a strategy for bringing Allerton under his influence by trapping him in a web of favours. Burroughs's main character wants to buy gratitude, in hopes of obtaining his sexual services regularly on demand. It occurred to Lee that to bring the matter up at this time was not tactful, but he decided the other was not the type to take offence. It is true, Allerton's sole reaction is to raise a bare shoulder, but the following day he is sullen when they have to take the camera from pawn. Eventually, Lee pays six hundred pesos to redeem the camera.

Apparently Allerton's silence can be misjudged, but he recognizes the degree to which he is becoming indebted to Lee and all he feels is discomfort. The breakdown of their relationship is inevitable, that night he declines an invitation to dinner claiming the need to work. In order to emphasize their relationship as one between employer – employee, Lee states: “ ‘I will pay you twenty pesos not to work tonight.’ Lee was able to develop the idea, but Allerton's impatient coolness stopped him.” (Burroughs, 1985:64) The young man feels entrapped in a vicious circle, and the growing financial issue turns him into a “nervous and irritable” person. Though he cannot name yet the cause of his agitation, Lee's pushing manner makes him feel uncomfortable. Refused, Lee wants to create a strategy to prove his capitalist idea of *rich American*. In his opinion, all things are negotiable if the price is adequate and he thinks that Allerton “did not like to feel that anybody expected anything from him. He wanted, so far as possible, to live without external pressure.” (66) Anyway, Allerton resented Lee's action in paying for the camera. “Allerton did not recognize friends who made six-hundred-peso gifts” (66), but Lee implicitly denied that the camera was a contract disguised as a gift, that he has treated the young man as a friend, and not as a commodity. When being rejected, Lee does not question his values; instead he rationalizes and makes clear his thoughts. Lee wants Allerton's friendship and love on the basis “ ‘I liked him and I wanted him to like me’ ” and “ ‘I wasn't trying to buy anything.’ ” (66) Obviously, he is trying to buy Allerton at all costs. To Lee, Allerton, the man he felt lonely and depressed about is a mere tool in the achievement of his own pleasure, he is just a pawn in the whole strategy of self-satisfaction and success:

Lee knew he could not find what he wanted with Allerton. The court of fact had rejected his petition. But Lee could not give up. ‘Perhaps I can discover a way to change fact,’ he

thought. He was ready to take any risk, to proceed to any extreme of action. Like a saint or a wanted criminal with nothing to lose, Lee had stepped beyond the claims of his nagging, cautious, aging, frightened flesh. (68)

With the biggest ace in his sleeve, that of ‘nothing to lose’, shrewd Lee appeals to all possible mechanisms to gain Allerton’s attention, body, innocence. He often creates embarrassing routines just to circle around the object of his attention, like a bird of prey.

Rather ambitious and fearless of becoming mockery subject, Lee suggests his companion a trip to South America in order to score for Yage, ‘the efficient confession drug’. He tempts Lee with the assets of a free trip:

‘I figure to go down to South America soon,’ he said. ‘Why don’t you come along? Won’t cost you a cent.’

‘Perhaps not in money.’

‘I’m not a difficult man to get along with. [...] What you got to lose?’

‘Independence.’

‘So who’s going to cut in on your independence? You can lay all the women in South America if you want to. All I ask is be nice to Papa, say twice a week. That isn’t excessive, is it? Besides, I will buy you a round-trip ticket so you can leave at your discretion.’ (75-76)

The ‘unselfish’ friendship becomes more offensive on the steep path of Lee’s achieving his interests. Having solid skills about capitalism and innate negotiating proficiency, Lee the trader offers financial freedom in exchange for two major things. Allerton has no obstacles in developing love affairs with all women on the continent, and is free to leave any time. Apparently. On the one hand because Lee dislikes local *senoritas* and makes it very clear to Allerton, maybe to influence him, and, on the other hand, the jungle where they go to is so remote from any trace of civilization that it is impossible to travel alone. Allerton recognizes this is another business proposition, but he accepts it when his existing job runs out. The main problem during the trip was Lee’s eagerness to have sex, that is why Allerton complained about a ‘breach of contract.’ Despite Eugene’s dissatisfaction, Lee wants to make the contract ‘more or less elastic’, but eventually reckons the contractual rights, as a disciplined businessman. “Biographer Barry Miles insists that ‘Marker was not really gay – he had agreed to go on the journey only because

Bill was paying the costs and had agreed in advance to restrict sex to only two encounters a week.’ “ (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>)

Lee’s financial background is a wealthy one, so he can trade anything with money. We can catch several glimpses of it throughout the book. Lee is a prosperous man who inherited financial education, he is a capitalist used to taking advantage and resorting to all means to achieve his goals. Whenever he appears, he doesn’t seem to have any financial troubles: from the two hundred dollars to bribe the inspector from Immigration, to the six hundred pesos to get Allerton’s camera and a double trip supported by him. Moreover, the lifestyle that Lee adopts in Mexico would mean in the United States a highly prosperous one; he never refuses himself anything he fancies. He drinks cognac, tequila, martini and Napoleon brandy brought from abroad. Lee also displays a fondness for steak, and can afford whatever he desires. One of his weaknesses is guns and he spends immense amounts of money for objects just to pleasure him. Certain objects satisfy a momentary whim, and then they get quickly discarded, like a book on chess which he will very soon throw into a lagoon.

The huge disparity of financial and also cultural background between the two makes it difficult or rather impossible for Lee to understand Allerton’s proletarian attitude. Eugene Allerton has a temporary job as a journalist, and basically no greater fortune than his clothes and innocence. He is submitted to Lee’s educational training on food and fancy things, as well as cultural ones, always with a shade of superiority.

A capital hindrance between Lee and Allerton is based on material issues, and the former, aware of his winning position and financial capital, is ready to take any chance in order to attain his goal. Allerton’s indifference is driving Lee mad, and wants to make him pay for his behaviour. Apathy is a sin, that is why Lee wants to improve the situation with revenge and blackmail ideas. When Allerton came back from the trip to Morelia ‘sullen and irritable’, Lee thought to himself: “I’ll make him pay for this somehow.” (78) He concocts a financial scheme for doing so:

Lee considered buying a half-interest in the Ship Ahoy. Allerton existed on credit at the Ship Ahoy, and owed four hundred pesos. If Lee was half-owner of the joint, Allerton would not be in a position to ignore him. Lee did not actually want retaliation. He felt a desperate need to maintain some special contact with Allerton. (78)

That is, he wants to maintain his proprietorship and his control over the object of his investment, Allerton.

The connection between the two men cannot last for the simple reason that Lee emotionally suffocates any shade of human contact; he only cares about his victory. This behaviour will eventually alienate his 'beloved', a person he wants to sentimentally abuse. The end of the novel illustrates once more this cruel manner of Lee, impossible to ignore or counter. Apparently resigned to his permanent separation from Allerton, his failure haunts him and he has a dream in which he becomes 'the old Skip Tracer', a 'finder of missing persons.'

'Mr. Allerton, I represent the Friendly Finance Company. Haven't you forgotten something, Gene? You're supposed to come and see us every third Tuesday. We've been lonely for you in the office. We don't like to say 'Pay up or else.' It's not a friendly thing to say. I wonder if you have ever read the contract *all the way through*? I have particular reference to clause 6(X) which can only be deciphered with an electron microscope and a virus filter. I wonder if you know what 'or else' means, Gene? (120)

The name and the company gather all reasons that stopped Lee from developing a mutually satisfying affair with Allerton. The name 'friendly' is ironic and mocks at Lee's entirely self-absorbed person and self-serving interests he was looking for in Allerton. The profile of the company is again a reminder that their 'friendship' has been based on economic terms rather than on love or pure forms of closeness. "The threat 'Pay up or else' in capitalist parlance always incorporates the dual punishment of suffering legal consequences and being publicly shamed as indolent or a fraud or both. 'Company', as the sign of the corporation, the ultimate power base in capitalist America, stands for the creed that anything can be bought. The dream reveals that Lee understands at some level that his cajoling and manipulating has not been 'a friendly thing.' Although the complaint that he has been 'lonely' may be genuine, he resorts in the end to the threat of the unspecified 'or else' to attempt his reclamation: "Friendly Finance doesn't forget you. Like the song say, 'No hiding place down there. ' " (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>)

There is no hiding place from reality and dreams. The clue for the unhappy relation is Lee's consumerist demeanour toward Allerton and his deeply dispirited sense of self. Ironically, the novel speaks about Lee's pushing and implicitly rejecting Gene Allerton. From this perspective, Allerton is only a victim who fell in Lee's web and became his tool in achieving personal satisfaction. But, as any coin has its obverse, Burroughs proves that despite Lee's being obsessed with Eugene, the latter escapes. All we

know about Allerton is that it has already been six months since he left being a guide for the colonel and his wife, but after having lost him, Lee seems to regret at least a little what he has done.

The romantic angle of the relationship between the two men is very modest and controlled to such an extent that Burroughs limits his tender actions and words to small and simple gestures. The invasive feeling is that of *economic affair* that makes the young and inexperienced creature fall in the net of the shrewd one.

The writer of the Beat movement contented with creating a shallow feeling that no matter where you open the novel you see fragments showing how lonely and hurt Lee felt. Of course, the reader is tempted to believe that this versatile character is the most compassionate man lost in a jungle of fierce creatures, but a more careful reading reveals the truth. The love Lee wants to give and receive without choosing is selfish and in fact being pleased with anyone almost is not a charity act, yet a desperate sign of getting laid as soon as possible.

To conclude over the topic of romantic love and treacherous desire in *Queer*, Bill Lee is not eager to establish contact with Allerton in particular, yet he looks for *someone*. He deeply lacks affection (probably because of his unaccomplished life and of the drug effects), that is why he resorts to desperate and often embarrassing gestures among his friends. His gesticulations attest to his longing for the original embrace, for the perfect unification between two people. So, despite the dominant materialist penchant Lee exhibits, Burroughs gives us glimpses of *any* human conduct: the need to love and be loved in return. Irony and sarcasm often intermingle with the *connoisseur's* superiority in dealing with life, but even the harshest people must have a soul and a yearning; this is what Burroughs seems to convey.

References

Burroughs, W. S. 1985. *Queer*. London: Picador

Unable to queer the deal: William S. Burroughs's Negotiations with "Eugene Allerton"
[Online] Available: <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>

Brown, S.W. 1996. *Contemporary Novelists*. 6th ed. Farmington Hills MI, United States: St. James Press

FEMALE MASOCHISM IN STEPHEN KING'S *GERALD'S GAME*

KORINNA CSETÉNYI

Juhász Gyula Teacher Training College, Szeged

Female masochism is a subject upon which very serious scholarly material has been written, but the theoretical background would not fit into this paper. Instead, I would

like to limit myself to the examination of a certain novel which was written by an author who some critics have claimed to be a misogynist.

Stephen King has been pigeonholed as a horror writer but he is a lot more versatile. Admittedly, his name is associated with supernatural events and people with special abilities (telekinesis, pyrokinesis), but the subject of the novel in question lacks any such skills unless we consider the sheer will to survive and its priority above all as an extraordinary skill. Though it makes use of the elements of the horror genre, this book could be more aptly described as a novel of development of the female consciousness, a novel of awakening.

What makes a popular horror writer reach the point of addressing gender issues and having a female protagonist? King has frequently been criticised for not being able to “develop a believable woman character between the ages of 17 and 60” (Beahm, 1989:58). So he consciously set out to repair this deficiency and he published three novels where the female voice is in the centre of the narration: *Gerald’s Game*, *Dolores Claiborne* and *Rose Madder*.

The subject of my paper is the protagonist of this first, experimental book, which tells us about the life of the heroine. Jessie Burlingame and her husband, the wealthy lawyer, Gerald, decide to spend the weekend in their isolated, lakeside cabin. Gerald took home an interesting plaything recently: two pairs of handcuffs. Jessie, after twenty years of marriage, seeing how much her husband is wound up by the idea, submits to the bondage game, which starts with innocent scarves, but then she soon loses her interest. When Gerald closes the handcuffs on her wrists, she realises she does not feel like doing it (the question arises whether she ever felt like doing it at all) and she asks Gerald to release her. “*I guess maybe I’m just tired of pretending*, she thought, and this idea led to another: she might have her own sexual agenda, and if she did, this business with the handcuffs was definitely not on it. They made her feel demeaned.” (King, 1992:21) She realises that only the desire to please the man, to fulfil his expectations made her accept the game but she feels it is no longer enough.

The husband pretends not to hear her, as if her protestations were part of the game. “But if it *had* been only a game (only that and nothing more), why had Gerald felt it necessary to buy real handcuffs?” (King, 1992:45) The title says *Gerald’s Game*, which shows us clearly whose game we are talking about and whose pleasure it is meant to serve.

Jessie is quite literally a slave to her husband's sexual desires. He is willing to sacrifice his wife's body just to satisfy his need to be in control.

She becomes enraged by his behaviour and kicks him in the groin. Gerald has a heart attack and he falls off the bed, leaving Jessie all alone, handcuffed to the marital bed. Then, during the course of the book, through internal dialogues, King takes the reader into the darkness of Jessie's soul: her emotions, repressed memories and associations are revealed.

How does she get out of her dire situation? How does she escape the prison of the bed which almost becomes her coffin? Is she the fragile Gothic heroine, entrapped, to wait for some knight in shining armour to rescue her? Or is she going to take her life in her hands and find the way out on her own? In the focus of the story we have a female subject, and with her memories the readers slowly come to understand why she ended up where she is, why she let men control her and how she formed her identity depending on others.

Jessie comes from a good family: well-off upper middle-class, stock broker daddy, stay-at-home mom and three children. But this idyll is overshadowed by a terrible deed: when she was ten years old, Jessie was molested by her father during the hours of an eclipse. King uses the eclipse as a symbol for the entire book: but the hidden secrets and nasty acts committed in darkness will finally emerge into the daylight.

This experience, and its repression, consumes a lot of energy and it almost leads to the fragmentation of her psyche. She starts to hear voices in her head: the various parts of her personality address her like that – and these voices are going to be her only company during the ordeal.

What are these voices like? One of them is called "Goodwife Burlingame" by the adult Jessie. This voice is the voice of conventionality, compromise, and in fact, this mental alter ego does not really understand what has gotten into Jessie. "Just lie there quietly and let him shoot his squirt. After all, what's the big deal? He's done it at least a thousand times before and you never once turned green." (King, 1992:31) But suddenly a strange, new voice speaks up, merciless and harsh. "This one, however, was new [...] and there was nothing comfortable about it. It was a strong voice, one that sounded young and vigorous." (King, 1992:16) Jessie later realises that the voice belongs to her college roommate, the rebellious Ruth, whom she had walked out on when Ruth had become suspicious that Jessie was an incest victim.

When saliva falls on Jessie's bare stomach from Gerald's lips, an image comes to her mind: she remembers her birthday party when she was 12 years old and her little brother poked her bottom. She became furious and hit him hard. But was she really mad at her brother? Or was it some deeply buried memory he brought to the surface? The spit produces the same effect: an external stimulus which receives a very intensive emotional and physical reaction. A strange déjà vu feeling comes over her and the room becomes dark. Her answer is to the suppressed memory: she kicks Gerald with all her might.

From this time on only the weird voices in her head keep her company: the proper goodwife, who thinks Jessie's imprisonment is a well-deserved punishment, the brutally honest Ruth, and her own childhood self. Ruth would like Jessie to confront the ghosts of the past because she says that Jessie is the prisoner and victim of the past.

The total solar eclipse lasted just over a minute that day, Jessie ... except in your mind. In there, it's still going on, isn't it? (King, 1992:138)

Jessie has to confront not only painful acts but painful thoughts as well if she wants to escape because she realises that the secret has never been completely buried in her subconscious. Her brain now is ready to get rid of the cancerous part. But before the expulsion, she has to face the repressed memory one more time.

She has a dream where she relives the molestation. Till this day she is full of guilt and thinks that she only got what she deserved. Her mother would have blamed her, as if she seduced the father, since Jessie often heard jealousy, or outright hate, in Sally's voice. She must have realised something because on the eve preceding the fateful day she accused her husband in the following way: "I swear to God, sometimes you behave as if she were your girlfriend instead of your daughter!" (King, 1992:198)

Jessie wanted to spend that special day with her father "whom she adored beyond the power of words to tell." (King, 1992:189) She is very excited about the eclipse and it never crosses her mind that the man trembles for another reason when he invites her to sit in his lap: "how oddly hard his lap was this afternoon. Something was pressing against her bottom. [...] it felt like the handle of some tool ..." (King, 1992:209) She feels confused and embarrassed. The father hides the molestation under the guise of love: "Do you love me, Punkin?" (King, 1992:215) This time the right answer to this question is the wrong answer, but Jessie is only ten years old, so the only answer she can give is in the

affirmative. The father unashamedly takes advantage of the situation. “Then don’t worry about anything. I’d never hurt you. I want to be sweet to you. Just watch the eclipse and let me be sweet to you.” (King, 1992:215)

Tom ejaculates on the little girl’s panties, which is the final act of this embarrassing interlude. Jessie only feels relief, but then it occurs to her that maybe her father is going to tell her mom. She bursts into tears and clings to her daddy desperately. “I’m sorry, Daddy [...] If I did something wrong, I’m really, really, really sorry.” (King, 1992:220) She feels that something in their relationship has changed forever. When she goes into the bathroom and looks into the mirror, a child’s face looks back at her but her body has undergone some changes which elicited an illicit reaction from the father. Jessie matured early and Ruth thinks that is the reason why Tom lost his head. “Maybe he smelled blood ... Maybe it made him frantic.” (King, 1992:104)

Her daddy sits down with her for a little talk and the feeling of embarrassment is replaced by shame, then terror in Jessie. Tom is able to manipulate the whole situation: he is the one arguing for not keeping it a secret. He turns his problem into her problem. He says that they should tell his wife because Jessie cannot keep secrets. By threatening to reveal it all, he gets her to never tell. The other fear of the child is that she might have lost her daddy’s love because of the incident, since she thinks she is to blame for it: “You love me, though, don’t you, Daddy? You still love me, right?” (King, 1992:252)

Why did she keep it a secret? She was afraid the family would just fall apart.

I could never tell, it would have killed my Mom, and even if it didn’t, she would have left him and I loved him. [...] they would have blamed me, and he didn’t do anything, not really. (King, 1992:136)

The adult Jessie is still prone to defend her father:

I got off with barely a scratch compared to what could have happened [...] what does happen every day [...] My father wasn’t the first college-educated, upper-middle-class man to ever get a hard-on for his daughter. (King, 1992:305)

But the voice of Ruth disrupts her to stop blaming herself and clearing her father of the guilt.

She realises that those few minutes spent in her dad's lap had a determining influence upon her entire life, directly or indirectly. That episode set up a pattern, influencing her choice of partner as well. "Yes, I suppose that what my father did to me then might have something to do with what's happening to me now ..." (King, 1992:303) When she finally sees this connection, she is on the way to recovery. In the present situation she can only rely on herself and the voices, which are all integral parts of her personality. "It was the tough-as-nails voice again, but this time it belonged to no one but her, and that made Jessie happy." (King, 1992:326)

She has a vision of a little girl in stocks, enveloped in darkness: she places her own childhood self into such an undeserved position. Jessie has to acquit the wrongly condemned child, she can be free only after that. At the end of the book *Punkin*, the little girl alter ego, breaks free and tells Jessie how to escape. She has no other choice: she has to put her life at risk in order to save it. She breaks a glass and cuts her wrist with a broken piece: blood makes her hand slick enough to be able to slip it through the handcuff. Her own body becomes a means for release. This is her final destructive act, committed for herself, for survival.

Thus, blood becomes one of the central images of the novel: it has a vital role in her escape. Without blood, there is no escaping. But blood is also connected to something else: to birth. Here, we are witnessing the birth of a new identity. Pain has a role during delivery, and in a parallel way, Jessie undergoes a painful construction of her new ego. And we might remember Ruth's remark upon the father smelling blood and losing his head. Thanks to this somatic cue, another self of the father emerged, a concealed one, during the hours of the eclipse.

A couple of months later Jessie tries to get into contact with her therapist, whom Jessie fled when she started to ask too many uncomfortable questions. But Nora, the therapist has died. So Jessie has to begin her therapy herself: as a first step she writes to Ruth, telling her about both the horrors of the distant and the recent past.

Apart from being written from a woman's point of view, this novel also calls our attention to a woman's striving for independence and her empowerment. Jessie's identity was constituted on the basis of certain stereotypical roles. She has always listened to others so she could not develop a strong personality. She let her husband control her life. At Gerald's insistence, for example, she quit her job as a teacher, although "teaching [...] filled her up in some important way, and Gerald didn't get that." (King, 1992:143) She has

to confront the males dominating her life and the patriarchal culture which subordinates women to males. By the end of the story she liberates herself from stereotypes and realises who she is and what social and personal forces prevented her from realising it before.

According to critic Theresa Thomson (1988:54), this novel examines the cultural myth of female masochism and the consequences of the feminine mystique (Betty Friedan's key-text appeared in 1963, which is the year of the eclipse in the novel). The housewife phenomenon and masochism are not inherent female characteristics; rather, they are construed by society, roles imposed on us from without. *Gerald's Game* reveals the false notions and beliefs and deconstructs the myth of the happy middle-class family. As long as this myth-deconstruction is limited to the working-class (popular notions surrounding them invest them with ignorance, and a lack of financial security, thus rendering them dysfunctional), it poses no threat to the patriarchal domination. This novel, however, places abuse within the white middle-class. Due to an imbalance in social forces, desire can be construed in the wrong way. Tom wields exceedingly great material and verbal power over the females in his family, and he lets it extend to the sphere of sexuality as well.

Jessie is chained to the bed with real police handcuffs, which symbolise the feminine mystique. They represent those social and legal structures which support the myth of male domination. Patriarchal society pairs female masochism with male sadism.

Similarly to the women described by Friedan, Jessie gets stuck in childhood and feels "inferior, childish, helpless, with no possibility of happiness unless she adjusted to being man's passive object" (Friedan, 1963:110). She is not an active subject, who can choose for herself, but she literally becomes an object: daddy's little girl. She thinks that in order to arouse a man she has to play according to the rules set up by her father: domination, subjugation, silence.

This book deconstructs the narratives strengthening female masochism and the seeming stability of the middle class. Instability is not confined to the working classes and the middle-class woman is not inherently masochist. King examines those powers which interfere with a woman's life and shape her identity, personality, until she discovers her power – in this case, the narrative voice.

Often during the 28 hours spent on her own, Jessie thought she would do anything in order to break free. But as long as she is willing to subordinate herself, she cannot be free. Only when she literally and figuratively takes her life in her hands does she become

free. As a symbol of her victory, King shifts to first person point of view. With Jessie now as narrator, the female voice dominates at the end of the book.

During the story, Jessie used to define herself in relations: “Jessie Mahout Burlingame, wife of Gerald, sister of Maddy and Will, daughter of Tom and Sally, mother of no one ...” (King, 1992:17), but a new definition of her personality appears by the end of the novel: “me, Jessica Angela Mahout Burlingame” (King, 1992:397). She awakened during the re-evocation of past traumas and she acquires a new, stronger personality during the horrible experience. She no longer lets men dictate her: “her days of doing things simply because it’s a man doing the telling are over”. (King, 1992:438) She frees herself both from the metaphorical chains of the past and the very literal handcuffs of the present.

References

- Beahm, G. 1989. *The Stephen King Companion*. London: Warner Books
- Friedan, B. 1963. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Dell Publishing Co
- King, S. 1992. *Gerald’s Game*. New York: Penguin Books
- Land, M. and T. Thompson. (eds.). 1988. *Imagining the Worst*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press

Gender, Culture, Society

THE FEMININE IN THE CULTURE OF THE ANCIENT BRITONS

CATHERINE MACMILLAN

Yeditepe University, Istanbul

Introduction

Today's knowledge of the ancient Britons comes from three main sources, and is greatly complicated by the fact that these societies left no written material of their own, probably due to a religious prohibition. The sources available are therefore all, to a certain extent, indirect, and each needs to be approached with caution.

The first source for both the European Celts and the Britons is classical: the writings of Greek and Roman travellers and historians. However, these sources, while they may provide some accurate information, have to be used with caution, as they were often written with political aims in mind. While Caesar's rather negative portrayal of the Gauls was perhaps intended as a justification for their conquest, Tacitus uses the Britons and Germanic tribes in order to criticise the Roman leadership, by portraying them as 'noble savages' in contrast to the decadence of Rome (Cunliffe, 1999:9).

Secondly, medieval Irish and Welsh texts such as the *Ulster Cycle* or the *Mabinogion*, presumably written versions of ancient oral epics, may provide a glimpse into the society of the Ancient Britons. However, there are also some difficulties with using such texts in historical research about the ancient Britons as they were redacted by medieval monks, who inevitably coloured them with their own world view, from a different religion and time. A further insight into ancient British society is provided by the medieval legal texts of Ireland and Wales, which may contain features dating back to the times of earlier populations (Cunliffe, 2003:3).

Thirdly, archaeology can also give us some important clues about the lives of the ancient inhabitants of the British Isles. While the written evidence is largely restricted to Ireland and, to a lesser extent, Wales, archaeological evidence occurs everywhere that human societies lived (Cunliffe, 2003:92-93). However care is also necessary when interpreting archaeological evidence as it can often be misleading.

Another difficulty is the issue of the ethnic identity of the ancient Britons. While the ancient Britons are commonly described as 'Celts', an identity which is today prevalent among many of their descendants, there is little archaeological evidence despite linguistic and cultural similarities, to suggest an invasion of the British Isles by Celts from Continental Europe (James, 1999: 92; Chadwick, 1997:27). Moreover, no classical author ever describes the inhabitants of Britain or Ireland as 'Celts', although Caesar does note some similarities in the lifestyle of the inhabitants of Kent and the Gauls (Cunliffe, 1999: 146).

Biological and genetic evidence also supports the argument against a large-scale invasion of the British Isles by continental Celts. Instead, the inhabitants of the ‘Celtic fringes’ of the British Isles appear to be far more closely related genetically to the Basques of Northern Spain and South-Western France than to the present-day inhabitants of the ‘Celtic homeland’, indicating continuity on the male line from Upper Palaeolithic inhabitants, with possibly some female immigration (Miles, 2005: 75).

In other words, then, genetic similarities with the Basques, presumed to be the remnants of the pre-Indo European ‘Old Europeans’ (Gimbutas, 1999:172) also suggests that the majority of the ancient British population were also of this stock. If Gimbutas’s argument that there was a dichotomy between the patriarchal society of the Indo-Europeans and the matrifocal, goddess-worshipping Old Europeans is accepted, this has relevance when examining the nature of the feminine in the society of the Celtic speaking Ancient Britons.

Instead, cultural similarities are probably better explained by contacts over long distances, crossing ethnic boundaries, among elites. The adoption of Celtic art and artefacts by the ancient British elite can therefore be understood as a status symbol, separating the privileged from the masses (James, 1999:92), serving much the same function as the adoption of a Roman way of life by that same elite in later years. In the same way, Celtic languages may have been indigenous to the British Isles, originating from a common Indo-European root, or may have developed there, as elsewhere in Europe, as a *lingua franca* accompanying such exchanges (Cunliffe, 2003: 54-55).

To complicate matters more, it is important to recognise that the Ancient Britons were not themselves one ‘people’, and the cultural and ethnic diversity among them was likely to be considerable. Cunliffe, for instance, divides the Iron Age Britons into five broad cultural zones, according to a broad range of criteria including settlement types, which vary from large, undefended villages in the East to strongly defended settlements along the Atlantic coast (Pryor, 2004: 336-338).

In addition, the economic system appears to have varied from region to region, ranging from self-sufficiency in the North, a surplus-producing trade economy in the South-East, and a ‘feudal’ type clientage economy in the South West (Pryor, 2004:336-338). Moreover, daily life also shows variation, with little evidence for the use of pottery or ‘Celtic art’ in some areas (James, 1999:41).

Moreover, physical descriptions by classical authors of the inhabitants of Britain also indicate both the genetic diversity of the islanders and their difference from the continental Celts. The Romans thought of the Gauls as large, fair-skinned and blond, and the inhabitants of present-day Eastern England were thought to resemble them. In contrast, however, Tacitus describes the Scots as tall and red-haired and the Silurians of South Wales as dark-haired and swarthy, stereotypes which are still common today (James, 1999: 85).

Inferring from these archaeological, genetic and classical sources, therefore, it is possible to reach two conclusions about the ancient Britons. The first is that there was no large-scale invasion of the British Isles by the continental Celts. Apart from some possible small-scale migrations, particularly in the east of Britain, the ancient Britons were generally an indigenous people, with most cultural similarities with the Gauls resulting from trade, or the exchange of elite goods. Secondly, the evidence suggests that they were far from being a uniform people, and differed from each other, particularly according to region, culturally, genetically and in terms of ethnic identity.

The Worship of the Feminine: Goddesses in the Religions of the Ancient Britons

Given the diversity of the peoples who made up the ancient Britons, their religious system is an extremely complex subject, and may have showed significant differences not only from region to region but from tribe to tribe and even village to village. Moreover, although there was certainly no 'pan-Celtic brotherhood' linking the Celtic-speaking peoples (Cunliffe, 2003:93), it seems likely that their religion was the result of Celtic culture then dominant in Europe combined with aspects of a more ancient, indigenous belief system. The absence of burial sites in most of Iron-Age Britain, for instance, in itself suggests that religious belief was somewhat different from that of the Gauls, where burial was common (Cunliffe, 1999).

However, despite these caveats, while the names of gods and goddesses may have varied widely, the worship of certain deities, even if known by different names from place to place, appears to have been widespread across Celtic speaking Britain and Ireland. Moreover, in spite of the seemingly large and complex pantheon, it appears that their religious system was, in reality, based on a structure of simple binary opposition: male/tribe/sky/war against female/place/earth/fertility (Cunliffe, 1999: 185).

On the other hand, it appears that in very ancient times the goddess was predominant in Britain and Ireland as she was in other very early (i.e. pre-Neolithic) Old European societies, and was parthenogenic, or able to procreate without the help of a male god. This Stone Age worship of the goddess, attested all over Europe and beyond by the voluptuous Venus figurines of the era, was a consequence of the mystery of women's fertility (Markale, 1986:14).

Men, and thus male gods, were less important in religious belief at this time as the masculine role in reproduction was still unknown. Markale comments (1986:14) that the discovery of the necessity of the male role in reproduction was a revolution which was to have consequences for society at least as great as the agricultural revolution which ushered in the Neolithic.

Moreover, it is argued that the focus of the Megalithic culture which appeared in Western Europe from the 5th millennium BC, was the goddess. The megaliths of Avebury in Wiltshire originally formed the shape of a giant snake containing two eggs, both of which are goddess symbols. Similarly, the nearby burial mound at Silbury Hill is thought to be fashioned in the form of a pregnant goddess, who would miraculously seem to give birth when the full moon reflected on the surrounding moat in late summer (Baring and Cashford, 1993:93-100).

Irish and Welsh myths tell of an ancient goddess who, unlike later versions of the goddess, was parthenogenic. According to the myth, this mother goddess, known as Danu or Ana to the Irish and Don to the Britons, led her children, known as the Tuatha de Danaan in Ireland, to the British Isles. This name is also shared by the River Danube, as well as several other rivers in Britain and France, suggesting that rivers were associated with the goddess and considered holy (Berresford-Ellis, 2002:188-189).

It is possible that this may be a remnant of earlier Neolithic and Bronze Age beliefs, before the arrival of Celtic speech and the Indo-Europeans, as the texts hint that such things come from a world of the past, usually a fairy-world (Hunt, 1990). In later belief Don was associated with the stars, the constellation Cassiopeia, and her children, possibly once deities, were regarded as kings and queens, or as fairies, or as somehow having magical powers. However, they were mortal and died, and the place of their burial sites was supposedly known.

Despite this, it appears that there was a certain bipolarity, of male/female and summer/winter, even in very early British religion. According to this theory, the female

principle was embodied in the concept of Mother Earth, representing fertility and the growth of summer, while the male principle, linked with winter, was represented as a horned, zoomorphic god of the hunt (Pryor, 2004:89) who controlled the forest and its animals. In fact, it has been proposed that some Mesolithic headdresses made of deer's antlers may have been used in shamanistic-style dances (Pryor, 2004:89) presumably in worship of this deity.

However, the relatively passive role of the male is still apparent in this belief system. According to Gimbutas (1999:115-116), while the male element was considered important in Old European religion as a stimulator and enhancer of life, it was not yet understood as being involved in the creation of life. It is thus more likely that the goddess/god pair were conceived of as sister and brother than as lovers (Gimbutas, 1999: 115-116).

In Cunliffe's view (1999:188), even after 'Celticization', traces of the bipolarity of a more ancient religion remain under the apparent complexity of Celtic-speaking religious belief. One theory which might explain this is that the Indo-European Celts, being far less numerous in the British Isles and other Atlantic regions than other Indo-European settlers further east in Germanic and Mediterranean societies (Cavalli-Sforza, 2001:117-118), were heavily influenced by the indigenous, pre-Celtic speaking inhabitants.

According to this theory, the matrifocal world view of these pre-Neolithic peoples would have therefore tempered the more patriarchal society of the Neolithic invaders (Markale, 1986: 23). For instance, the medieval writings of British and Irish myths dating from an earlier oral tradition show glimpses of an earlier matrifocused, if not female-dominated, society, although they also evidence a later shift in consciousness resulting from Christianity, the warrior ethos and patriarchy.

However, by this time, the masculine principle had grown in importance, and the goddess was no longer able to reproduce alone. By Neolithic times at least, it was considered necessary for the goddess to be accompanied by a year god, representing the changing seasons, in order to ensure the fertility of the land (Gimbutas, 1999: 17-18). By Celtic-speaking times in Britain and Ireland, according to vernacular literature, the consort of the goddess was the main tribal god, known as the Dagda in Ireland, the equivalent of the Gaulish Cernunnos and, according to Gimbutas (1999: 181-182), a descendant of the Old European 'Lord of the Animals'.

He was usually depicted as a horrific, priapic male figure, horned and carrying a club, who was probably responsible for testing his people with various challenges and disasters, and rewarding them appropriately from his huge cauldron of rebirth. In the Welsh tale of Owain, he is remembered as a huge, dark man who can summon all animals through the bellowing of a stag (Gimbutas, 1999:182). As in Neolithic times, the coming together of the god and goddess on the night of Samain, in other words the *hieros gamos*, was meant to ensure prosperity and fertility for the tribe during the coming year (Cunliffe, 1999:186). On the other hand, despite the fact that she was no longer parthenogenic, the goddess was arguably still the greatest deity of all, the Mother and Triple Mother (Williams, 1991: 9), who represents both fertility and destruction. As Gimbutas points out, 'The Irish and Welsh oral tradition and historic records preserved the primary Old European goddesses – especially the life-giver and death-wielder – with little change since Neolithic times' (Gimbutas, 1999:184).

The three aspects of the goddess were the Maiden, the Mother and the Crone: she was therefore associated with death and destruction as well as fertility. As the representative of the life-cycle, she also appears to have been closely related either to the waxing and waning of the moon, or to the rising and setting of the sun. The moon connection is particularly evident in one of the Ancient Britons' names for the goddess, Arianhrod (Silver Wheel); the sun symbolism can be seen in the myth of Rhiannon, discussed below.

The goddess also followed the waxing and waning of the rule of the tribal kings, and the rhythm of the god (Williams, 1991:9), which was linked to the seasons as well as the human life-cycle (Gimbutas, 1999: 17-18). As part of the symbolic marriage between the king and the goddess, the king traditionally had to embrace the goddess in the form of a hag, who would turn into a beautiful woman as a result of his kiss (*Celtic Women: Myth and Symbol*). In this way she was linked with sovereignty.

It appears that the Celtic-speaking ancient Britons worshipped many goddesses. It is, however, not clear if these were entirely separate deities, or if they were viewed as different aspects of the Great Mother herself, especially as shape-shifting is notably common in ancient British and Irish myth. In this way, goddesses were often linked with creatures: among others there was a raven goddess of battles, a bear goddess and a horse-goddess, known as Epona to the Continental Celts and Rhiannon to the Britons (Williams, 1991: 9).

Rhiannon, best known from the British myth *The Saga of Rhiannon*, has been unanimously connected by mythologists to the Gallic horse-goddess Epona, thought by Gimbutas to be influenced by the horse-worshipping Indo-Europeans (Gimbutas, 1999: 183). In Roman times this Celtic goddess was adopted by the Romans and frequently appears in Gallo-Roman sculptures. In these she is portrayed either mounted on a horse or standing between two horses, and is sometimes carrying a bowl, goblet or horn of plenty, or is occasionally accompanied by a dog, the symbol of the underworld (Markale, 1986: 88-89).

While the horn of plenty appears to symbolise fertility, the dog, the guardian of the gates of hell, is a symbol of death and the afterlife. All this suggests, then, that Rhiannon/Epona was a goddess of fertility and destruction, although here the life-giving aspect of the goddess appears to be dominant. Moreover, the horse is a symbol of the sun, as it draws the sun on its carriage from night to day and back again. Indeed, Rhiannon, in the myth, is depicted as dressed in golden clothes and mounted on a white horse, colours which call to mind the brightness of daylight. It is likely, then, that this goddess represented the circle of night and day, death and rebirth (Markale, 1986: 86-89).

It is also probable that Rhiannon/Epona fulfilled another function of the great Mother Goddess in that she was seemingly involved with sovereignty (*Celtic Women: Myth and Symbol*). Indeed, the mare, presumably as a representation of this goddess, was noted by Giraldus Cambrensis in the 13th century to play an important part in kingship ritual in an Ulster town. In this case, the new king had to copulate with a white mare, after which she would be killed, and he would bathe in and drink the broth of her meat (Markale, 1986: 86-89).

Another important Celtic goddess, according to Gimbutas a descendant of the Old European bird goddess, was the crow goddess known as the Morrigan. Among the Old Europeans, birds of prey symbolised death, and one form of their goddess of death and regeneration could take the shape of a bird of prey, most frequently an owl in Western Europe. In Gimbutas's view, in Neolithic times it was considered necessary for a body to be cleaned of its flesh by birds of prey before being buried (Gimbutas, 1999:19-21).

The Morrigan of Celtic speaking Ireland, a crow goddess and death messenger, then, can be considered a continuation of the Old European tradition of linking birds of prey with death and regeneration. A beautiful goddess, she had the ability to change into a

crow, sometimes appearing with her sisters Bodb and Macha (Gimbutas, 1999:19-21), and, in this guise, had the ability to create panic and madness among soldiers in battle.

Despite her beauty, she is sometimes depicted as white-haired (Chadwick, 1997: 173; Markale, 1986:114), she symbolises all that is evil in supernatural power (Berresford-Ellis, 2002:128) and, according to Nora Chadwick, was 'an unpleasant person' (Chadwick, 1997: 172-173), thus linking her to the destructive, or crone, aspect of the goddess. Moreover, she also has the ability to shape-shift, sometimes appearing as a greyhound, an eel, a red, hornless heifer, a red-haired woman driving a cow and an old woman milking a three-teated cow (Gimbutas, 1999: 186). The cow association in particular, usually a symbol of life and fertility, suggest that the goddess was linked with regeneration in addition to death and destruction.

Similarly, birds are also connected with death and regeneration in several stories in Welsh tradition, perhaps the best known being the 'birds of Rhiannon', which are supposed to bring the dead back to life and put the living to sleep (Markale, 1986: 111). Moreover, both Markale and Chadwick point out that the character Morgan la Fee, who is able to turn herself into a bird, of the King Arthur myths may also be a memory of this goddess (Markale, 1986: 111; Chadwick, 1997: 172).

A Domestic Goddess? The Position of Women in Ancient British Society

Although the feminine principle was clearly important in the religious life of the Ancient Britons, it does not automatically follow that mortal women were similarly revered in their everyday lives. It does, however, appear that women did have a higher status, and more freedom, in ancient Britain and Ireland than in ancient Greece or Rome, although this does not mean that they were dominant over men, or even that they had complete equality with them. In Gimbutas's view (1999: 123), this relatively important role for women was directly inherited from the matrifocal societies of the Old Europeans.

The rights of ancient Greek and Roman women were considerably constrained. Indeed, most ancient Greek women were kept in seclusion at home, had no political rights at all, and could not own or inherit property. While ancient Roman women were not kept in seclusion, property and business were entirely male affairs, and the *paterfamilias* still had complete control over his wife. In contrast, women in ancient Britain enjoyed considerable freedom and seem to have been able to partake in all aspects of public life, sometimes becoming warriors, ambassadors, rulers or druidesses, a fact which surprised

and even shocked Greek and Roman visitors, sometimes leading them to make wild claims (Berresford-Ellis, 2002: 91-97).

Despite their greater freedom, British women, perhaps unlike their Irish sisters, were undoubtedly affected under Roman rule, by the more patriarchal society of Rome. While a Roman primary education was available for both the sons and the daughters of the British elite, secondary education, a means of assimilation into Roman society, was reserved for the boys. Some British women did, however, become adapted to Roman society, with one woman, Claudia Rufina, becoming so assimilated according to Martial that even Roman matrons took her for an Italian (Miles, 2005: 142).

However, both the medieval Irish and Welsh codes of law are evidence for the relatively high status of women in ancient times. Although these laws, being codified in the Middle Ages, were undoubtedly affected by the more patriarchal atmosphere of Christianity, the status of women under these legal systems was far higher than in other European countries at the time. It appears that, while Roman law dictated that a woman was the property of her husband, the ancient Britons viewed marriage as a partnership between a man and woman. In general, divorce was easy, and there was little stigma attached to being a divorcee. Indeed, there is evidence that year-long trial marriages existed in parts of Scotland and Ireland (Savino-Payne, 2002:3).

Moreover, women seem generally to have been able to inherit property, and to retrieve their dowry upon divorce (Savino-Payne, 2002:3). In the Irish Brehon law system, for instance, women had the right to inherit property and maintain whatever wealth they brought to the marriage. Moreover, both male and female children were entitled to education, while a child born of rape was considered entirely the responsibility of the father (*Celtic Women: Myth and Symbol*).

Similarly, although Welsh women in the Middle Ages did not appear to be as free as their Irish sisters, they still had more legal rights than the majority of European women. According to the medieval Welsh Law of Hywel Dda, a woman was entitled to the return of her dowry if a marriage broke up before seven years, and after seven years she was entitled to half of her husband's property. Moreover, a woman did not lose her own kin on marriage, and, at least in the early days of the Law, was able to inherit her father's land in the absence of brothers or male cousins (Williams, 1991: 50)

Both Welsh and Irish sources suggest that marriage was traditionally matrilineal, with the husband leaving his home to live with his wife's family. This was also true among

the Picts of Scotland, and matrilineal settlement was still common in parts of the Scottish Highlands into the twentieth century. Moreover, the prominence of both maternal brothers and sisters' sons in these sources indicate an earlier matrilineal system (Gimbutas, 1999: 123).

In addition, both Irish and Welsh vernacular literature suggest that society had once been matrilineal through the habit of naming literary heroes after their mothers rather than their fathers. The Irish hero Cu Chulainn, for instance, was known as the son of Dechtire, while in Welsh myth Gwyddion and Arianrhod are defined as the children of the goddess Don (Markale, 1986: 38).

Women in 'Men's' Roles: Women in War, Politics and Religion Female Leaders and Warriors

Historically, there were female leaders of British tribes who led their people into battle during the period of Roman rule, the most prominent of which were Boudicca of the Iceni and Cartimandua of the Brigantes (Miles, 2005:137-138). Tacitus, moreover, implies that these were not isolated cases, and that there had been previous cases in which women had acted as war leaders in Britain (Berresford-Ellis, 1999: 9).

Boudicca, however, is perhaps the best known of such leaders. Wife of King Prasutagus of the Iceni, she led a rebellion against the Romans after they deprived her of the inheritance of her husband's title, and allegedly raped and beat her. She acted as war leader, and was an able tactician, choosing the moment when Roman governor Suetonius Paulinus was away campaigning in North Wales to rebel (Cunliffe, 2003:90). Cartimandua, the 'sleek pony', Queen of the Brigantes, on the other hand, proved a traitor to her people, as she handed over Caractacus, leader of the British resistance, to the Romans (Markale, 1986: 32).

Moreover, the ability of women to become leaders is also attested in legal sources and in vernacular literature. In Irish law, for instance, the queen, although considered secondary to the male leader, was of considerable importance and was entitled to a third of penal fines and war booty. This historical evidence for women sometimes being able to take a leadership position is also supported by British and Irish myths. According to Irish sources, for example, Macha Mong Ruadh (Macha of the Red Hair) was ruler of all Ireland between 377 and 331 BC.

In contrast, there is no classical record of women holding such leadership positions in Gaul. It is therefore difficult to be certain whether this phenomenon had once been more widespread in Celtic-speaking Europe or was a fact of insular culture not shared on the continent (Cunliffe, 1999:110).

The Roman author Tacitus mentions that the British were accustomed to female commanders in war (Miles, 2005:138). Yet, despite the Roman penchant for hyperbole when it came to Celtic-speaking peoples, scholars concur that women in Ancient Britain took part in battle, at least for a time (*Celtic Women: Myth and Symbol*). This is corroborated by both Welsh and Irish vernacular literature, in which there are many examples of female warriors. Two of the most notable of these according to Irish myth are Medb of Connacht, who led her own army and slew the warrior Cethren, and Scathach, an expert in martial arts who became the chief instructor of Cuchulainn (Berresford-Ellis, 2002:106).

The existence of female warriors is also echoed in Welsh legend. In the story of Peredur, for instance, Peredur is led to a group of nine witches, the ‘Witches of Gloucester’, who instruct him in the arts of knighthood and war before killing his uncle and cousin. In turn, Peredur, supported by Arthur and his family, kills them in revenge. Similarly, in the story of Culhwch and Olwen, Arthur fights with, and defeats, a witch or hag who fights only with her nails (Chadwick, 1997:139-140).

Moreover, historically attested events such as the Roman siege of the holy isle of Mona (Anglesey) indicate that women were prepared to take an active part in their defence. According to Tacitus, when Romans were attempting to reach the beach of Mona, a Druidic centre, women as well as men lined up on the shore ready to defend the island, “with dishevelled hair like Furies, brandishing torches” (Miles, 2005:136-137).

Witches or Druidesses? Women in Ancient British Religion

Both classical and indigenous sources refer to the existence of druidesses, known as *dryades* in Latin, in Celtic speaking Britain and Ireland. Indeed, as Berresford-Ellis points out (2002:106), “if women had no part in the priestly functions of the religion of the early Celts, then the Celtic religions would indeed be unique in the world’s history”. Thus, it seems logical that women would play an important part in a religion dominated by goddesses. In Gimbutas’ view, the concept of priestesses having considerable authority in Europe goes back at least to the Neolithic age, when one priestess would represent the

goddess. She would be assisted in decision making by a council of several priestesses, often numbering nine (Gimbutas, 1999:119).

In Celtic-speaking Britain, women continued to act as priestesses. Like the Roman Vestal Virgins, women were charged with keeping vigil over eternal fires, such as that at Bath dedicated to the goddess Sul (Markale, 1986:38). However, various sources of evidence, including vernacular literature, classical sources and the position of women in the early Celtic church, suggest that the power of these priestesses or druidesses was more than merely symbolic.

Druidesses appear frequently in Irish vernacular literature particularly, where they are known as the *bandruaid* or *banflaith* (female druids). In these stories, the druidesses use their magical powers to perform both good and evil. The wicked druidess Aoife, for instance, the stepmother of the children of Lir, turns them into swans. In contrast, Birog, also a druidess, uses her powers to save children endangered by the evil Fomorii king Balor. One of these children, whom Birog rescues after being cast into the sea by Balor, later grows up to be Lugh Lamhfada, the Irish god of arts and crafts.

In Welsh literature, warlike characters such as the Witches of Gloucester and the hag defeated by Arthur perhaps also represent druidesses, who were often portrayed as witches during the Christian era. In addition to war, both the witches and the hag are associated with prophecy and predictions, the witches, for instance, prophesying that they would suffer at the hands of Peredur (Chadwick, 1997: 139-140).

Moreover, even the fact that the witches of Gloucester are nine in number appears to be a memory of Gimbutas' original council of nine wise women. Similarly, for instance, Pomponius Mela mentions that nine witches or druidesses were said to live on the isle of Sena, off the coast of Brittany, who would call out prophecies to passing sailors (Berresford-Ellis, 2002:97)

In addition, even after the advent of Christianity, women still had an important position in the early Celtic church. Many of the early saints in both Britain and Ireland were women, a far higher proportion than in the Roman church. One of the most prominent of the early Irish saints, St Brigit, illustrates the continuity between the old and new religions.

Brigit was a *bandrui*, or female druid, before her conversion to Christianity, and was evidently either named after the fertility goddess Brigit or adopted the name as a title given to the priestesses of the goddess. St Brigit's feast day was, moreover, celebrated on

the day of the festival of Imbolc, traditionally dedicated to the goddess Brigit, and she became associated with many of the functions attributed to the deity, including divination, healing, arts and crafts and poetry (Berresford-Ellis, 2002:102-103).

As they had under the earlier religions, women continued to play an important role as priestesses in the early Celtic church. They were allowed to celebrate mass, and often were housed together with men in monasteries (Markale, 1986:38), generally in extended family groups as land traditionally belonged to the kin group. Even when lodged separately from men they were often influential, with the most notable convent being that of St. Brigit at Kildare (Miles, 2005:171-172).

Conclusion

It is impossible to talk of the ancient Britons or Irish as being matriarchal societies. However these were societies in which the feminine was clearly respected and played an important part. Gimbutas argues that this is due to the fact that in the British Isles, as in other peripheral areas of Europe, the Indo-European invaders were too few in number to completely suppress the native Old European population.

Firstly, religion was dominated by the worship of goddesses, with gods, particularly in earlier times, tending to play a secondary role. Moreover, many of the goddesses worshipped by the ancient Britons appear to be of Old European origin.

Secondly, while it cannot be argued that women had an equal status to men in ancient Britain or Ireland, their situation in society was clearly superior to that of their sisters from the great Mediterranean civilizations. This is reflected in law as late as the Middle Ages, which suggests that marriage in the British Isles was viewed as a partnership, rather than as a man's ownership of his wife as in ancient Rome.

Thirdly, vernacular literature, archaeology and classical sources all suggest that women in ancient Britain and Ireland were able to play an important part in public life, something that appeared almost scandalous to the Roman invaders. There is evidence that women served alongside men as soldiers, druidesses and even as political and military leaders.

References

- Baring, A. and J. Cashford. 1993. *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*. London: Penguin
- Berresford Ellis, P. 1995. *Celtic Women*. London: Constable
- Berresford Ellis, P. 2002. *A Brief History of the Druids*. London: Robinson
- Cavalli-Sforza, L. L. 2001. *Genes, Peoples and Languages*. London: Penguin
- Celtic Women: Myth and Symbol* at the University of Idaho [Online] Available: http://www.uidaho.edu/student_orgs/arthurian_legend/celtic/women/ [2006:16 January]
- Chadwick, N. 1997. *The Celts*. London: Penguin
- Cunliffe, B. 1999. *The Ancient Celts*. London: Penguin
- Cunliffe, B. 2003. *The Celts: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Gimbutas, M. 1999. *The Living Goddesses*. Berkeley: California University Press
- Hunt, F. 1990. *Goddess Culture in Early Celtic Literature* at Carleton University. [Online] Available at: www.unc.edu/home/freb/thesis.htm [2005: September 13]
- James, S. 1999. *The Atlantic Celts: Ancient People or Modern Invention?* London: British Museum Press
- Markale, J. 1986. *The Women of the Celts*. Rochester: Inner Traditions
- Miles, D. 2005. *The Tribes of Britain: Who Are We and Where Do We Come From?* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson
- Nicholls, R. W. 1988. "Stag and Earth Mother: Pagan Beliefs in Ancient Britain" in *The World and I Online* Available: www.worldandi.com/specialreport/1988/december/Sa13833.htm [2005: 15 November]
- Pryor, F. 2004. *Britain BC: Life in Britain and Ireland before the Romans*. London: Harper Perennial
- Savino-Payne, H. 2002. "The Lives of Ancient Celtic Women" in *Celtic Learning Project*. [Online] Available: <http://www.celtlearn.org/women.pdf> [2006, March 20]
- Williams, G. A. 1991. *When Was Wales?: The History, People and Culture of an Ancient Country*. London: Penguin

ECOURAGING WOMEN TO BE LEARNED AND WISE

REMINA SIMA

The purpose of this paper is to show how women came to be integrated into the broad educational system. During the period, 1550-1700 women's education improved greatly, but they were still barred from receiving a university education. Women were deemed to be the inferior branch of human race. The successful reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), the powerful Anna of Denmark, demonstrated that women could flourish in politics.

The humanist philosophers of the Renaissance consider that educated women should confine their learning to the private, domestic sphere. In *Education of a Christian Woman*, Jean Luis Vives wrote that it was not fit for a woman to rule a school. If she was good it was better to be at home and unknown to other folks. She should let few see her and none at all hear her as she says:

For Adam was the first made and after Eve, and Adam was not betrayed, the woman was betrayed into the breach of commandment. (quoted in Sarah Gamble, 2001:6)

Jane Anger wrote *Her Protection for Women* giving a different vision upon Genesis. She said that man was formed of dross and filthy clay and then God brought him to life. Jane Anger says that the woman was made of man's flesh being purer than he is and she considers that in this way women are more excellent than men (Gamble, 2001:8). In the Scriptures, there are precedents and models of strong and wise women such as Sarah, Rebecca, and Esther who use their intelligence and wisdom to prove successful.

Mary Oxlie said that:

If a woman is intellectually inferior to a man, it is because she is denied the same opportunities. (Gamble, 2001:10).

During 1670-1680, it was very perilous for women to write for the public stage, as men were the ones whose intelligence and power of creation was encouraged. Aphra Behn was the first to achieve outstanding intellectual success during this period and she was hailed as a feminist hero (Gamble, 2001:14).

In the 19th century in America there was a great change regarding women's education. Linda Kerber has observed:

The years after the Revolution witnessed a great expansion of educational opportunity, an expansion sustained by the belief that the success of the republican experiment demanded a well-educated citizenry. There is one step forward having women encompassed in this citizenry. (1989:189)

There seems to have been a literary gap between American men and women. As Linda Kerber has said, educational options for girls were far more limited than they were for boys; nevertheless between 1790-1830 facilities for girls' education expanded and improved making possible the closing of the literacy gap; the reasons for this are related both to the political revolution and the industrial one.

The Republican Mother owed much to the Revolution and the Enlightenment. To her traditional responsibility for taking care of the household, was added the obligation that she should be an informed and virtuous citizen. She was to observe the political world and be a guide for her husband and children in making their way through it (Kerber, 1986: 235).

Reading fiction played a very important role in a woman's private life and imagination. Women were encouraged to read history books and not novels that celebrated passion as these ones suggested that all women were solely guided by their emotion. The woman was to be in control of her emotions so that she could control her husband and children and so guarantee the virtuous behaviour on which the security of the Republic depended. The Republic did not need emotional women who could be manipulated by men. (Kerber, 1986: 245).

And why should girls be
learned or wise
Books only serve to spoil their eyes.
The studious eye but faintly
twinkles
And reading paves the way to
wrinkles.
John Trumbull (quoted in Kerber, 1986:185)

This quotation places women in the dark when it comes to education and reading. Not only does he consider education useless for young girls but it is also an ironical

approach. This reminds me of the beauty myth, which glorifies women for their beauty and body, the only aspects of life that help her accomplish her mission in this world, as if it were for this that the woman was created. J. Trumbull seems to believe in women's interest in reading but what he means I think is the fact that girls may be willing to study but by their nature they are too weak to do that. The last line expresses clearly the idea that the field of culture is not welcoming to girls. In a way, he discourages them reminding women that reading is not easy, its traces can be seen physically in the wrinkles on the face.

Even if there had been opinions like Trumbull's, the 19th century brought much progress in woman's way towards education. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was and still is the most coherent statement of what women deserved and what they might become. In her work Wollstonecraft, argued that middle class women's oppression was due to their deficient education. Men possessed no innate intellectual superiority over women, she insisted; the most critical differences between sexes were the way they were taught. Advocating the rights of woman, her main argument is built on the simple principle that if she is not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue (1975:4).

Wollstonecraft's work comes as a major reaction to Rousseau. The later does not see the woman suitable for too intricate things. According to him women's place is in the household and they should never for one moment feel independent; a woman ought to be weak and passive as she has less bodily strength than man, she is meant to please and to be submissive to him. Wollstonecraft encourages women not to confine themselves to the role of inferior, weak creatures whose main duties are those of wife and mother. Women owe it to themselves and their family to strike in the direction of a rich intellectual and moral maturity that would enable them to choose the kind of work to which they would apply themselves.

The aim, which Wollstonecraft wants to accomplish by advocating national education, is the introduction of co-education. She suggests that without distinction of sex or wealth, children under nine years of age are to be taught in schools free to all and obliged to submit to the same discipline. She would even suggest that all the children be dressed alike. After the age of nine differentiation is to begin, natural and individual choice is to be taken into consideration. She expects equality in education.

Women little by little came to trust themselves. They understood they can do much more than just limit their existence within the boundaries of the household. The 19th

century is the period when many women try their hand at writing. Most of the American authors were middle class women who were in need of money. Middle class women had sufficient education to know how to write books and only those who needed money attempted it. During the 1820-1870 period there were no satisfying and well-paid jobs for women. The cultivation of the mind was seen as the great key of freedom, the means by which women learnt to think about their situation and learned how to master it. The women who tried the act of writing saw authorship as a profession rather than a calling, work not art. They did not think of themselves as artists until 1870. (Baym, 1993: 28-32).

According to Elizabeth Sewall the aim of education is to make children fit for the future position in life which they are to occupy; boys are to be sent out into the world to face the bad and the good, to direct and govern, girls are to dwell in quiet homes to exercise a noiseless influence, to be submissive. (Helleirstein, 1981:69). Eliza B. Duffey, in opposition to Sewall, considers that boys and girls are equal in their desires for an active life. She says:

They both want the air and the sunshine. They need equally to be hardened by the storms, tanned by the winds and have limbs strengthened by unrestrained exercise. (Hellerstein, 1981: 70).

Women's education, undoubtedly, is important for the progress in a society, as they are part of its citizens. Even if their opportunities were quite confined in the 19th century, much progress has been made. I could say that the freedom and liberty in the educational system that women enjoy today is due to the endeavours undertaken by courageous women two centuries back. The struggle for accepting women in certain fields still goes on but the great war was successfully waged in the 19th century.

References

- Baym, N. 1993. *Women's Fiction - A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820-1870*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press
- Gamble, S. (ed.).2004. *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*. London and New York: Routledge
- Hellerstein, E. O. L; Hume, L. P. and K.M. Offen. *Victorian Women*. California: Stanford

University Press

Kerber, L. K. 1980. *Women of the Republic*. SUA: University of North Carolina Press

Wollstonecraft, M. 1996. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Mineola, New York:

Dover Publications. London [1792]

Visions of Power/Powers of Vision

**LOOK WHO'S TALKING: GENDERED DISCOURSE IN MARGARET
ATWOOD'S *BACKDROP ADDRESSES COWBOY***

ANEMONA FILIP ALB

University of Oradea

Introduction

In this paper I examine the discursive configuration of negotiations between what Seamus Heaney coined as the ‘feminine mode’ and the ‘masculine’ – and the ways in which this distinction instantiates iconographies, be they feminine or masculine.

Beyond the cultural constructs of gender and the patriarchal structures of language, Heaney’s classification deems ‘language’ instantiation, which he labels ‘mode’, as the distinguishing factor:

So I am setting up two distinct categories and I am calling them: the masculine and the feminine mode. Language in the masculine mode is architectonic, it displays the *muscle of sense* – whilst language in the feminine is more a matter of *divination* and *evocation* than address. It rather goes for the come-hither than for the confrontation. It rather evokes than names. (Heaney: 1990:24)

What this distinction yields, to my mind, is that the masculine ‘mode’ displays *structure*, hence *coherence* and *cohesion*, a rationality and solidity of construction, whereas the feminine, according to Heaney, is meant to ‘*echo*’, (Heaney uses here the term evocation from the verb ‘to evoke’, rather than ‘utter’) what is being stated through the masculine mode, which is a traditional and diachronically-enforced role for the feminine discourse, that of relaying, re-telling, disseminating what has been – prescriptively – asserted and decreed by the male, as sole uttering-subject in an androcentric society.

Research Questions

The research questions that have prompted this study are:

1. Are women ascribed ‘*agency*’ or is it their taxonomic predicament that they be assigned the traditional, diachronic, patriarchally-informed roles that literature up to the 20th/21st centuries has been suffused with?

2. What are the *discursive mechanisms* that *perpetuate* - or *subvert* – the *replication* of male strategies of control, or as Fraser (1980:98) puts it: the ‘patriarchal structures of language’? (Fraser coined this when exploring the linguistic play she had begun to discover in Stein and Woolf as a gender-marked resistance to these – male-

informed – linguistic structures. She recognised in these predecessors “[...] a structural order of fragmentation and resistance to the patriarchal models that confirmed my / i.e. her perspective.” (Fraser, 1980:99).

3. What happens when the woman, culturally inscribed by endless narratives, enunciated by other – male – utterers, begins to *inscribe herself*? What happens when Leda takes on a voice? What do the – liberated -- *cultural daughters* have to say that the *sons* cannot?

4. Are these power struggles *overt* or -- in-keeping with pre-feminist paradigms – *covert* - in the text under scrutiny here?

Analytical Framework

Apart from analytical frameworks proposed by Fraser (1980), Kinnahan (1994), Heaney(1990) and the theoretical underpinnings put forward by Kristeva (1999), Irigaray (1977) and Foucault (1980), I have also found operative the framework suggested by Alice Jardine (1997) in her *Gynesis: Configurations of Women and Modernity* – and the ‘gynesis’ term she coins:

Gynesis [...] the putting into discourse of ‘woman’ as that process diagnosed in France as intrinsic to the condition of modernity, indeed the valorization of the feminine, woman and her obligatory, that is historical connotations, as somehow intrinsic to new and necessary modes of thinking, writing, *speaking*. (italics mine) (Jardine: 1997:102)

Sample Text Analysis

The sample text I use as data in this paper is provided by a poem entitled “Backdrop Addresses Cowboy” by Margaret Atwood (see **Appendix 1**)

The very title of the poem (“Backdrop Addresses Cowboy”), redolent of connotations of Hollywood-speak, i.e. the script/screenplay format – is indicative of *passivity* in a two-fold and, I would argue, doubly-effective manner:

(i.)that of the *pre-scribed, formulaic* nature of scripts – here: masculine paradigms – that assign and replicate traditional gender roles;

(ii.)by the very use of the word ‘backdrop’ – or ‘props’ as it were – beyond the passivity inherent in such elements of décor – this, I argue, merely sets the scene for and allows the space for *action/agency* – someone else’s action.

The ‘backdrop’ is the space to be invaded – as the female body is. Indeed, it has become to some extent quite a cultural cliché that the female body, in its ideological stance, be reified, treated as object-of-desire/study. The ‘woman-as-object’ is - quite prolifically - germane to – at times – overlapping paradigms, namely *feminism* and *postcolonialism* (see ‘India-as-Woman’ in postcolonial studies). Hence the theoretical profitability of the association between the female anatomy and space-to-be-invaded/colonized – conceptually.

There is no explicit reference in the poem under scrutiny to female anatomy; indeed it is reified for conceptual purposes here notwithstanding.

I will now detect and analyse textual instances of my theoretical claims (see the Research Questions above), using extracts from the poem (see **Appendix 1**), in an attempt to substantiate those claims; the lines selected to make a point are henceforth referred to as ‘Quote/s: Line/s ‘.

Quote: Line/s 3 – 4:

“[...] your face/ A porcelain grin” – which I decode as lack of expression – in all epistemology, i.e. it is that *fixed* (*the fixedness of the porcelain* -- see the porcelain-faced dolls), immobile, *monolithic*, *canonical* expression, *the* expression as it were, *the* paradigm imposed in an androcentric world, never to be tested or contested.

Quote: Line 12:

“[...] the air in front of you/ Blossoms with targets” – if invasion is to be had, the space is there – yet again in all paradigmatic conflict: i.e. the evanescence of it (the ‘air’) vs. the protruding solidity of the ‘targets’, distinction which I decode as the continuum constituted by the two – anatomical and epistemological – extremes: the diffuse ‘landscape’/‘topography’ of the feminine vs. the phallic, centripetal nature of the masculine. Dissolution as opposed to focus.

Quote: Line/s 14 – 15:

“And you leave behind you a *heroic / Trail of desolation.*” (italics mine)

Let me focus on the attribute ‘heroic’ here: yet another instance of iconic instantiation of androcentrism, i.e. the male exploits celebrated diachronically, over a long history (there are those who find value-ladenness in the very his in ‘history’ and advocate the her instead (see ‘herstory’). (But that’s another story).

As for the ‘trail of desolation’ part – ‘desolation’ the operative word therein – this denotes a space uninhabited, not inhabited by *alternative, counter-discourses* – a space that exudes a sense of *epistemological vacuum*.

And for the ‘trail’ part: it could well indicate the *trajectories* of male-female *power-struggles, a choreography of ‘gender-as-battlefield’*.

Quote: Line 20:

“I ought to be watching” – beyond the prescriptive *overtones* of the modal verb ‘ought to’ – this is about – traditionally – assigned roles. Always an on-looker be! – or, as Fraser (quoted in Kinnahan, 1994:99) puts it:

Privilege. Authority. Seeing. Many feminist epistemologists have focused on ‘vision’ as an excellent metaphor for understanding how knowledge is conceived. One sees best at some distance from the object, one can see without being seen or without affecting or being affected by the object, and seeing is ‘spatial’ rather than temporal: one can take in all at once an array of objects.

One can also choose to fix the object in one’s gaze as one cannot, for example, dominate someone by one’s intensely focused listening (Fox Keller and Grontkowski in Harding and Hintikka (1983:55). Vision is always a question of the power to see (Haraway: 1988:32).

The ‘male gaze’ is institutionalised through the media, arts, film, literature etc. and it gives men the legitimacy to look publicly at women. Valerie Walkerdine (1984) suggests that the power of the researcher to ‘objectify’ and ‘scrutinise’ the ‘subject’ of research is a process similar to that of the male gaze. A version of female experience is created in the very act and meaning of looking, which she has been for too long denied. This process becomes even more complex if one takes into account the work of Lacan (1977), reworked through a feminist theory to suggest that the category ‘woman’ is itself the “product of male fantasy.” (Kinnahan, 1994:70)

The ‘I-ought-to-be-watching’ above acknowledges the very fact that the female gaze is intrinsically distinct – if only ‘elsewhere’ – or, in other words, merely pre-figured at the moment, yet to be canonized; distinct from the ‘male gaze’, which is evaluative.

Quote: Line 21:

“From behind a cliff or a cardboard storefront”. I discern here *marginality, the peripheral location* of feminine – *and* feminist - discourses.

Quote: Line 22:

“When the shooting starts ...” – here an action-driven persona of the male interlocutor is instantiated, aggressively connoting ‘agency’;

whereas:

Quote: Line/s 22 – 23:

“(...) hands clasped / In admiration.” The stance here reinforces femininity as spectatorship, audience to be mesmerized, *passivity*.

Quote: Line 24:

“But I am elsewhere.” Beyond the elusiveness or diachronic non-instantiation of the discourses of femininity, this is indicative of *non-taxonomy*, any classification thereof of the feminine as social actor being for the time being deferred.

Quote: Line/s 25 – 26:

“Then what about me” – the feminine “I” is re-instantiated as ‘subject’; picked up again as:

“What about the I”, which raises questions as regards a much-deferred *critique of feminine subjectivity*.

Quote: Line 27:

“Confronting you on that border” suggests *delineation* between *contesting subjectivities* and *epistemologies*.

Quote: Line 28:

“You are always trying to cross?” Yet again *invasiveness* – and – crucially – *degradation of space* and attempt at *appropriation* are put forward here rhetorically.

Boundaries forever frail and (re)negotiable, and, equally importantly, paradigms and discourses *not co-terminous*.

Quote: Line 29:

“I am the horizon”. The ‘horizon’ here can be decoded in point of ‘identity’ – remote, not contiguous, therefore not familiar. Idiosyncrasy overrides all.

Quote: Line 30 (a)+(b): I will break this up into two parts:

(a)“You ride towards,” –is what I label here a *choreography* of *ideological penetration* into unfamiliar space, space to be ‘colonized’, gentrified therefore appropriated.

(b)“(..) the thing you can never lasso” – the elusiveness of the feminine space. Depredation of space is aimed at here, the elusiveness *and* resistance of the latter notwithstanding. Resistance, *inter alia*, to taxonomic confinement.

Quote: Line 31:

“I am also what surrounds you:”. What I find operative here is – beyond the reference to ‘territory’ - the dissolution, i.e. lack of focus, of the feminine space, be it paradigmatic or anatomical.

Quote: Line/s 32 – 33 – 34:

“My brain/ Scattered with your/ Tincans, bones, empty shells,” –lines that are quite relevantly *form-ridden*, not *content-informed*. As regards the content-vs.-form debate, Kinnahan (1994:33) decrees that ‘content be the primary locus for a poetics of the feminine.’

‘My *brain ...scattered* with ...’ (italics mine) again connotes imprint when print is to be had, androcentrism the colonizer thereof.

Quote: Line 35:

“The litter of your invasions.” ‘Litter’ equals ‘remains’ – male paradigms failing to have the ‘here-to-stay’ factor, ideological ‘staying-power’ – a sense of disinvestment pervades these last lines to perhaps undermine the solidity of the discourses of masculinity. If not the downright poor quality of such discourses that the term ‘litter’ can be said to be connotative of.

I shall refer now to the last two lines (Lines 36 – 37): “I am the space you desecrate/As you pass through.” As in a sonnet – presumably a covert reference to the canon, the imposed fixedness of form (arguably, as androcentrism is, any canon is a form of epistemological imposition) – the last two lines sum up all that has been assumed/presumed (in T.S. Eliotean stance) by the female ‘voice’ in the poem. And – subtly – paradoxically so, as in a silent movie, long before the talkies (the cowboy does *not* actually speak), there’s no interlocutor for her. Or is there?

References:

- Foucault, M. 1982. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. (trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith). New York: Pantheon Books
- Fraser, K.(ed). 1980. *Feminist Poetics: A Consideration of the Female Construction of*

- Language*. San Francisco: San Francisco State University Press
- Haraway, J. 1988. *The Female Cyborg*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Harding, M. and L. Hintikka. 1983. *Discovering Reality*. London: Routledge
- Heaney, S. 1990. *Preoccupations. Selected Prose*. London: Verso
- Irigaray, L. 1977. *This Sex which is Not One*. (trans. C. Porter). Ithaca: Cornell University Press
- Jardine, A. 1997. *Gynesis. Configurations of Women and Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Kinnahan, L.A. 1994. *Poetics of the Feminine. Authority and Literary Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Kristeva, J. 1982. *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press
- Lacan, J. 1977. *Ecrits*. (trans. A. Sheridan). New York: Norton
- Walkerdine, V. 1984. *The Male Gaze*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Appendix 1:

Sample Text:

Margaret Atwood: “*Backdrop Addresses Cowboy*”

Starspangled cowboy
 Sauntering out of the almost-
 Silly West, on your face
 A porcelain grin,
 Tugging a papier-mache cactus 5
 On wheels behind you with a spring.
 You are innocent as a bathtub
 Full of bullets.

Your righteous eyes, your laconic
 Trigger-fingers 10
 People the streets with villains:
 As you move, the air in front of you
 Blossoms with targets

And you leave behind you a heroic

Trail of desolation: 15

Beer bottles

Slaughtered by the side

Of the road, bird-

Skulls bleaching in the sunset.

I ought to be watching 20

From behind a cliff or a cardboard storefront

When the shooting starts, hands clasped

In admiration,

But I am elsewhere.

Then what about me 25

What about the I

Confronting you on that border

You are always trying to cross?

I am the horizon

You ride towards, the thing you can never lasso 30

I am also what surrounds you:

My brain

Scattered with your

Tincans, bones, empty shells

The litter of your invasions. 35

I am the space you desecrate

As you pass through.

THE FASCINATION OF THE FEMALE BODY

ANDREEA ȘERBAN

University of the West, Timișoara

People have always been fascinated with the body and with the female body in particular. Sculptures and paintings (among which we find an impressive number of female nudes) that go back centuries back stand as proof of this.

Although fascinating, women have always been considered inferior to men one way or another, and defined in relation to them, first to the father and then to the husband.

Biological determinists have claimed that biology grounds and justifies these social norms, i.e. men's superiority over women; in other words, that the social differences between men and women stem from the physiological differences. Thus men pursue the new, while women preserve the old; men are energetic, active and independent, while women are conservative, passive, and dominated by emotions (Moi, 2005:15-21,103).

Women's emotional instability is said to be reflected in their language, too. Their messages are short and intended to keep the conversation going. While men's discourse is characterized by independence, assertions of vertically hierarchical power, and the use of exclusive pronouns ("I", "me") and open criticism, women's conversational patterns are interdependent and cooperative, they include attenuated assertions, apologies and questions (Jaffe, Lee, Huang, and Oshagan, 1995), and make more frequent use of terms of endearment and indirect strategies of persuasion (Frențiu and Beică, 2000:191).

In her book *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir (quoted in Moi, 2005:5) said that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman". Therefore, it can be argued that a woman's body is a cultural construct, as women learn through routine how they are supposed to look and behave. The idea of the body as a cultural construct is maintained by the dominant patriarchal society which, over time, established various ideals of women's bodies. Thus if, at a certain point in the past, plump women were considered attractive, later on corsets reshaped women's figures to resemble hourglasses, while nowadays, the ideal woman's body is expected to be ever thinner, leading to women's dissatisfaction with and even hatred of their own bodies.

In the Victorian period, the corset was used to accentuate a woman's waist which was symbolic of her ethereal nature that differentiated her from man; a woman's light weight was said to be indicative of her spirituality. As women were regarded as weak, emotionally unstable and "potentially sexually voracious" (Krugovoy Silver, 2002:47), they had to be closely monitored and controlled and given foods that calmed their sexual desires, another attempt at dominating women through their bodies. But ever since women adopted men's dress code (trousers, suits and even ties), the threat posed by women has increased. The sexist (male) discourse fantasizes about career women wearing bustiers and lacy lingerie at the office, "so they can feel confident that, underneath it all, they are still anatomically correct" (Faludi, 1993:228). The truth is that men are the ones who buy sexy underwear for women, reducing them to sexual bodies.

The dominant patriarchal society seems to regard women as occupying a marginal position “between man and chaos” (Moi, 1997:248), thus allowing an ambivalent interpretation of women’s role in society: on the one hand as whores to be despised and marginalized, and on the other, as virgins and/or mothers (madonnas) to be worshipped as “representatives of a higher and purer nature” (Moi, 1997:248).

Women’s inferiority and marginalization are also proven by their exclusion from the priesthood. Women are temptresses whose presence arouses impure thoughts and whose bodies ‘speak’ a provocative language (an excuse widely invoked by wife-batterers). Only recently have some Protestant denominations accepted women as ministers.

By establishing ideals of beauty for women to follow, women’s bodies are standardized by the dominant male culture whose ideal of femininity is embodied by the Barbie doll, which “does the dirty work of patriarchy and capitalism in the most insidious way – in the guise of child’s play” (duCille in Leitch, 2002:27), transmitting patriarchy’s ideological message of the ideal woman – white, big-busted, long-legged, sensuous and sexual. The doll’s body seems to contain the contradictory messages of women as whores or madonnas used by patriarchy to subvert (young) women’s individuality by promoting an impossible standard of beauty and “a mindless, can’t-take-care-of-herself femininity”, Barbie’s perfect plastic body standing for the “dominant white Western ideal of beauty” (duCille in Leitch, 2002:31-33). Although this ideal body is impossible to achieve, women will endeavour all their lives to achieve it, investing huge amounts of time, money and energy.

It is still generally believed that women are delicate, sensitive and frail creatures who need protection, as opposed to men who are strong, forceful and self-reliant. It is through their bodies that women are made vulnerable, partly because their dependency on pregnancy and partly because male culture fetishizes such parts of women’s bodies as breasts, legs and bottoms (Lee Bartky in Leitch, 2002:3; Bordo, 1997:125) in an attempt to find the penis in women (Kaplan, 2000:121). For the female figure raises a big issue for men: it has no penis and therefore, symbolizes the threat of castration. Since women can give birth to children, they pose a further problem – they will bring up the child into the symbolic, leaving in her memory a latent threat of castration. Kaplan (2000:133) argues:

The entire construction of woman in patriarchy as a lack could be viewed as emerging from the need to repress mothering and the painful memory traces it has left in the man. The phallus as signified can be set in motion only given the other with a lack, and this has resulted in the male focus on castration.

Psychoanalysts analyse motherhood as a narcissistic relationship in which the mother looks for the phallus in her child so as to make up for castration. When the father enters the scene, he causes the child to understand the castration of the mother and her possession (objectification) by the father (Kaplan, 2000:125,133).

Nowadays, television and popular films are new incarnations of the fascination with the body, and with the female body in particular. In the patriarchal structures, men control the look, which is by no means neutral, and women are first appreciated through their bodies. Looking confers power, and “men assess, judge and make advances on the basis of these visual impressions” (Coward, 1985:75). The male look (gaze) reduces women to their bodies, eroticizing them. However, the gaze, connoting desire, is associated with full manhood; otherwise it is a mark of insolence or stupidity, a failure to understand the codes of masculine rank” (Bordo, 1997:160).

Films and advertisements widely portray women as sex symbols, their bodies being cultural constructs that can give women power if they obey certain norms of feminine body comportment, for example, dieting, hair care, skin care, exercise, etc. (Lee Bartky in Leitch, 2002:5). In the patriarchal order of things, women do not return men’s gaze as equals, their inability to return such a critical look signifying their subordination and control by visual ideals. Coward (1985:81-82) argues that film, photography/ adverts are reflections of reality where women’s bodies are

most carefully scripted with the prevailing ideals. Women internalize the damage created by these media; it is the damage of being the differentiated and therefore the defined sex. Women become *the* sex, the sex differentiated from the norm which is masculine. Women are the sex which is constantly questioned, explained, defined. And as the defined sex, women are put to work by the images. The command created by an image-obsessed culture is ‘Do some work! Transform Yourself! Look Better! Be more erotic!’ And through this command to meet the ideal, our society writes one message loud and clear across the female body. *Do not act. Do not desire. Wait for men’s attention.*

Again, we come back to the depiction of women as passive, objects of desire, important only for what they inspire in the active men. Or, to put it in Mulvey's (1975) words – a woman is characterized by “to-be-looked-at-ness”. Therefore, what is important is not what a woman is or does, but rather what she represents, what she inspires in men, the active principle: namely love, fear or concern (Mulvey, 1975). Since she lacks the phallus, the woman has turned into a “recipient of male desire” (Kaplan, 2000:125-126); she has become a mere sensual body, which tempts men away from their duties, and which – in Bordo's words (Leitch, 2002:10) – “is the negative term, and if the woman *is* the body, then women *are* that negativity, whatever it may be: distraction from knowledge, seduction away from God, capitulation to sexual desire, violence or aggression, failure of will, even death”.

Women's images in films (as well as in advertisements) are sexualized, since men are the ones who control the fantasy which addresses a male spectator and the satisfaction of his scopophilic instinct (voyeurism, i.e. getting sexual pleasure by watching other people have sex). According to male thinking, men cannot bear to be sexually objectified and to watch other exhibitionist men. Their bodies are not seen as desirable, and they remain in control of the desire and of the action of looking.

Kaplan (2000:135) argues that “the domination of women by the male gaze is part of men's strategy to contain the threat that the mother embodies, and to control the positive and negative impulses that memory traces of being mothered have left in the male unconscious”, while women have masochistically learned to associate their sexuality with “the domination of male gaze” and to “find their objectification erotic”. Thus men assess and rank women in an attempt at controlling their bodies and at eliminating the threat (of castration) they might pose. On the other hand, women have been “trained” to feel attractive only if they are watched by men, i.e. if they attract and retain men's attention; the more men look/ gaze at them, the more attractive they feel.

Men and women have been attributed specific gender roles by the patriarchal society, where women may have homemaker roles such as housewives or mothers, where they do not (or cannot) conduct important business or make important decisions, where they need men for everything, i.e. protection, money, advice, or where they are considered sex objects or decorative ones with no personalities (‘women who know their place’, the sexist discourse would claim). The stereotypes of the existing order of things present men in action, energetic and effective, unconcerned about their appearance, while women are

always depicted as objects of sight, “existing for the pleasure of an imagined spectator, and aware that to be a spectacle is the domain of their value, even when walking to work on a city street” (Bordo, 1997:151). According to male thinking, if a woman does not care about her appearance, she may be suspected of lesbianism, man-hating, or of wanting to become a man herself (i.e. transgressing her gender role and thus undermining man’s authority and power).

The advertising industry makes use of such stereotypes to a great extent, usually portraying women either as angelic (but still alluring), or as tempting. In what follows, I shall deal with stereotypical images of women in advertisements, paying particular attention to cosmetics commercials and focusing on perfume advertisements.

Flaunting Women

Earlier in this article I have stated that women strive all their lives to achieve the patriarchal ideal of female beauty by investing huge amounts of time, money and energy. Nowhere else can this be better perceived than in the advertising industry especially for cosmetics.

Women are continuously followed by their image of themselves. They are reified both sexually, physically, by becoming mere bodies – an ‘aesthetic gift’ of nature – to be consumed by the male gaze, and emotionally, psychologically, by not being allowed to express their opinions and feelings or by not being taken seriously.

Advertisements exploit women’s bodies and generally promote the image of a ‘dumb sexual bomb’, by suggesting that women should always be perfectly groomed and always ready to have an affair. Girls and teenagers are indoctrinated with the super model appearance, and start dieting and using make-up at a (very) young age. As in the dominant male society women seem to be primarily appreciated through their bodies, the cosmetics industry has developed, eventually becoming a huge money-making business meant to help women achieve the patriarchal ideal of beauty, i.e. the Barbie doll look – “*the* icon of true white womanhood and femininity” (duCille in Leitch 2002:27).

Numerous adverts for cosmetics (especially for perfumes) rely on the madonna/whore or angel/temptress (she-demon) stereotypes when promoting the image of the product. What should be kept in mind is that all the women who appear in ads for cosmetics live up to the male ideal of a woman’s body – the 36-24-36 (or the European 90-60-90) top model measures. What such ads subconsciously transmit is that if women buy

and use the promoted product, they will, at least partly, achieve the ideal body and, consequently, they will be more appreciated, more accepted by the patriarchal structures.

To illustrate my arguments, I have chosen six commercials taken from Romanian magazines for women between April 2004 and April 2005. The only advertisement that actually featured real, ordinary women with hips and flabby around the waist was the one promoting *Dove Firming Lotion*, within Dove Company's 'real women' campaign which started in April 2004. It was short-lived on Romanian television channels and even in women's magazines, probably because it made women feel good about themselves and (consequently) undermined the patriarchal ideal of female beauty.

Advertisements for cosmetics focus on the female body and present it either fragmented – and thus emphasizing the (sexual) body and objectifying the woman – or as a whole, but almost always connoting sexuality by means of such body language as posture (e.g. *Sensi* by Giorgio Armani), (seductive) look, smile or half-opened mouth (e.g. *Northern Lights* perfume by Oriflame, or *Fresh Matte* foundation by Maybelline), etc. Even if the image of the woman in the advertisement seems angelic at a first glance, it is rather the image of a fallen angel, as the woman's sexuality or sensuousness is somehow always implied (by her face expression, look or mouth position, as in *Miracle* by Lancôme, for example).

Moreover, the women who appear in such adverts wear sexy and revealing clothes, or their bare shoulders suggest their actually being completely naked and sexually provocative (as in *Miracle* by Lancôme); in one word, a witch who makes use of her ethereal beauty and of charms to lure men from their duties. Sometimes, other elements are used to suggest this image of temptress such as a snake on the woman's (naked) body or arm, or a white sheet partly covering her alluring body as in the perfume commercials for *Trouble* (by Boucheron) or *Incanto* (by Salvatore Ferragamo). Such ads create and enhance the image of the woman as passionate, lustful, i.e. dominated by instincts and therefore, a sinful woman – or a witch – whose body is a weapon for seduction of the reasonable man.

The colours used in such adverts also play an important part in transmitting the message. Red means blood, and is associated with passion, carnality and sexual desire; thus red lipstick (*Trouble*), red dresses (*Sensi*), red sheets (*Incanto*) and even a red snake (*Trouble*) immediately lead to associations with seduction and temptation, presenting women as temptresses or sex objects (*Sensi*, *Trouble*, and *Incanto*).

Blue usually connotes reason, but also sensitivity and emotions. Psychologists associate it with passivity, resignation, and the need of love and affection. Commercials which use this colour highlight once more the patriarchal stereotypes that women are passive or dominated by emotions, that they are weak and in need of protection (by a man, as in *Northern Lights*, or *Fresh Matte*).

Pink is a combination between red and white and therefore bears the significance of both colours: a milder passion, emotions and need of affection; it is also the colour attributed to girls, just as blue is to boys, and thus may suggest youth and a girlish appearance (*Miracle*).

Women's reification is a burning issue which appears not only in everyday life, but also in literature, film and advertising. This study should be placed in a cultural context, as it deals with the condition of being a woman – i.e. white, Western, not married, and (must needs) mother-to-be. Men have always seemed to be fascinated with the female body and have developed certain stereotypes about it as well as about the roles a woman should have. As I hope this study has demonstrated, women are presented as temptresses, possessing the perfect body which they use as a weapon to seduce men. The occasions on which women rebel against this patriarchal idea of the female body occur seldom because they are seen as a challenge to or even an undermining of, the patriarchal order of the world.



Fig. 1 Incanto



Fig. 2 Trouble

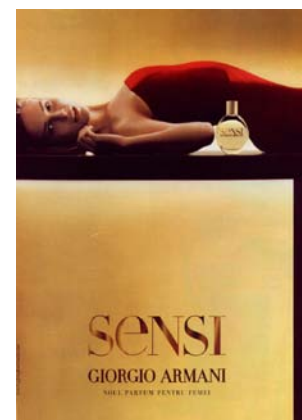


Fig. 3 Sensi

References:

- Bordo, S. 1997. "Can a Woman Harass a Man?" in *Twilight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 139-172
- Bordo, S. 1997. "Never Just Pictures" in *Twilight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 107-138
- Bordo, S. 1993. "Introduction: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body" in Leitch, V.B.

- Seminar on Body Studies. A Reader* PhD. Programme, English and American Studies, University of Debrecen, pp. 7-23
- Coward, R. 1985. *Female Desire. How they are Sought, Bought and Packaged*. New York: Workman Publishing
- duCille, A. 1995. "Dyes and Dolls: Multicultural Barbie and the Merchandizing of Difference" in Leitch, V.B. (2002). *Seminar on Body Studies. A Reader*, pp. 24-33 PhD. Programme, English and American Studies, University of Debrecen.
- Faludi, S. 1993. "Dressing the Dolls: The Fashion Backlash" in Faludi, S. (1993). *Backlash – The Undeclared War against Women*. London: Vintage
- Frențiu, L., Beică, L. 2000. "Persuasive Strategies in Cross-gender Communication" in Pârlog, H. ed. 2000. *BAS – British and American Studies*, Timișoara: Hestia, pp. 190-197
- Jaffe, J.M., Lee, Y.-E., Huang, L.-N., Oshagan, H. 1995. Gender, Pseudonyms and CMC: Masking Identities and Baring Souls, [online]. Available: <http://members.iworld.net/yesunny/genderps.html>.
- Kaplan, E.A. 2000. "Is the Gaze Male?" in Kaplan, E.A. ed. (2000). *Feminism and Film*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Krugovoy Silver, A. 2002. "Waisted Women: Reading Victorian Slenderness" in Krugovoy Silver, A. (2002). *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Lee Bartky, S. (1998). "Body Politics" in Leitch, V.B. (2002). *Seminar on Body Studies. A Reader* PhD. Programme, English and American Studies, University of Debrecen, pp. 1-6
- Moi, T. 1997. "Feminist, Female, Feminine" in Kemp, S., Squires, J. (eds.). *Feminisms* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 246-250
- Moi, T. (2005). *Sex, Gender and the Body. The student edition of What is a Woman?* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Mulvey, L. (1975). *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.panix.com/~squigle/vcs/mulvey-vpnc.html>

The adverts were taken from:

"Dove Firming Lotion", *Unica*, April 2004

"Fresh Matte" by Maybelline, *Unica*, November 2004

“Incanto” by Salvatore Ferragamo, *Unica*, November 2004

“Miracle” by Lancôme, *Joy*, March 2005

“Northern Lights” by Oriflame, *Elle*, March 2005

“Sensi” by Giorgio Armani, *Elle*, January 2005

“Trouble” by Boucheron, *Bolero*, March 2005

**CHRISTINE DE PIZAN’S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ‘MALE
GAZE’**

REGHINA DASCĂL

University of the West, Timișoara

As soon as one realizes that the act of seeing leads to a self-conscious apprehension of spaces, distances, subjects, others, subjects as others, and others as subjects, consideration of this type of act raises questions concerning the connections

between one's gaze and one's desire and between one's gaze and one's gender. Versions of the Griselda story by Petrarch, Chaucer, and Christine de Pizan present an opportunity to investigate these kinds of connections, for one account has a female author and narrator, while the other two have male authors and narrators.

The main argument of this paper is in one respect fairly predictable: through descriptions of gazing (and through other means) Christine offers a more feminist account of the events than her male counterparts. Nevertheless, Chaucer's complex portrayal of gazing as a strategy within both narrative and language in the *Clerk's Tale* (*The Oxford Scholar's Tale* in the Modern English version used here) allows him to both promote and to undermine the typical male gaze. Petrarch, on the other hand, insists on the mariological connotations of the story, instituting irreconcilable tensions between Griselda-as-Mary and all other women.

The paradigm of the gaze as masculine enables us to describe the appetitive construction of male identity and patriarchal hegemony: power relations in the modern state and in the male psyche are played out in a visual drama of desire and fear, authority being enacted visually through mastery of the complex nexus of terrors that women represent. The very phrase *male gaze* has assumed much of its cultural charge through film theory which has created a schema out of the gendered gaze through intricately argued claims that Hollywood cinema has been organized along the sight-lines of a male spectator, and that cinema visually plays to male fantasies of desire and terror.

Yet, aren't we all victims of back-formation when we frame Griselda's story within a scenario of male fantasy enacted around a fetishized female body, forcefully applying to the text a scopic regime of modernity?

As several critics have emphasized medieval representational schema for framing the human body as public spectacle or object of public gaze unsettle post-Cartesian formulations that read the meaning of the female body through its inscription by male consciousness and vision. Taboos on idolatry until the Renaissance suppressed the imaging of the female body (Stanbury, 1997:264).

The body favoured for display during mediaeval times was the body of Jesus Christ, the body that consistently focused a collective gaze through its display before a crowd. A body that was flexibly gendered, standing in both for masculine and feminine corporeality.

As Eamon Duffy remarks in his study of lay piety in the 14th and 15th centuries, the spectacle of the Mass itself centred round a ritual of the visible - the elevation of the Host that actually displayed a man in a wafer; seeing the Host became the high point of lay experiences of the Mass (1992:98). When Foucault, for his part, describes the disciplinary and controlling aspect of the modern scopic regime, he repeatedly implies that the power of the gaze of a viewing subject depends upon a strategic maintenance of a spatial distance. This again clashes with description of the uses of vision in late medieval times - especially in devotional texts – where the focus is placed insistently on an eye of piety - *oculis pietatis* that fractures distance, fusing self with object of devotional desire in a hybridized mix of maternal, infantile and erotic impulses (Stanbury, 1997:267).

Both in Petrarch and Chaucer it is this religious repression of the material body that prevails in the end. When we first encounter Griselda, she is clearly delineated by a few broad strokes: she chops and boils cabbages for her dinner, she sleeps on a hard bed, tends to her father, etc (cf. Petrarch: “wearing her fingers on the distaff, an obedient, dutiful daughter”, she is marked by human desires and curiosity: “of keen insight [...] she hurries to see her lord’s bride” (1992:659)) But once she marries Walter/Gualtieri she becomes incomprehensible as a feminine body. As object of gaze, ironically and paradoxically her feminine body is effaced to the point where it turns into an object of pilgrimage, a kind of relic whose truth can only be taken on faith. There are instances of the spectacularized body that we are going to illustrate further on, but at the same time the body shifts into sign, an icon of collective religiosity, her body is translated into text, even as the elevated Host.

Mariological innuendos are not rare in the two texts: Griselda holding her jug when Walter/Gualtieri enters evokes Mary in the Annunciation; she is a type of Job; when stripped publicly of her clothes and humiliated she echoes Christ.

The tension resulting from these competing visual regimes is typical of the late Middle Ages and on the one hand Griselda defines the feminine as object of gaze and on the other she demonstrates a simultaneous reluctance to capture, hold down or use the female body as an image in representation. This assimilation with the devotional schema renders the body free (in a way) from gender marking as we will see later.

All of the authors/translators that I discuss here feel free to alter their sources, often broadly, and Christine de Pizan, taking Petrarch’s *Epistolae seniles* 17.3 as her chief source, radically changes entire gazing situations - even gazing possibilities. In Christine’s

Book of the City of Ladies, Griselda's story appears in the Second Book where once built the City is being peopled with women of great virtue and Griselda features as a marvellous example in this truly feminist campaign of rehabilitating the much vilified realm of womanhood. As one might expect in a composition that polemically defends women against misogynist literature, there are fewer references to the heroine's beauty than in the versions with male narrators, though they are not entirely absent.

Correspondingly, Christine omits most of the moral qualities that Gualtieri has in Petrarch's *Epistolae* - "Gualtieri was in the prime of his youth and beauty and no less in manners than in blood" (1992:657), yet she retains the observation that the Marquis is handsome and honest (1998:170). In Christine's account of the Griselda story, there is almost no explicit reference to her bodily appearance. Again we have here an illustration of the subversive creativity of Boccaccio's and Petrarch's translatress. Actually, Petrarch himself confesses, in his acknowledgement of Boccaccio's version of the story (which served as the source of his translation into elegant Latin), that his intention was "not try to render word for word" his friend's work (1992:656).

Whilst both male authors do lavishly describe Griselda's beauty, objectifying and commodifying it in the process, Christine's focus is on the Christ-like willingness of Griselda to endure hardships and extreme trials. It is, however, no vapid and agentless passivity that we have here. Christine does not present Griselda as a mere receiver of gazes and misfortune and, at the same time, she reduces but does not eliminate the idea of *seeing* in the Marquis's action when Gualtieri comes into her version of the story "perceiving," firstly Griselda's "virtue and honesty," and secondly her beauty. The gaze becomes in Christine's version a discriminating, careful look-cum-reflection more *intellectuatio* than *delectatio*: "he had carefully noted this maiden's upright conduct and integrity, as well as (parenthetic mention) the beauty of her body and face" (1998:171). Christine's narrator introduces Griselda by her singularity, her age, and her service to her father through work, whereas Petrarch's account introduces her by her desirability: "an only daughter ... called Griselda, remarkable enough in physical beauty." (1992:658) The Petrarchan narrator's discriminating eye for feminine beauty asserts his masculinity and assumes the cooperation of a male audience (who presumably would know how much beauty is enough). Gualtieri then joins this community of masculine gazers when his assessment of Griselda matches the narrator's in its superior attitude: he "has cast his eyes upon the maiden but not with a young man's lust but with an old man's gravity." (660)

As opposed to Petrarch, Christine mentions no gaze as the story begins; in fact, instances of gazing are so substantially reduced as to be almost nonexistent after the Marquis's initial assessment of his future bride. In contrast, Petrarch's (and Chaucer's) versions use the separation between the narrator's, the public's, and Gualtieri's gaze as a major theme of the tale: the discriminating ability of the Marquis overshadows the surface, shallow assessments of the populace, the testing of his wife takes place under his nearly constant scrutiny, and the story's distinct gazing communities are at last reunited in the communal appreciation of the beauty of his children, who represent (among other things) a mingling of the public and private "virtues" of both parents.

As Sarah Stanbury remarks in her study of 1997 Chaucer's *The Clerk's Tale* is a story of visual investigation. The looks Walter/Gualtieri fix on Griselda are acts of private and deliberate investigation and they are mimicked throughout the text by the public, hence the collective, ubiquitous gaze that Griselda is subjected to. We have a collusion here of a private gaze and a public one, turning Griselda into a spectacle "an intersection of wills and lines of sight that is most forcibly represented in the public acts of dressing and undressing her" (1997:261).

Christine removes all of these references to sight, and, unlike Chaucer, lets many opportunities to expand on incidents of gazing slip by - until the reunion scene, when she seems to appropriate the gaze of men and give it to a woman. Before Griselda recognises her children "she was attracted so steadily to the girl and boy that she could not go away, and assiduously gazed at their beauty, which she praised much." (1998:175) This attraction is not in the source, so the heroine's appreciation of the children's beauty in the *Book* seems to originate in maternal emotion. We have the only instance in all accounts when *it is her who gazes* but not with a reifying and devouring eye, but with a love (reminiscent of motherly devotion) at her own children (at this stage she does not know that they are the children estranged from her).

It is also the second instance of Griselda's speech, since in Christine's story we have mostly acquiescent gestures and silences, not so much her own voice and discourse but a docile echo of her husband's demands, save when she asks for the right to don the chemise when leaving him and when Christine uses the bold verb 'advise':

She answered loudly I would however make a single request of you and give you only one bit of *advice*: that you neither trouble nor needle her with the torments you inflicted upon your first wife [...] she cannot bear as much as your other wife did (1998:175).

These words prove her to be not only virtuous, enduring and self-effacing but as the Marquis himself is made to conclude “he recalled her unsurpassed steadfastness, strength and constancy and was filled with admiration” (1998:175). The Marquis, the cruel, compulsive tester features against the grain of more stereotypically feminine reactions: no tears for Griselda, no hesitation, no sign of sadness in all her trials, whereas “The marquis could hardly keep himself from weeping out of compassion, and then pity overwhelmed him” (175).

Whilst vicarious access to greatness and an elevated social and moral position for women is emphasized by the male authors we find no trace of it in Christine’s account. There is implied criticism of the whole process of marriage in the Middle Ages – a mere contract between patriarchs with the silent chattel changing hands, not spoken to, not being asked to consent. Before Griselda actually appears in the story, Chaucer insists on women’s self-effacing and service to others as her main reasons of being (her father was her first care, treated with all devotion and deference) serving the patriarch with infinite care; her bodily posture one of humility, she falls to her knees, her look is downcast, the proposal is done in an aside manner, not for Griselda to hear. Once done with Janicula he makes his wish known to Griselda in a way that does not elicit consent

If, as I think, you wish to marry me /I ask if you’re prepared with all your heart /To submit to my will, so that I may /As I think best, bring happiness or hurt /To you, and you’ll not murmur night or day? /That to my Yes you do not answer nay /Either by word or frowning countenance? /Swear this, and here I swear to our alliance (1986:288).

Whereas in Petrarch and Chaucer the first mention of Griselda’s conduct and moral bearing is made to appear as a kind of metamorphosis taking place once she assumes her bridal status and is dressed in the royal clothing given to her by Gualtieri (cf. “You are my lord and theirs, use your right over your property and do not seek my consent. The moment I entered your house I laid aside my clothes, I laid aside my wishes and feelings and put on yours” (Petrarch, 1992:663)) – in the *Book* these moral qualities are inherent, integral to her identity as an individual. There are clear ideological presuppositions here: it

was a woman's destiny to be improved, to become socially acceptable only vicariously, through masculine agency.

Mediaevalists have dubbed the whole intricate process of dowry and marriage gifts in the 14th and 15th centuries the *Griselda Complex*. Its central ceremonial address: *chi to'donna, vuol danari* translates to "he who takes a wife wants money". The dowry was a very important, regulating force in society and the dowry penetrated to the very heart of the social ideologies of the time. It was what guaranteed honour and the share of respect due each individual: it ensured the nubile girl and the widow a marriage that respected the taboos concerning feminine purity (Klapisch-Zuber, 1987:214). As Jack Goody clarifies, in a time when women did not have any ownership or inheritance rights, the dowry was the equivalent of the daughter's share of the inheritance (216).

The clothing of Griselda by Gualtieri also makes reference to the husband's gifts, very often a kind of counter-trousseau, symbolic agents in the integration of the wife into another household and lineage. The *vestizione* keeps the husband's gifts within the symbolic sphere, we cannot see only economic or affective motivations in the husband's gifts; it must be seen as an indispensable ritual counterpart to the goods brought by the wife and the agents of her transfer under his roof: "Nor did I bring any other dowry besides faith, maturity, love, reverence and poverty" [...] "a single slip be granted to me" because in her modesty she thinks that "the womb wherein lay his children" should not be subjected to public gaze, thus a sacrilege to his name and crest, and in compensation for her virginity which she cannot take back she asks for a 'shift', a 'slip' in Jeffries' translation (Pizan, 1998:173) to cover her womb (cf. Petrarch: "I had no other dowry whatsoever but faithfulness and nakedness except that I consider it unbecoming that this womb in which your children lay that you begot should appear naked [...] *in payment of the virginity I brought here* and cannot take back let me keep one of those shifts" (1992:665)).

One may contrast the treatment of Griselda's maternal feelings with those that Petrarch implies in his most conspicuous gaze-image. When Griselda seems to be about to lose her son, she hands him over while "clinging to him with her eyes" (1992:663). Christine, on the other hand, removes the motif of the motherly eye from its original spot altogether and places it just before the recognition scene, where it makes her heroine look almost prophetic. Still, in Christine's account the motherly streak of Griselda is placed in a tense relation with her saintly endurance ("nor did she say anything except to beg the

squire to bury the child after killing him so that wild beasts and birds would not eat the infant's tender flesh" (1998:172)). In addition, the removal of the one distinguishing feature from the abduction of Griselda's male child makes Griselda's love for her children more equally distributed between the two sexes, for the two abductions become virtually identical.

Through Christine's innovations, one may see that she reworks the gaze theme in her version of the story so that the (revised) legend may support the attitudes on view in her *Book*: the virtues of women and their more abstract qualities, as opposed to those (such as appearance) that tend to work within male conceptions of idealized love-objects.

In Christine de Pizan's version the bride is dressed by the women inside the hut so she is no prey for the aggressive masculine gaze. Her likeness to Christ is recurrently alluded to in her noble, generous conduct, her constancy and patience (1998:172), the spirit of self-sacrifice, her unearthly readiness to stand up to all her husband's monstrous trials.

Griselda's departure is more majestic and impressive than in the male authored accounts. She strips herself before all knights and ladies, all the subjects being much grieved at the news of the Marquis's divorce and Griselda bare-headed *mounted a horse* and rode out accompanied by the barons, knights, ladies who all wept, cursing the Marquis and mourning the lady's goodness. In Pizan's account the status of Griselda is definitely superior, elevated, she leaves *on horseback*, whilst at the beginning the Marquis and his retinue were mounted, thus physically and symbolically elevated. Griselda has a vantage point at this stage that comes from her spiritual elevation, in sharp contrast with her lowly social status. In Petrarch, on the other hand, the solid connection between physical, moral/spiritual and social elevation is being emphasized - we have an allusion to St Augustine's eye of the heart when the Marquis first sees Griselda's "maidenhead" (1992:658) as if he wants to see inside her with a morally superior "eye of the heart," and his heightened insight receives emphasis from his higher vantage-point on horseback, which implies that his ability to see what the public cannot comes from social superiority. However, this situation is entirely reversed in Christine. Lowly from the social point of view, Griselda is nevertheless a woman of the highest distinction and prudence.

In his turn Chaucer not only asks for a traditional reading of his poetry from a male point of view but also disrupts this kind of reading. He certainly places the heroine in the male gaze, in contrast to Christine and in spite of his use of virtually identical sources to hers but he also creates a complex tension between an eroticized body and repression of

its own eroticizing hints so that the body is repeatedly recast through the indices of Griselda's voice and her face.

The oxymoronic definition of the body as site of sexual potential and as centre of virtue is given full play in the two extraordinary lines in Chaucer describing how her heart is contained within her virginity as if her virginity were a kind of palpable skin, the membrane of her hymen transferred to her breast: "But though the girl was still of tender age/ There was enclosed within her virgin breast, / Maturity of spirit, steadfastness" (1986:284). It is an interesting illustration of the body as vessel, virtue never departing from embodiment.

Furthermore, habits of sight make up a considerable part of the description of his Marquis, as Chaucer builds on Petrarch's sight-theme by interposing, between the story and the audience of the poem, a narrator who possesses a gaze, and who comments upon the gazing of others. Chaucer's narrator addresses a male audience in *Clerk's Tale* and seems to identify with his hero. Together they perceive Griselda's virtues in a stanza that contains five verbs of seeing:

Upon this penniless girl, poor Griselda /The Marquis many a time *had cast an eye*/ While hunting, as he rode upon his way;/ Yet when he happened to *catch sight* of her/ It was not with the wanton *glance* of folly/ He *looked upon* her, but would *contemplate*/ With sober eye her bearing (1986:284).

The narrative largely follows the earlier ones of the story as Walter/Gualtieri's glance supposedly demonstrates discernment and intelligence.

Critics try to resolve the contradictions at the heart of Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* by trying to absolve Griselda from total passivity, but sometimes, in making a case for her assertiveness, they downplay the emphatically male viewpoint of the poem, one of its very few consistencies. This gaze begins the poem, continues through it, and even persists through the various endings, because the narrator of this particular Griselda story cannot help but be a gazer himself, even as he criticizes the Marquis. For the clerk, Griselda is "fair enough to sight". He mentions her beauty before he mentions her name and says that she is "None more beautiful, none more fair beneath the sun" (1986:284). Chaucer seems to uphold a community of masculine gazers, thinkers, and readers through the opinions of his clerk. Not only does the narrator address a male audience in general, but he also has a particular kind of masculine audience in mind.

As Carolyn Dinshaw and Seth Lerer notice, when the clerk seems to appreciate the story's landscape through Petrarch's eyes during the prologue to the tale he expresses a desire to place his audience in "the brotherhood of literate men of all times and all places," a brotherhood that excludes women and the unlearned, and thus refashions his audience into a group of learned and literary "male tourists" (Waugh, 2000:16). Even when the narrator addresses the women in his audience asking them to judge if Walter/Gualtieri's trials have gone far enough, he hives them off from the brotherhood of men by provoking debate between the sexes, and he puts them in Griselda's place by challenging them to endure the story's extremes without complaint. The male view dominates.

I agree with Dinshaw that the clerk demonstrates sympathy with Griselda, that he sometimes connects with the heroine, and that he "breaks the man-to-man structure of clerkly *translatio* with his 'But' turned toward women" at the end of the tale, so that the discourse rides off into "contradictions in suspension" (Waugh, 2000:17), but not before this narrator establishes an overwhelming male tradition.

His "identification with the female" is far less prevalent. For instance, "What a heart-breaking thing it was to see/ Her faint away, and hear her humble voice!" (1986:309) imply that the clerk witnesses Griselda's great emotion himself, just as he witnesses the countryside in his traveller persona, which reappears at strategic points in the narrative and re-establishes the male perspective. The most strategic of these points comes near the end of the tale: "Just one word, gentlemen, before I go" (311). Go where? The clerk/guide seems to disengage from his topic, from the "sight" (Griselda) that has dominated attention so far, and to hint at a restarting of the Canterbury pilgrimage. The traveller voice then continues with "It would be pretty hard to find, these days / In any town three Griseldas or two" (1986:311). The visual image of a cluster of Griseldas in a town is bizarre to contemplate. The Clerk relapses into another bout of gynophobia

It would be pretty hard to find, these days,/ In any town three Griseldas, or two [...] Their gold's so poor now made with such alloys /That, though the coin looks good enough to you,/ Instead of bending it will break in two. (311)

but the clerk virtually destroys any individuality that his legendary heroine might have with the vast understatement of the "Griselda three or two" image that makes her so common as to resemble women in any of the towns between London and Canterbury.

The clerk seems to be a thorough reader of a whole raft of misogynist literature from Theophrastus and Juvenal to Jean de Meun's *Romance of the Rose*, the latter's matriphobia a recurrent source: "O bow your neck beneath that happy yoke,/Which is dominion, but not servitude / That men call matrimony or wedlock" (1986:281). "Where I was free, I shall be in bondage" (282). And here again it was the groom's magic touch that transfigures the humble goat-herding maiden: "They scarcely knew her in her loveliness./ She was transfigured by such magnificence." (289).

In Petrarch there is a passage about the wife's condition in mediaeval marriage that parallels William Blackstone's concept of *femme covert* elaborated upon in his *Commentary on the Laws of England*. Compare

the very being of legal existence of the woman's suspended, or at least incorporated or consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection and cover she performs everything. Or, as the popular saying went husband and wife are one person and that person is the husband (Yalom, 2001:185)

to

thus, with his eyes fixed on his wife he watched assiduously whether there was any change to the point where the two of them seemed to be just one mind and that one not shared by both, but only the husband's, for the wife had resolved never to want anything or not want anything for herself" (1992:664).

Janicula's attitude to the Marquis' jilting of his daughter is also seen in masculine terms of hunter and prey, of sexual object to be consumed when the prince has satisfied his lust: "He'd soon begin to feel that he disgraced/ His rank by having stooped so low/ and would get rid of her as soon as ever he could" (1986:304).

Whilst there is no comment on Griselda's giving birth to a daughter first in Pizan: "That year the Marquise bore a daughter whose birth was received with great joy" (1998:171) there is a gynophobic reference to it in Chaucer: "For though a girl was first to come, they knew/ She was not barren, and in time she would/ Achieve a male child, in all likelihood" (1986:290) as well as making Griselda complicitous to the male desire for an heir: "She'd rather it had been a son" (290). The subordinate status of women is plainly stated in Chaucer "You are our master; therefore with your own/ Do as you please; ask no

advice of me (1986:296) and Petrarch: “You are my Lord and theirs, use your right over your property and do not seek my consent” (1992:663).

Chaucer underscores the paranoid nature of the Marquis’ need to test his wife. Testing his wife occupied all his thoughts bringing about his men’s opprobrium and even hate, but this is not so much due to their sympathy with the wife, as with his double infanticide. The woman’s suffering at the hands of her husband were in a way understandable since “She showed, no matter what the tribulation,/ A wife should have no wishes of her own, but that her husband’s wish should be her wish”(1986:298)

However, we cannot overlook the extended fragment in which Chaucer expresses his conviction that the virtues of a woman such as Griselda could be employed in the service of the public good

If need be when the case required it, / Herself help to promote the public good. / There was no grievance, rancour or discord/ In all the land, that she could not compose, / And wisely draw to harmony and peace (1986:290).

This role of the woman as judge, meting out justice, solving conflict and promoting understanding and peace was not an ideal of the epoch. Even more amply is this wide range of responsibilities presented in Petrarch where the private/public divide is spanned by Griselda’s manifold talents:

Nor indeed did the clever bride attend only to domestic, womanly duties, but where the situation required official duties as well, in her husband’s absence arbitrating and settling the country’s disputes and the disagreements with nobles with such grave pronouncements, such maturity and fairness of judgement that everyone declared that the lady had been sent by heaven for the public well-being (1992:661).

A second feminist comment comes from Chaucer in the *Clerk’s Tale*: “Job is remembered for his patience mostly, / A thing the learned love to expatiate on, / Especially as found in men – but really, / Though scholars give but little praise to women, / As far as patience is concerned, there is no man/ Can behave as well as woman can, or be/ One half so true – if so it’s news to me” (1986:304). Petrarch himself spares no accolades at the end of his *Letter*:

I decided to retell this story in another language not so much to encourage the married women of our day to imitate the wife's patience, which to me seems hardly imitable, as to encourage the readers to imitate at least this woman's constancy, so that what she maintained toward her husband they may maintain toward our God. For although He is no tempter of evil, and tempts no one, as the Apostle James says [1:13] still He does test and often allows us to be harassed with many heavy blows, not in order to know our spirit, which he knew before we were created, but so that our weakness may be recognized through obvious and familiar signs. I would number among the men overflowing with constancy whoever would suffer without a murmur for his God what this little peasant woman suffered for her mortal husband (1992:668).

It is also important to mention that in Chaucer's text there is constant criticism directed towards the dominating, public gaze, the volatile, gossiping vain crowd construed as masculine, "faithless and swinging like a weather vane", false in judgements, "gaping up and down", thirsting for spectacle and pageantry (1986:306).

Only Chaucer depicts Griselda as affecting the eyes of her tormentor specifically. Petrarch has Gualtieri averting his face rather than his eyes, and, typically for Petrarch, a similar aversion marks the height of Gualtieri's control over his wife's will and of his attempt for control over her emotions: when Griselda greets the bridal party, she shows her servant-status with "[her] face respectfully and humbly lowered." Perhaps Chaucer deliberately transfers this aversion image from a female to a male character in order to strengthen her and weaken him. As often noted, her very existence is a strong statement against tyrants and against the class-system of mediaeval Europe in general. Throughout his work Chaucer appears to subject the very notion of social "betters" to searching criticism. The author's belief in social mobility and in goodness - not necessarily related to rank is a sign of the rise of the middle class, of the growing respectability of townfolk. Similarly, Christine de Pizan's use of 'ladies' for all the female inhabitants of her City is indicative of Christine's own egalitarian and democratic tendencies.

Yet one does not need to resort to elusive puns in order to perceive Griselda's victory over her husband's gaze. Her walk to her former home in only a shift would seem to be a blatant example of spectacle, but, as critics observe about Griselda during this episode, this very scene shows Griselda becoming the agent of almost all of the activity, and visual activity in particular. She uses the passive voice, "Be seen," in her request for a garment, and thus reverses the action of gazing so that being looked at seems more

“active” than looking. The same passage features many verbs that describe Griselda’s movement: “turns,” “went,” “walking,” “go” (1986:303). The poem does not describe anyone looking at her during the return. The people follow and weep all the way while Griselda “kept from weeping, both her eyes were dry” (303), and the reversal of gazing roles continues. At the same time, Walter/Gualtieri’s gaze has been utterly defeated. From the moment of her stripping, the narrative does not describe him using his powerful gaze until the poem’s climax: “And now when Walter *saw* her patience” (1986:308).

Moreover, Griselda is less passive than she might appear and her subversive challenges to authority involve the use of her gaze. She certainly begins the *Clerk’s Tale* as an object of masculine attention, but soon the tables are turned when her powers of sight are stressed three times within five lines:

She’d never seen a sight like this before [...] No wonder that she was amazed to see/ So great a visitor come to that place/ [...] Unused to having such a guest as he, She paled and all her colour left her face (1986:287)

These references to gazing are Chaucer’s additions to the previous accounts of the story. Suggestive of desire, they clearly depict Griselda turning Walter/Gualtieri into an object. Her ascetic disposition might preclude such a possibility, yet the narrator does not mention any lack of “lecherous lust” here. He says that Griselda is astonished “to see so great a guest” as Walter/Gualtieri in her house. This emotion seems unlike lust, but does not preclude it. So, she does not escape the gaze of men as she does in Christine’s version, but she gives as good as she gets. Later the heroine’s assertiveness goes so far that she defeats Walter/Gualtieri’s gaze completely. Like Christine, making him to avert his eyes, she defeats the gaze that is the maintainer of this social hierarchy, and she defeats the gaze that fixes a woman or other servile figure in discourse and in society.

As mentioned already above, in the *Clerk’s Tale* ultimately Griselda’s body as the object of both public and private scrutiny is absent – at least at the point where it is formalized as spectacle within a public regime. By being dressed into her identity as queen and then undressed back to a peasant, Griselda’s body seems to be displaced in translation as if the moment she is fitted out in rich clothes she becomes unrepresentable, a mere icon, a relic, the object of pilgrimage and public visual devotion. Although her body is initially

framed as object of the gaze, when dressed into a queenly identity, it is rendered absent from representation.

Through allusions to Petrarch, travel, learning, and female attractiveness, the clerk has already established the kind of audience that he has in mind, so this heroine is utterly different from Christine's Griselda in one more significant respect: she is completely and only *a work of art created by men*, who fix her in their knowing gaze and admire her Mona Lisa-like inscrutability along with her statue-like beauty; who chisel her out of the cold stone of their attitudes to women (Waugh, 2000:24). Of course such works of art are by their nature non-human and incredible. For instance, the artist demands absolute stillness from his model, and Griselda supplies it with her wall-like facial expression. If one visualises many of her actions throughout the tale, they come over as set-pieces, thoroughly modelled: a young woman fetches water from the well, shredding some herbs and roots for provender (1986:284) and walks home in her underclothes. The idealism and the power that she almost seems to radiate are also typical artist's subjects. One need only examine medieval paintings of and illuminated illustrations of saints for examples.

Ironically, then, if the Petrarchan brotherhood is defeated by Griselda, defeat comes at the hands of a product (a work of art) that the brotherhood created out of its desires (Waugh, 2000:22). And Chaucer shows up this masculine delusion about women for what it is when Harry Bailey wishes at the end of the *Tale* that his wife had heard the Griselda legend once and comments on Griselda, as a personification of the "stillness" that Harry mentions, is an art object, a "thing that will not be," in this final and rueful comment on the tale. Harry's paradoxical mood of desire for an ideal object, mixed with resignation to its unattainability, comes through as well in the tension between stillness and action that exists in Walter/Gualtieri's orders concerning Griselda's smock/shift when she is cast out: "let it be still, and take it when you go away" (1986:303). At one point, Chaucer seems to allow Griselda to escape from the male fantasy of art and stillness, but only in a very abstract fashion. For all the possible allegorical readings of the *Tale* that invoke Old Testament typology, secular hagiography, lay piety, Mariology, etc., Griselda's endurance of unjust suffering connects her most obviously with Christ, and this interpretation is the only allegorical connection that the narrator seems to invite explicitly with his references to an ox's/cattle stall (284).

I do not wish to endorse Griselda as a model for human behaviour (although this is one possible morals for her legend as Petrarch and critics suggest and as the clerk notes),

but the *Clerk's Tale* briefly offers support for its heroine as a morally superior being. During the casting out episode, she declares that she does not consider herself to be the lady of Walter/Gualtieri's house,

I call on God in heaven to witness/ As I hope for him to comfort me and aid me, I never
played the chatelaine or mistress/But was a humble servant to your lordship/ And will be
always/ While I've life and breath/ More than any other soul on earth" (301).

These terms allow Griselda to assign God the most exalted gaze and viewpoint. With this meaning, the phrase puts her above the action in "high style," in the place an author or narrator occupies while addressing kings or composing highly literate, travelogue-like prefaces in the place of the clerk, Chaucer, Christine or Petrarch (Waugh, 31). The height that Griselda reaches, and the height that she assigns to God raise the possibility of God's gaze as dominant in this story, and these passages might rekindle arguments that the *Clerk's Tale* is an allegory.

Thus, in some ways, the problems of the Griselda story and its contradictory gazes are longstanding philosophical problems. People often find the ideas of the reversal of sex roles, the reversal of social roles, the existence of suffering, the existence of God on earth, the existence of a presence that watches one's every move, and the existence of evil (particularly unpunished evil) difficult to accept. I think that Petrarch, Christine, and Chaucer all knew how provocative they were being in retelling this legend: Petrarch with his acknowledgement that the story divides its audiences, Christine with her participation in feminist debate, and Chaucer with his complex and contradictory treatment of the act of gazing, a treatment that continues through the complex and contradictory conclusion to the *Tale*. The clerk insists upon the artificiality of his heroine when he dismisses her as "dead" (1986:311), disqualifies her as a model for women (312), and restores her to object status by describing her virtue as "gold compared to brass" (311). A golden image of the saint-like Griselda suggests a keepsake, a statue, perhaps a commemorative medal of her and of this part of the pilgrimage, which a gazer could look at whenever he wants. But the conclusion of the *Tale* is no simple retrenchment of male gazes. It cannot be when it is directed to the wife of Bath (311), and when women maintain the "high" vantage point that Griselda achieves earlier in the narrative throughout the multiple endings of the *Tale*; the clerk asks God to maintain the "sex" of the wife of Bath in "high authority" (311).

Chaucer's version of the Griselda story thus consistently displays a masculine gaze, but occasionally and briefly acknowledges the existence of a competitive female one. These acknowledgements force male perspectives (and perhaps all perspectives) into a state of unresolved tension – such tension being the prevailing atmosphere of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

References:

- Chaucer, G. 1986. *The Canterbury Tales*. (Verse transl. by D. Wright). Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press [1476/1483?]
- Duffy, E. 1992. *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*. New Haven: Yale University Press
- Klapisch-Zuber, C. 1987. *Women, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*. Chicago: Chicago University Press
- Petrarch, Fr. 1992. *Letters of Old Age (Rerum senilium libri)*. vol II books X-XVIII, (transl. Bernardo, A. S; Levin, S. and R.A. Bernardo). Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992 [first published 1501?]
- Pizan, C. 1998. *The Book of the City of Ladies*. (transl. E. Jeffrey Richards). New York: Persea Books [first English edition 1524]
- Stanbury, S. 1997. "Regimes of the Visual in Premodern England: Gaze, Body and Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*" in *New Literary History*, 28. 2. pp 261-283
- Waugh, R. 2000. "A Woman in the Mind's Eye (and not): Narrators and Gazes in Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* and in Two Analogues" in *Philological Quarterly*, 1/1.
- Yalom, M. 2001. *A History of the Wife*. New York: HarperCollins

Women in a Changing World

**THE MODERN WORLD AND WOMEN PRESIDENTS:
THE BEGINNINGS**

DIANA ELENA BONCESCU

University of the West, Timișoara

Since the very first beginnings of society as we know it, women have had a long journey trying to be heard. Until the twentieth century, the gap between men and women

consigned women to a sort of primitive condition. In many ways the situation has not changed greatly. Anyway, society has evolved and even the most conservative of people have to accept that women are necessary in many aspects of life, not only because of their much talked about quality of being life bearers but also their position as citizens. It is my belief that the obtaining of the right to vote offered women a fresh start in a new era – one in which their opinions could no longer be disregarded. We should ask ourselves how a society could fully develop ignoring a significant part of its members: women. They had to win their legitimate rights one by one, often overcoming incredible obstacles.

However, there was one huge step to be made and that was the active involvement of women in political leadership. The obstacles were many. I believe the main one was the preconception that women are not capable of the dedication and diligence needed to pursue a political career. Secondly, and widely accepted, there was the traditional image of women as being merely housewives and mothers, with no time and strength left to actively involve themselves in the life of the community, especially at the level of leadership. The last centuries have given the world some important women leaders, yet they were royal, therefore the people did not elect them.

No author has clearly stated the fact that female monarchs who had successfully ruled great and important societies, such as Great Britain, should be considered relevant for women's ability to handle political leadership. However, history has demonstrated that being a good and successful leader is not a matter of gender but of excellence. Contemporary politics has accepted women in power gradually. The purpose of this paper is to present the first women presidents of the twentieth century: Suhbaataryn Janjmaa, Song Qingling, Isabel Martinez de Peron, Lydia Gueiler Tejada and Vigdis Finnbogadottir and the circumstances that led to their rise to power.

According to Farida Jalalzai (2003:11-12), the first women to come to power in the last century were helped by circumstance rather than by their skills as politicians. The fact he draws attention to is that the ice was broken in communist societies and in poor countries in which the political regimes were not democratic. It is interesting and somehow unexpected, that women came to power in such countries as China, Argentina and Mongolia and not in the USA or Canada where freedom and equality were, supposedly at home. How could this be, taking into account that democracy has often been considered the most proper environment for political and ideological freedom? It could be explained by the political differences.

Many authors consider that the priorities of the communist and socialist countries were mainly maintaining power, projecting legitimacy and preserving their ideological principles. Such societies do not usually accept promotion criteria other than complete loyalty to the force in power. One of the consequences was that women could find their way into the political leadership even if, at the level of the people, gender discrimination remained part of everyday life (Jalalzai, 2003:11-12).

Wikipedia (2005) records that the first woman ever to be an active president led Mongolia between September 23, 1953 and July 7, 1954. Her name was Suhbaataryn Yanjmaa and she started as an ordinary member of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party the Secretary of whose Central Committee she became in 1941. Mongolia's political power was structured on two levels and Suhbaataryn was a member of the Presidium for each of them, consequently she took over both the posts of Chairwoman of the Party and Head of State.

Suhbaataryn was the widow of a Mongolian military hero, Damadiny Suhbaatar, an important figure in the Politburo. After Suhbaatar's death she could come to power (*Wikipedia*, 2005). This shows that Suhbaataryn was helped by political and historical circumstances and not by public acceptance. However, Suhbaataryn was the first woman president of the modern world and unfortunately her name has been forgotten almost completely. One could only assume that this might be either because Mongolia has not been into the attention of the world, politically speaking, or because her leadership was rather a formality as in practice it was the party behind her that took all the decisions. One way or other this first step does not seem to have counted very much.

According to the *WorldWide Guide to Women in Leadership* (2005), the situation changed significantly in the case of Song Qingling. Qingling was Head of State in China not once but twice, the first time between October 31, 1968 and February 24, 1972, and for a second period between 1976 and 1978. Her leadership was longer than that of Suhbaataryn and its impact was greater, even though Qingling shared presidential powers with other vice chairmen (*World Guide to Women in Leadership*, 2005).

However, things are more complex than they might seem. On the one hand the cultural and historical background of China does not easily accept women acting as public or political figures. As a consequence the boundaries were tighter and harder to cross. Her political convictions seem to have been strong enough to propel her to prominence among the leaders of the Communist Revolution. The *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia* (2005:3-

4) records Qingling as an ardent communist who remained loyal at all times to the ideology she was fighting for. In the same spirit she chose to marry a revolutionary leader, Sun Yat, whom she helped against the Qing and Yuan Shih-kai dynasties.

According to *Everything2* (2002:1-2), Qingling's husband's death in 1924 secured her election to the Kuomintang Executive Committee. Yet, the moment president Chiang Kai-Shek decided to cut out the communists in 1927, Qingling did not hesitate to resign from the Kuomintang and left the country until Japan attacked China, in 1937. After the end of World War II when Mao brought communism back into power, Qingling was appointed vice-chairman of the People's Republic of China. Her merits and loyalty were rewarded. Song Qingling demonstrated that she was not a simple pawn and that she could be an important partner in the political fight.

There is another aspect I consider important and that is the source of Qingling's political ideas. They were not the result of indoctrination and blind submission but of personal choice. According to the *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia* (2005:3-4), Qingling, the daughter of Charles Jones Song, a Methodist missionary, had been educated in the USA at Wesleyan College, from where she brought an entirely different perspective on economics, business and politics. She was a fresh gust of wind in a traditional Asian society.

Qingling was a good businesswoman, a determined politician and a writer. In 1951, she was awarded the Stalin Peace Prize and in 1953 she published her book: *Struggle for New China*.

According to the *BBC News* (1974), Isabel Martinez de Peron, President of Argentina between 1974 and 1976, experienced an entirely different rise to power.

Encyclopaedia Britannica (2005) records that Peron was born in a lower middle class family, in Rioja, Argentina, on February 4, 1931, and she was a cabaret dancer when she met Juan Peron in a nightclub, during Peron's exile. Isabel was to become his third wife following the famous Evita from whose shadow she could never escape. Peron's strength was her femininity. Isabelita, as the people called her, would have great influence on Juan Peron, as she was the one who kept him informed on the situation throughout the country starting from the time when Juan, at the age of 78 started to need permanent medical attention (BBC News, 1974).

According to the *BBC News*, Isabel Peron even got to the point where she persuaded the president to appoint Jose Lopez Rega, an occult philosopher, as his personal

secretary. On July 1, 1974, at Juan Peron's death, Isabel Peron became at 43 the youngest Latin-American president. However she started out on the wrong foot. Even though she had been pledged support by important political and military groups, Isabel had to face a violent and insecure time, with many strikes, ambitions and political assassinations. Isabelita could not handle this and on top of everything, she was not able to win the hearts of people - they belonged to Evita. She was considered too weak to rule, therefore she was placed under house arrest and finally sent into exile to Spain (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2005).

I consider that it was Peron's feminine side, manifested through her blind confidence in Lopez, that was fatal for her. She could not survive in a world ruled by men. The question to be asked at this point would be: had she been more determined and pragmatic, could she have handled the situation differently? Probably not. According to the *World Guide to Women in Leadership* (2005), Jorge Rafael Videla, the general who plotted Isabel Peron's fall intended to take over power. However, it is my belief that Isabel's failure was not due to her inability to fight against Videla, which would have been rather impossible without military support, but her lack of popularity. The people of Argentina did not accept Peron. Evita's memory defeated her. Even if she had not been head of state, as Isabel Peron was, the people had regarded her as if she were one, in fact.

The first woman president of Bolivia had almost the same fate. According to *List of Presidents of Bolivia* (2005), Lydia Gueiler Tejada, born on August 28, 1921, in Cochabamba, was Interim Executive President between 1979 and 1980, a period during which Walter Guevara Arze, the president in power at the time, was sent into exile by the army led by General Luis Garcia Meza. The General sent her too into exile in France in 1980. Gueiler was obliged to remain in France until the military government fell. After Gueiler returned she served as ambassador to West Germany and later to Venezuela (*List of Presidents of Bolivia*, 2005).

I believe that the difference from Isabel Peron is, however, significant. Gueiler was a strong politician, very determined and stable in regard to her convictions. She knew what she wanted and that brought her the respect and recognition of the people. According to the *List of Presidents of Bolivia* (2005), Gueiler's presence was active even in the feminist movement, as she was involved in many Bolivian feminist organizations and she published two books related to the subject: *Women and Revolution* in 1960 and *Mi Pasion de Lidereza*, her autobiography, in 2000 (2005). Gueiler was an educated woman. She

had studied to become an accountant, but she chose politics as a career instead. Lydia Gueiler Tejada's convictions favoured the socialist ideology, as she was a loyal member of the Revolutionary Party of the National Left (*List of Presidents of Bolivia*, 2005).

The women presidents presented here were rather products of political or social backgrounds, which created conditions for their rise to power and acceptance as state leaders. The countries under discussion were socialist and this detail cannot be overlooked. Socialist and communist ideologies focus on the construction of a uniform society. Their basic values are conformity and loyalty meant to create an illusion of stability. In fact it is a tool to maintain control over the system. Taking this into account, the leadership had to be either strong enough to manipulate the power groups or submissive enough to be accepted by them. I have shown so far that, with the exception of Isabel Peron, each of the women presented above had what it takes to be a president, yet the systems in which they lived changed at a certain point leaving them out of the political education. There was no question of democratic elections, therefore they took advantage of favourable circumstances for as long as it was possible to do so.

According to *Wikipedia* (2005), it was the year 1980 that marked the beginning of a new era. For the first time a woman became a president as a result of democratic elections. Iceland voted for Vigdis Finnbogadottir, a prominent intellectual, and it voted for her not once but four times as she was reelected in 1984, 1988 and 1992 (*Wikipedia*, 2005). People respected her and their vote was overwhelmingly in her favour showing that a woman could be a valuable ruler in the eyes of an entire society. An ambitious and intelligent woman, she assumed an active role in the social, political and cultural circles, not only in Iceland but also in other parts of the world. What is remarkable about her is the fact that Finnbogadottir did not understand women's leadership as "access to male power" (Dascăl, 2001:123) but as a result of competence. According to Finnbogadottir (Gewertz, 1997:2-3), men and women should share roles in society, in a way that reflects their complementary qualities.

According to *The Women of Iceland* (2005:1-5), the situation of women in Iceland has been quite different and better in many ways. Women have been regarded as citizens, with civil rights that would seem rather strange in other societies. Firstly, they are not expected to take the husband's last name on marriage. Such a possibility gives them a distinctive identity not allowing men to consider wives as property but as partners. Secondly, having a job and a career on a regular basis offers women an equal chance to

demonstrate their skills and to enter a fair competition. Almost 90% of the women in Iceland work and many of them are single parents and providers for their families. Finnbogadottir is one such. Such circumstances create a proper environment for women to pursue a political career, as competence is the most important selection criterion (*The Women of Iceland*, 2005:1-5).

According to the *UNESCO Celebrity Advocates* (2005), Finnbogadottir, the daughter of a civil engineering professor at the University of Iceland, and of the chairman of the Iceland Nurses Association, was born on April 15, 1930, in Reykjavik. She was a graduate of Reykjavik College in Iceland, completing her education abroad. In France, at the Sorbonne, and at Grenoble, Finnbogadottir studied theatre and literature, after which she attended drama classes in Copenhagen and studied pedagogy in Iceland. Back home she pursued a French teaching career but this was to prove insufficient to fulfil the ambitions and the potential Finnbogadottir had (*UNESCO Celebrity Advocates*, 2005:1-3). Step by step the future president of Iceland gained respect and recognition. Her rise was due to anything but the opportunistic exploitation of circumstances.

According to the *Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership* (2005), Finnbogadottir chose to cultivate her skills and competences and she used them in order to make a difference. As she encountered different cultures, Finnbogadottir improved her communication skills and enlarged her perspectives, opening the way to her becoming an international figure. Recognition followed soon enough. Firstly on television, through televised French lessons, then, in 1972, through the position of director at the Reykjavik Theatre Company. Finnbogadottir's public activity expanded, as she became a chairman of Grima, the first experimental drama group in Iceland. Since 1978 she has been the head of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Affairs of the Nordic Council. In 1980 Finnbogadottir was elected president of Iceland (*Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership*, 2005).

According to the *UNESCO Celebrity Advocates* (2005), Finnbogadottir is probably the first internationally recognized female leader as she has initiated, supported and developed programmes and projects destined to improve the quality of life of people all around the world and to increase people's awareness of the responsibility they share concerning any kind of discrimination. She has been concerned with the condition of women and of the poor and illiterate. In 1998 Finnbogadottir was appointed a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. Education seems to be the way she understands to take when

dealing with disadvantaged people. Finnbogadottir is also an active participant in the UNESCO Panel on Information and Communication and the president of the UNESCO'S World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology.

Through her activity at UNESCO, Finnbogadottir has successfully tried to increase the power of the fight for women's rights, ecology and education by joining the international forces that share these goals. In 2003, in October, the Mondialogo School Contest took place as a result of the combined efforts of UNESCO and Daimler-Chrysler. The idea was to establish and develop a cultural dialogue between countries. This was not an isolated event but an application of UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Vigdis Finnbogadottir participated as a member of the internationally selected jury (Vigdis Finnbogadottir).

According to the *Council of Women World Leaders* (2005), Finnbogadottir's long and sustained fight for women's rights and her merits have been widely recognized. Consequently she was awarded the International Leadership Living Legacy by the Women's International Centre on January 26, 1990. Finnbogadottir realized that, as the successful woman she had become by now, she was responsible for the image of women in leadership and the way in which future society would understand to give them credit. Therefore, in 1996, she founded, together with Laura Liswood, the Council of Women World Leaders. The council has been one of the most important organizations for women's rights since its foundation, and that is partly because it challenges established prejudices according to which women are not supposed to become political leaders due to their 'subjective nature'. The Council of Women World Leaders's membership includes women heads of state that were or still are active. It has been meant not only to make a statement but also to assist women that are in power. The key words are communication and information, both of which stand as central values for people's understanding and acceptance. Democracy has been the aim while the means have been the political struggle and international collaboration (*The Council of Women World Leaders*, 2005).

Finnbogadottir considers that women are not more destined to leadership than men, yet competent people, women or men, are (Gewertz, 1997:2-3). With a creed such as this, the Council crossed the boundaries of a sheer feminist movement into a worldwide fight for democracy and human rights. The Council of Women World Leaders has been concerned mainly with global issues, trying to find the best solutions through collaboration and combined efforts at the level of leadership.

According to the *Council of Women World Leaders* (2005), The Project for Women's Leadership, as defined by Laura Liswood, was at the foundation of the Council. The Project consisted of interviews, documents and discussions with 15 heads of state, gathered in video and written form. As a result of the huge impact that the project had, in 1996 the first meeting of women leaders was organized in Stockholm making way for the Council to take shape with the initiative of Vigdis Finnbogadottir and Laura Liswood. The fact that the president of Iceland was highly respected as an educated and powerful representative of women in power, and that her diplomatic skills and vision allowed her to develop a good relationship with other international leaders made it possible for the Council of Women World Leaders to be hosted by the John Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University (*The Council of Women World Leaders*, 2005).

Finnbogadottir's success represents the victory of democracy, as it should be; a fair struggle of skills and intelligence, with one sole purpose: the well being of society. Many other extraordinary women were to follow, becoming icons for the women in leadership. It is enough to mention Margaret Thatcher and more recently Angela Merkel, women leaders that are considered some of the most important political figures of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. Finnbogadottir summarizes it perfectly:

We are a reality, we ladies who have reached the heights. We want people around the world to know that it has been done. (Gewertz, 1997:2)

References:

- Dascăl, R. 2001. "Thatcher's Gendered Politics" in *Feminist Perspectives*. Timișoara: Ed. Universității de Vest
- "Female Presidents" in *Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Presidents.htm> [2005, December 1]
- "First Female President for Argentina" in *BBC News Online*. [Online]. Available: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/29/newsid> [2005, December 12]
- Gewertz, B. 1997. "New Organization Supports Female World Leaders" in *The Harvard University Gazette*
- "Isabel Peron" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article.9059305> [2005, December 18]

- Jalalzai, F. 2003. "Women Political Leaders Past and Present" in *The Midwestern Political Science Association Annual Conference*. Chicago: Illinois University Press
- "Lydia Gueiler" in *List of Presidents of Bolivia*. [Online]. Available:
http://www.gaple.com/articles/List_of_Presidents_of_Bolivia [2005, June 18]
- "She" in *The Women of Iceland*. [Online]. Available:
<http://womenhistory.about.com/od/finnbogadottirv> [2005, September 20]
- "Suhbaataryn Yanjmaa" in Wikipedia. [Online]. Available:
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suhbaataryn_Yanjmaa#column one](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suhbaataryn_Yanjmaa#column_one) [2005, July 25]
- "Song Qingling" in *Everything2*. [Online]. Available:
<http://www.everything2.com./indexpl?node=Song%20Qingling> [2005, July 18]
- "Song Qingling" in *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*. [Online]. Available:
<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0930629.html/> [2005, December 12].
- "Vigdis Finnbogadottir" in *UNESCO Celebrity Advocates*. [Online]. Available:
<http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php.TOPIC201.htm> [2005, December 18]
- "Vigdis Finnbogadottir" in *Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia*. [Online]. Available:
http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php_Finnbogad [2005, December 18]
- "About Us" in *The Council of Women World Leaders*. [Online]. Available:
<http://www.womenworldleaders.org/Content.aspx?id=6> [2005, December 18]

RHYTHM AND *BULZ*

MAGDALENA ROIBU

Faculty of Law, University of the West, Timișoara

The title of the paper was inspired by that of the most recent album of the blues band "Nightlosers".

Introduction

Women and men still work at different speeds. In a very “non-biased”, chic and freak, white and black, male and female, EU and out of Europe, society is very much like a watch. One brand, formerly known as the “gender equality” watch stirred up a lot of fuss and “much ado” among modern people, so it was changed for the “equal opportunity” watch.

The skeptics should not envisage it as one of those Swiss made types. It would be pointless to do otherwise since – in terms of employment at least – things are far from perfection. Men are so much like the second hand (of the watch, undoubtedly!), while women are still the minute hand. Both the minute and the second hand of the watch do basically the same thing, i.e. show the exact time, only the latter benefits from an increased speed.

The time gap between minutes and seconds could be just another metaphor for old gender issues in contemporary society.

If the watch fails to indicate the right time, two possible reasons might be invoked: there is either a problem with the mechanism or with the battery (or both).

The watch mechanism is a hidden and very complex world in which all elements are both individually essential and highly inter-independent. If we want to change the speed at which the watch runs, we need to readjust the works.

A closer look inside the social mechanism of the equal opportunity watch reveals a seriously broken gear: disproportion in employment.

Yin vs. Yang

In the top ranking, usually decision-making professions, the leading positions are largely adjudicated by men. Data provided by the European Commission speak for themselves. Thus, in the political sphere, decision-making is served mostly by men, who represent 71% of the institution’s employees, as compared to only 29% women. In the European Parliament, women are fortunately better represented by an encouraging 30.3%. The situation differs from one country to another. A study performed by the Gallup Organization in 2003 shows that when it comes to women’s involvement in the political area, Sweden hits the top of all European countries since women occupy 45% of parliamentary seats. The last position is occupied by Greece, with 9%. In Romania, 11% of parliamentary seats are held by women.

In the countries analysed by the European Commission, in the public and legal sphere, at the level of the national administrative centres, the average percentage of the women holding decision-making offices is of only 16%. In the economic sphere however, the situation seems happier - 30% of managerial positions are held by women. Still, the top management positions in a firm are dominated by men. According to the same statistics by the European Commission, only 2% of chief executives or company presidents are women.

Women in the Western countries have perhaps fought their way up much more easily than their Eastern counterparts, due to the well known historical, economic and political advantages which have helped them catapult forward on the value scale.

Yet the phenomenon of the low representation of women in decision-making positions is still common to the current member states of the EU, let alone the accession candidate countries [at the time of writing]. The EU legislation on equal opportunities for women and men, the regulations and directives on this topic are part of the “package” which the candidate countries are required to adopt before joining the EU. The enlargement process has provided some important political instruments meant to help increase equality between men and women and fight against exclusion based on other criteria, in addition to sex, such as ethnic, geographical or social origin or religious affiliation.

Critical voices have nonetheless sustained that the EU has failed to convey to the countries concerned the importance of internalizing the above mentioned social dimension. The candidate countries as well as the EU itself need to show increased political will in this field, make full use of the financial and political means available and reinforce gender equality in the pre-accession strategies and negotiations.

À la roumaine

Romania has pledged allegiance to the EU *acquis*, assuring the European forums that it will intensify women’s promotion to decision-making at all levels, in political institutions, but also in the public and private spheres.

The EOWM (Equal Opportunities between Women and Men) Report on Romania indicates that although Romania has a well-articulated and non-discriminatory *de jure* framework, many steps are still to be taken in order to bring the principle of equal opportunities between women and men into everyday life.

While the promotion of equal opportunities and treatment has not constituted a priority for any of the governments of the last decade, the steps for improving the legislation have been created through, *inter alia*, the ratification of the Revised European Social Charter, the adoption of the National Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2000) and the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2002). The latter provides for the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Furthermore, it explicitly defines and prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination and sexual harassment, which has become a punishable offence in the Criminal Code.

The principle of equality between the sexes is explicitly laid down in Section 4 of the Romanian Constitution, according to which:

Romania is the common and indivisible homeland of all its citizens, without any discrimination on account of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, opinion, political affiliation, property or social origin.

The same principle is reflected in other national regulations, including Law no. 92/1992 regarding the organization of the judiciary, which establishes equality before the law, and the Family Code, which contains explicit provisions regarding equality between the sexes in terms of spousal relations, personal or patrimonial, and in terms of the exercise of parental rights and obligations. In terms of work relations, the Labour Code settles the general principle of women's entitlement to occupy any position or job, in accordance with their training, on fully equal terms with men.

Without any doubt, all these reveal a well articulated and non-biased *de jure* framework. In fact, the European Commission, in the evaluation document Agenda 2000, emphasized that "in the field of equal opportunities, the national legislation covers the provisions of the Community legislation on non-discrimination on account of gender". At the same time, it was noted that there are no specific provisions that guarantee equal opportunities and treatment for women and men.

It is good to know that the number of employed women has increased in the fields of public administration, electrical and thermal energy, gas and water, financial, banking and insurance activities, hotels and restaurants, postal services and telecommunications, while reductions in the number of employed women have been noticed in sectors such as

real estate transactions and other services, transport and depositing, and the extractive industry.

In the category of managers and superior public officials in administrative and economic organisations, the number of women represented is generally four times less than the number of men. The *professional segregation of women*, demonstrated by the existence of models of occupation differentiated by gender, leads to disparities between incomes, even though the principle of equal pay for equal work is legally accepted. It has been noticed that women are well represented in fields where the income is generally low. Thus, the segregation of the work force is perpetuated to women's disadvantage both horizontally and vertically, thus explaining the feminization of poverty as a characteristic of the period of transition towards the market economy.

As far as participation of women in decision-making is concerned, the first transition period (1990-1996) was characterized by a low representation of women in politics and in decision-making structures at an economic level. Thus, after the 1992 elections, women represented 4% of all members of Parliament; in 1996, they represented 6%. From 1996, certain changes began to occur and although the presence of women in the Romanian Parliament is far from illustrating the principle of equal opportunities, the evolution has been positive. Since the elections in 2000, women have represented 10.3% of all members of Parliament (50 women of the total of 485 members of Parliament, although they form more than 51% of Romania's population (sub-representation statistics by the National Youth Authority). So, when it comes to women, there is no such thing as equal opportunities in the access to political power. The national mechanism for the promotion of equal opportunities was readjusted by the creation, within the Romanian Parliament, of the Sub-commission for Equal Opportunities within the Joint Parliamentary Commission for European Integration.

The European institutions continue to lead the way in relation to the strategic objective called "women in power and decision-making". Thus, in 2003, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making. This recommendation establishes a "parity threshold" of 40% at least of each sex in the composition of elected assemblies, consultative organs of the state, political parties, trade unions and decision-making bodies of the media.

Referring to Romania once again, the activities developed by the bodies for the promotion of equality are not coordinated enough and there is no single, whole strategy in this field, the main cause for these deficiencies being the lack of political will to give priority to this issue. Besides the general provisions on equal rights among citizens and the more specific ones on equal opportunities between men and women, Romanian legislation includes other regulations concerning, for instance, the principle of equal pay for equal work. The observance of the principle of equal pay for men and women is compulsory, from a legal point of view, for both the public and the private sector. As a rule, the norms of labour law apply to all Romanian wage earners, irrespective of the sector in which they work.

It can be assumed that the implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work for men and women could be better monitored if there were a system of job classification to determine a certain level of remuneration irrespective of gender. To eliminate any suspicion regarding discrimination, a hierarchy of the remuneration system was established through Law no. 188/1999 regarding the status of public officials (Section 30), using categories, degrees, classes and stages, so that competence should take precedence in the professional career of the public official.

Discrimination X-rayed

In reality, there will always be some jobs paid better than others, just as there will be jobs that favour men instead of women, from all points of view.

Discrimination in the legal profession is alive and well, with obstacles still blocking the path of ethnic minorities, poorer people or females. Expectation of discrimination is particularly troubling as far as women as career-makers are concerned. Given the deep-rooted gender problems of the modern workforce, including discrimination and harassment, it is entirely rational for female job-seekers to consider how various workplaces treat women. Basic economic logic supports such a strategy for female workers: discrimination lowers the expected payoff of employment, so with less discrimination, women are likely to be more willing to supply labour at any given wage. Sometimes, to the extent that women prioritize family or leisure over work, they do so because they perceive little opportunity for career advancement. In traditionally male fields, male hostility (e.g. harassment, sabotage, denial of training) makes women less likely to succeed.

The problem, however, is not limited to women who directly face discrimination; it also includes the indirect effects of discrimination, which heavily influence female labour force participation. In several ways, discrimination discourages women from entering (or remaining in) the workforce, and particularly from seeking traditionally male jobs. This expectation of discrimination acts as disincentive to spending time and money preparing for a career. An aspect worth considering here is that the exclusion of women from male-dominated jobs and from positions of authority creates hostile relations among women at the workplace.

When women undermine and undercut each other, vying for advancement, they are reacting to workplace segregation and low organizational power. But women should not have to constantly tiptoe around each other. Instead, they should be aware of the factors that encourage them to compete with each other, recognizing that they can help each other advance and that success of one can lead to success of another. With healthy competition, women can push each other to do their best, supporting each other in the face of conditions that would have others thinking that it is every man for himself. One cause of discrimination is animus-based bias (e.g. misogynist refusals to hire women). Another is stereotypical employer judgments based on group status (e.g. assuming that all women will become pregnant at some point and leave their jobs).

Not only does discrimination lower human capital, it also negatively influences the strategic choices of discriminated-against groups. Women lawyers represented one such group just a few years ago.

The Legal Equality

Presently, alongside with other liberal professions, the legal profession has witnessed remarkable open-mindedness. To fight all sorts of discriminatory tendencies and practices, various women lawyers' organizations and centres have been set up, especially in the US, but also, more and more decisively across Europe.

In America, the WWL (Washington Women Lawyers) sponsors workshops on recognizing and eliminating gender bias among public and private sector supervisors and managers. Moreover, it continues to strive towards the full integration of women in the legal profession and for equality for women everywhere. Since it is primarily a women lawyers' organization, it provides networking opportunities and occasions to exchange strategies for dealing with the challenges of being a woman lawyer.

Also, the NAWL (the National Association of Women Lawyers) in the US boasts a history of more than 100 years of action on behalf of women lawyers.

The NAWL makes its voice heard in federal and state governments. On issues that affect women generally, and women lawyers particularly, the NAWL is often the first – and sometimes the only – bar association to speak out. It was the sponsor of the American Bar Association resolution that opposed legislation restricting a woman's right to choose. That resolution was adopted by the ABA and remains its official position on choice. It is definitely worth mentioning that this association focuses on issues relevant to women lawyers, such as glass ceiling, pay equity and balancing work and family.

In Europe, the best known is the EWLA, i.e. the European Women Lawyers' Association, which follows the American model. It was officially "launched" at the conference of the Women Lawyers' Forum in London, May, 1999. Today it is concerned with the cooperation of women lawyers from all member states of the European Union. Its intermediate aim is to bundle up these women's specific expertise in monitoring law and politics seen from the angle of gender.

A long-term target is to build up a women lawyers' association acting on the European level as a pressure group to enhance equality by means of law, as for instance by giving expert opinions to and by lobbying political institutions, by proposing and even outlining drafts for European directives, by bringing test cases to the European Court of Justice, by informing and empowering women to claim their rights, by campaigning and so on. Target groups are women lawyers and women lawyers' organizations whose major concern is to enhance equal opportunities by means of law.

Another professional association defending and advocating the interests of women lawyers is the Association of Women Barristers in England. It has a well defined set of rules and objectives. Among these, some of the most self-fulfilling will be to represent, support and further the interests of women barristers; to provide professional, business and social activities for women barristers; to offer educational courses, lectures and seminars to benefit the standing of and to improve opportunities for women barristers; to develop and foster contacts and cooperation with women lawyers practicing both nationally and internationally on issues of mutual concern; to bring about such contact with and consultation between the Association and any other organization, institution, government department, professional body or individual, whether in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, as may be beneficial to the Association and its members.

In Romania, especially in the 90s, the legal profession became particularly attractive, with thousands of students graduating from the national law faculties. The huge mass of legal experts absorbed men and women alike. In fact, the legal field comes closest to attaining equality between women and men. The old days when women were forbidden to join their male colleagues in the Bar are gone (as in the notorious Court of Cassation case of Ella Negruzzi, in 1914, who was not accepted into the Iași Bar Association, on the grounds that “a woman cannot be a lawyer because, first and foremost, she must take care of the household”).

Although there are no women lawyers’ associations in Romania, women featuring in the field of justice are more and more the leading actors of the cast. Consider, for instance, the consecutive appointment of ladies as heads of the Ministry of Justice (by two different governments), which is the sign of the much needed vote of confidence in favour of women in decision-making.

Not all Romanian women lawyers (or magistrates or notaries public) hang their professional hat under the umbrella of leadership. Just as in other professions, the distance to run up to the top position is quite long and takes considerable preparation and financial effort. Some common prejudices are those according to which a woman lawyer is easier to exploit or, on the contrary, that she stands a fair chance of being favoured by the judge. Fortunately, these are pure speculations. Being a woman lawyer is neither a clear advantage, nor a major disadvantage. It implies respect and recognition, two of the core legal rights that women in this challenging profession have won in time. Women’s fundamental rights and liberties, women’s livelihoods and their very lives, irrespective of their profession, depend on a fair and balanced legal system. Despite the little progress inherent to the modern period, women still face discrimination in pay and promotions and a lack of support that help them succeed in decision-making. In Romania, these barriers still need to be addressed by improved and consistent legislation and social programmes. That is why women lawyers, together with their politically involved colleagues, are at the forefront of the fight for equal opportunities.

Conclusion

It is crucial to keep an eye on the battery of the equal opportunity watch. We may have the most perfect machinery, but if we do not have the energy and input to make it work, the watch will become a merely decorative object. This energy is our motivation, our

determination and, of course, our money. We have to stop pretending that gender equality policies can be established without investment. We should be aware that a performing equality watch is a good investment, as it will show us the right time and the most economic way to do things. Investing in equality is not only a moral or legal obligation; it is also value for money. Hopefully, in the perfect future, the equality watch will show 12: women and men advance at the same steady speed, making decisions together and working towards the same aims.

References:

- Mizrahi, R., 2004, "Hostility to the Presence of Women: Why Women Undermine Each Other in the Workplace" in *The Yale Law Journal*, vol.113, no.7, p.15
- Moss, A.S.. 2004. "Women Choosing Diverse Workplaces: A Rational Preference with Disturbing Implications for Both Occupational Segregation and Economic Analysis of Law" in *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender*, vol.27, p.1
- Vasilache, A. 2005. "Managementul de top este acaparat de bărbați" in *Capital*, no.2, p. 10

Web references:

<http://www.ewla.org>

<http://www.law.harvard.edu>

<http://www.legislatie.resurse-pentru-democratie.org>

<http://www.wvl.org>

A FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF THE EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION

DIANA DĂMEAN

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Introduction

The deficiencies in the *European Constitution* can be approached from many perspectives; in this paper I will discuss the gender related issues. I have chosen to focus on the institution of marriage, on the unequal power relations within the traditional family and on how they alter women's rights as human rights. In order to do so, I have analysed Part II of the proposed European Constitution, *The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union (EU Constitution, 2004:2)* which provides all citizens with human rights only in the public space. Since what occurs in private remains invisible to the public eye, most women cannot enjoy their 'fundamental rights' as their fellow men do. From my point of view, the proposed *European Constitution* does not represent women appropriately and ignores their particular problems and needs. They are silenced and invisible as the dominating discourse is a masculine one. I will support my view with arguments and examples in what follows.

After decades of militating for equal rights in all fields of activity, women are still far from reaching their ideal. We have to admit, though, that remarkable progress has been made in this regard as women's condition in the public sphere has improved, at least theoretically. Despite all this, women's condition in the private sphere has not changed much. Feminist movements have focused mainly on acquiring rights in the public space. Although feminists have redefined family as an equal partnership between women and men, there are no laws stating the rights the members of a family should have, for the mere reason that family deals with the private sphere and the law can not interfere with privacy.

The constitution itself does not define family in any way, but assumes it to be an institution everyone represents in the same way. According to *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, the family is "the collective body of persons who live in one house, and under one head or manager", "the group comprising a husband and wife and their dependent children, constituting a fundamental unit in the organization of society". Moreover, according to *Brainy Dictionary*, a husband is defined as "the male head of the household", whereas a wife is defined as "a woman; an adult female; the lawful consort of a man; a woman who is united to a man in wedlock; a woman who has a husband; a married woman" and not as "the female head of the household". The "husband" is defined as an autonomous subject, whereas the "wife" is defined as an object in relation to the subject. She has no autonomy of her own; she exists solely in relation to her husband. Although the term "husband" is also related, as one cannot be a husband in the absence of a wife, the unequal position of a woman inside family appears through language, as a "husband" has more value than a "wife". The language expresses reality and therefore, if the wife

occupies an inferior position inside family, language will portray her as such. If the Constitution intends to guarantee equality for women in all social structures, it must seriously take into consideration the institution of family.

The European Constitution is no exception as in its second part, *The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union (EU Constitution, 2004:2)*, it defines dignity (15), freedom (16), equality (17) and solidarity (18) using a concept of family that allows an unequal treatment of women.

The articles in the *European Constitution* use vague terms and do not clearly specify how its laws shall be implemented. *The European Constitution* uses the pattern of the traditional, patriarchal family, does not discuss power relations within it, leaving room for the abuse and exploitation of women inside family. The articles are easily interpretable and they address a masculine segment. Women come into discussion as exceptions, due to reproduction related matters (*EU Constitution, 2004:18*) or as the underrepresented sex (17).

Therefore, I considered that a feminist critique of the *European Constitution* is welcome.

Outside of Society – The Family as Private Space

Although the family is a part of society it is, at the same time, outside it. The public-private divide allows the existence of separate norms in the family, different from those governing the public space.

Family is a patriarchal form of organization, having the man as its head and the woman (and children) as subordinate(s). The 'head' establishes the rules, takes the decisions, and has power over his subordinate(s). He will not refrain from using his power whenever his subordinates do not obey him. He can exercise his power in private as no law can interfere; from this point of view, family relations may as well resemble the relations between a master and his slaves. I shall start with a few reflections on the institution of marriage and its compatibility with violence. Marriage is a form of organizing social relations between sexes. Once they start a marriage, men's and women's lives are radically changed as they are provided with a new social status. Marriage is a hierarchy consisting of one dominating man and one subordinate woman (Hyden, 1994:36).

Men's violence against women is a 'natural consequence' of this hierarchy. When we define violence against women, the term 'abuse' is neither a scientific nor a clinical

concept, but a political one. The abuse is defined as a deviant act by a group that is large enough or has enough political power to define it (Hyden, 1994:37).

According to statistics provided by Margareta Hyden in her study of the domestic violence phenomenon (Hyden, 1994:52), domestic violence occurs mainly inside families founded on the idea of romantic love. This idea is the centre of the couple's view of what family is all about. The idea of romantic love implies intense desires of personal fulfilment and reconciliation. The marital life-style that promises sexual gratification, reproduction and unity maintains this idea. The media play an important role in promoting the pattern of the united happy family as a norm and scarce cases of abuse inside family as exceptions. Even when the divorce rate is continuously growing and the 'personal' has become 'political', the institution of marriage remains intact. The 'problem' is seen as belonging to individuals and not to the family as a form of patriarchal organisation.

Patriarchy depends on women's participation due to the benefits it offers. The man provides the woman with protection, financial support and social status in exchange for access to her body, her care for him and of her having his children. In many cases men use physical power to obtain what can be taken by force, such as access to her body. At this point we encounter a paradox: the idea of romantic love, although incompatible with violence of any kind, has been constructed in a culture that allows violent actions of men against women. The 'romantic' ideal of masculinity portrays the man as strong, bold, rational and able to support his family, whereas the woman appears as a complementary character, enjoying man's ability to support her. As a complementary character she can be either idealized and treated with respect or treated as a nobody and (ab)used (Hyden, 1994:83).

Men as a group are invested with power and their domination over women is a historical and social construction. Men's violence towards women is part of a patriarchal system of power and exploitation. Since our society is a patriarchal one and men are associated with values, intellect, norms, the abuse they commit against women and other 'marginal' categories is a common social phenomenon that does not stand out unless given the appropriate emphasis (Hyden, 1994:84).

The patriarchal society cannot protect the abused against violence and does not provide suitable services that can offer assistance to the victims and overcome re-victimisation (Hyden, 1994:102). Instead, the abuse is made invisible and difficult to sanction.

I intend to highlight the importance the 'private' life has over the 'public'. When women are denied democracy and human rights in private, their human rights in the public sphere also suffer, since what occurs 'in private' also shapes their ability to participate fully in the public arena (Burch, 1995:14). That is why the private sphere must constitute a priority for politicians implementing politics of equality. There is need for laws regarding the domestic space as this is a space where the abuse is not at all or hardly visible. Without a visible victim, there is no crime, and without a crime there is no perpetrator (Ashworth, 1999:261). From this perspective, questioning power relations within family and offering adequate protection is a must.

Media both reflect and shape individuals' attitudes and lives. They develop behaviours according to the models media provide. As far as the family is concerned, the model promoted by the media (Adams, Coltrane, 2005:323-347) is that of the traditional family, having the man as the 'head', traditional bread-winner, producer of material goods, and the woman in an inferior position as the traditional house-keeper, care provider, reproducer. Her unpaid work deprives her of her financial independence and, if she works on the labour market as well, it restricts her chances of developing a career as the care she offers her family along with the unpaid work at home takes most of her time. In these conditions, her chances to grow professionally are few; therefore the public sphere does not offer her much satisfaction. She will then search for her personal fulfilment in private, namely in her family, as wife and mother. In order to do so, she will align herself to the 'ideal wife' model presented in the media. While assuming the role of the devoted, submitted and supportive wife, the woman enters another realm of interpersonal power relations that finds her in a vulnerable position.

The purpose of this paper is not to analyse all forms of abuse inside family or how these occur; plenty of authors have studied these phenomena (Beck, 1999; Denfeld, 1997; Gottman, Jakobson, 1998; Locke, Richman, 1999). I will only draw a few conclusions: the concept of 'family' itself defines man as the 'head' of the other members; due to this hierarchical organization of the family the abuse (necessarily) occurs; whatever happens in private is invisible to the authorities and to the public. In conclusion, we are all aware that women are oppressed in private, yet the laws regarding everyone's right to 'respect for private life' does not allow us to interfere.

Paraphrasing Charlotte Burch (1995:14), if men deny women's rights as human rights in private, they will deny their rights in the public sphere as well, as they develop a

discriminative attitude towards women at all levels. There is a strong connection between private and public. A man who is usually aggressive towards women in private will definitely be aggressive (verbally, emotionally, physically, sexually) towards women in public. His act is the same in both cases, yet the law applies sanctions only against the aggression committed in public. To ignore the same act just because it occurs in family makes no sense, especially since family is commonly associated with safety, affection and unity. In here we may say that we deal with double-standard justice rather than with the right to respect for private life. Women who have been aggressed against in their family suffer even more since they are compelled to live with their perpetrator. They have to live with continuous feelings of fear, anxiety, depression, humiliation, which are against human dignity. In such cases, art. II-61, “Human dignity” (*EU Constitution*, 2004:15) and II-63, “Right to the integrity of the person” (15) of the proposed *European Constitution* do not apply as a consequence of art. II-67, “Respect for private and family life” (2004:16) of the same *Constitution*. This contradiction affects women disproportionately. However, if we were to consider only the masculine segment of the population, we would not face a paradox. I do not imply that men are never victims of abuse or that the above mentioned contradiction never affects them. I refer mainly to the dominant group of white, heterosexual men. *The European Constitution* is their product and it takes into discussion only their personal issues.

A common conception and interpretation of human rights assume that states are not responsible for violations in what has been referred to as the private sphere (such as the household). According to this interpretation states can only be held responsible for violations taking place in the public sphere, that is a sphere largely defined by and composed of men (Callamard, 1999:11). Such an approach makes power relations in the family invisible and keeps the major areas where women are oppressed away from the public scrutiny. *The European Constitution* aligns itself to this conservative view despite its equalitarian and democratic appearance. It is not gender-sensitive and it is, in many regards, incomplete.

Contradictions of the European Constitution: Private vs. Public

Equality

In the second part of the *European Constitution*, Title III, 'Equality', art. II-83, 'Equality between women and men' (*EU Constitution*, 2004:17), states that "equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas", without clearly mentioning "both public and private". As law deals only with the public space we cannot infer that women and men are equal inside the family as well. The article refers only to equality in the public space: "equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay" (17).

I admit I was very confused while reading art. II-83 "the principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the underrepresented sex" (17) as I could not figure what sort of 'underrepresentation' it might refer to. It was not clear whether the term 'underrepresented sex' was used to describe the representation as a number or as political power. As a percentage of the population, women outnumber men in many countries. Despite this, their representation inside political structures remains low. The article lacks clarity and leaves room to interpretation.

Solidarity

Referring to the status of the family, art. II-93.1 (*EU Constitution*, 2004:18) states that "the family shall enjoy legal, economic and social protection". The section entitled 'Family and professional life' defines neither family nor professional life. Moreover, the only tension that art. II-93.2 (18) considers may occur when having both a family and a professional life is dismissal on grounds of maternity: "to reconcile family and professional life, everyone shall have the right to protection from dismissal for a reason connected with maternity and the right to paid maternity leave and to parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child". The interaction between family and career is superficially treated and reduced to matters regarding reproduction. Even so, this is only one possible scenario, as the *Constitution* does not state that an unemployed woman shall be protected in case she remains unemployed due to her pregnancy or due to her parental responsibilities. The article uses the term 'connected with maternity' and not 'connected with parenthood', which could suggest that both sexes' professional life may be affected by the birth of a child or by the parental status. Instead, the term 'maternity' suggests that women are the only ones who may be victims of discriminatory behaviour on grounds of parental status. Our society considers that children are entirely their mother's

responsibility and that a man's professional life is not at all affected by his parental status since he is not the traditional care-provider, but the traditional bread-winner.

This is a reflection of a real fact, namely the unequal division of responsibilities inside the family and their impact on individuals' social lives. *The European Constitution* did not free itself from the patriarchal view on gender roles inside family. In these conditions we cannot talk about a partnership inside marriage, but rather about a hierarchical model where all social privileges belong to men. Women come into discussion due to reproduction and motherhood. The particular problems they face in other areas of life are not treated in a special section as in the above mentioned example. The 'invisibility' of women's particular problems (unequal treatment based on prejudices, discrimination based on gender, violence against women, etc.) does not suggest that both genders are considered equal and treated accordingly, but rather that the European Constitution addresses mainly a masculine segment. Gender equality does not mean that all women and men have the same needs, namely men's, with the only exception that the female representatives of the species give birth. From this perspective the *European Constitution* is not gender-neutral, but rather gender-blind. We may assume that the *European Constitution* has been written by and for men.

At a closer look we can see that amendments for citizens of other races or sexual orientation, for instance, are nearly missing. The particular problems related to their particular condition are not taken into consideration. We might think that everyone is treated as equal and the same laws apply to all, but such an attitude is incompatible with diversity, pluralism, multiculturalism. Although it claims to encourage diversity, the *European Constitution* summarises all this support in a few sentences, in Part III, 'The Policies and the Functioning of the Union', Title II, "Non-Discrimination and Citizenship", art. III-124.1: "Without prejudice to the other provisions of the *Constitution* and within the limits of the powers assigned by it to the Union, a European law or framework law of the Council may establish the measures needed to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The Council shall act unanimously after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament" (*EU Constitution*, 2004:23) and in Part II, 'The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union', Title III, 'Equality', article II-81 'Non-discrimination': "1. Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth,

disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited; 2. Within the scope of application of the Constitution and without prejudice to any of its specific provisions, any discrimination on grounds of nationality shall be prohibited” (17) and in article II-82, ‘Cultural, religious and linguistic diversity’: “The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity” (17).

As it follows, “the European law or framework law of the Council *may* establish the measures needed to combat discrimination” (but they also *may not*), which suggests that these measures are not imperative. Once again, the text of the *European Constitution* is too vague. In extension I may add that none of the above mentioned minorities shall be discriminated against as long as they align themselves to the standards of the dominant group and they all pretend to be white heterosexual men.

Freedom

As a consequence of the unequal power relations inside the family, women are or may be victims of violence and abuse. Maintaining or allowing the existence of the traditional/patriarchal family and at the same time promoting democratic laws leads to a major contradiction regarding both freedom and human dignity. Title II ‘Freedoms’, article II-66, ‘Right to liberty and security’, states that “everyone has the right to liberty and security of person” (*EU Constitution*, 2004:16). Article II-67, ‘Respect for private and family life’, states that “everyone has the right to respect for his or her private and family life, home and communications” (16) and comes into contradiction with the previous. Since in private abuse of all kinds is tolerated, and, at the same time, made invisible, this law does neither apply to nor address women. If the law cannot interfere within one’s family and cannot apply sanction against the abuse that occurs there, it reduces to silence a large segment of the feminine population, thus depriving them of their ‘constitutional’ rights.

Regarding the ‘heterosexual discourse’ we may say that article II-69, invests only heterosexual citizens with the ‘Right to marry and right to found a family’: “The right to marry and to found a family shall be guaranteed in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of these rights” (16). Yet, in few countries do the ‘national laws’ allow homosexual marriages, therefore this right does not apply to the entire segment of the homosexual population.

Title II of the *European Constitution*, provides masculine heterosexual citizens with ‘freedoms’, excluding such ‘marginal’ categories as women and homosexuals.

Freedom of Expression – Women’s Representation in the Media

In Article II-71, ‘Freedom of expression and information’, which states that “2. The freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected” (*EU Constitution*, 2004:16), there are plenty of things to be said. The freedom of expression and information is, nevertheless, a basic human right. However, this coin has two faces, as media’s role is not only to inform, but also to form. When the materials media provide distort reality and violate the human rights of a certain social category we face a dilemma: on what basis may the *Constitution* restrict media’s freedom of expression without being accused of censorship or surveillance; and to what extent should the Constitution protect the human rights of the categories misrepresented in the media? Media representation of reality in general and of women in particular is one delicate issue. I will focus on the interaction between the representations of women in the media and women’s human rights.

In this I do not refer to media’s role to inform, to present real facts; but to their role to interpret facts, to manufacture (distorted) images of reality that are assimilated by the public as if they were reality itself. In the era of mass culture media eliminate real needs and at the same time create false needs, as well as false images. The image prevails, as the public can no longer think using abstract concepts. The public can only represent what they can see and touch. For the media-nurtured public what can not be pictured under the form of an image can not exist. In building reality media operate with stereotypes. My critique does not target media’s freedom to inform, but their freedom to interpret and to reconstruct social concepts and to delude the public. The media construction of gender roles reflect, maintain and promote the patriarchal organisation of society by using stereotypes. Women are represented in the media mainly as images, with the only purpose to arouse or to decorate. They appear commonly associated with the domestic sphere and in complementary hypostases.

Media representations of women are divided into two main groups: media representations of women for women and media representations of women for men. While one would be inclined to believe that their discourses radically differ, they would be surprised to discover one huge similarity: both media materials for men and for women portray woman as an object, as an image. There is a difference though: for men women

appear as sex-objects, while for the other women, they appear as aesthetic objects (for a brief comparison see magazines such as *Playboy*, *Hustler*, *FHM* as women's representations for men and *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Vogue* as women's representations for women).

Media products such as films, TV series, magazines, TV shows, web pages, etc., aim at defining women according to the patriarchal organization of society. Media play an active role in forming individuals' identities and shaping their attitudes. The growing importance of the image undermines women's social position. It annihilates their subjectivity and it affects their personality. Women have to obey men's desires and beauty standards, being valued mainly as beautiful (sex) objects. This ideal of femininity strengthens male domination, since women must look good with the only purpose of attracting and keeping a man. The media picture women as sex-objects, usually young, thin, beautiful, passive, submissive, dependent, often incompetent and stupid. Women's image as submitted (sex) objects also results in a discriminatory attitude of men towards women, as they expect them to be passive, obedient, dependent, good-looking, etc., in other words, like media portrays them. Men will also be inclined to value women less as, according to their media image, women are inferior to men in many regards and cannot manage without them.

According to the media, women are seen first of all as images; their main concern is to become a beautiful image and to preserve their beauty, thinness and youth. For this purpose they are willing to focus most of their energy and to spend most of their money. Nevertheless, the ideal of beauty promoted in the media is an important source of income for various industries (everything related to show-biz in general, advertising industry, cosmetic industry, fashion industry, medical and pharmaceutical industry – from plastic surgeries to psychiatric treatments, just to mention a few). That is no surprise since media are an important instrument reflecting both state policy and economic interests.

The ideal of beauty is a double trap: first of all no woman can look like an adolescent at all stages of her life. Her failure to reach this ideal, despite all efforts results in low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence. Secondly, she neglects her professional development. She invests time, energy and money in order to look beautiful and not to build a career. Since in most cases she fails to reach the beauty standards, the lack of self-confidence and self-esteem will draw her back professionally as she will not feel able to compete with men on the labour market. Media and society taught her to seduce men, not

to challenge them. As a consequence, ‘the ideal of beauty and femininity’ has much deeper implications, such as the elimination of a large number of women from the labour market, namely from the high-pay positions on the labour market. Instead women will remain in subordinate, low-pay positions that allow their exploitation on the labour market as well.

Apart from the psychological and economic implications that are not the object of this study, I try to point out the violations of women’s human rights that occur due to their representations as objects. Women are reduced to their bodies, to their sexuality; they are objectified and therefore, seen as inferior to men. The unlimited freedom of expression and information allows media to portray women according to economical, political or financial interests that violate women’s rights to dignity, respect and equality with men. *The European Constitution* no longer protects their rights once it guarantees unrestricted freedom to the media. Article II-71.2 (16) is vague and does not take into consideration any exceptions.

The media discourse resembles the political discourse in so far as it promotes a dominant pattern (for instance, a certain image for women) and it excludes or presents as negative everything that does not subscribe to or contradicts the dominant model. Media can also be used as a political instrument to delude the public. The freedom of the media should not be regarded merely as the freedom to spread whatever information; media should also be freed from the external influence of those who support it materially. Media representations of reality can be manipulated according to the political or financial interests of the dominating group. Their view will become the dominant one and will be internalized and adopted by the public. The European Constitution does not protect the integrity of the media or that of politically or financially under-represented groups.

Dignity

Article II-61 ‘Human dignity’ states that “Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected” (*EU Constitution*, 2004:15).

Due to legally permitted inequities in the family, article II-63, ‘Right to the integrity of the person’, which states that “everyone has the right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity” (15), although claiming to address ‘everyone’, cannot apply to abused wives. Living with an abusive partner, both women’s physical and mental integrity is affected (see Dworkin, 2001; Hyden, 1999).

Violence against women is predictable within a culture that promotes hatred towards women. This culture teaches men to become violent and one of the instruments it uses is pornography. Pornography can be seen as a 'manual' for objectifying women by reducing them to their sex and legitimates violence against women by sexualizing it. Pornography is the result of a very well-thought-out strategy, a global industry founded on capitalism, racism and patriarchy (Dworkin, 2003:58-70). This kind of violence remains unsanctioned as, according to its defendants, if pornography were censored freedom of expression would be restricted. But what happens when a group's human dignity is affected by another group's exercising their freedom of expression? *The European Constitution* does not take that into consideration and does not provide an answer as it addresses only the dominating group.

Conclusions

I intended to highlight the sharp contradiction between the statements of the *European Constitution* and women's real rights as far as their life experience is concerned. I also intended to point out that women are not represented appropriately in the *Constitution*, but they are reduced to mere child-bearers and silenced as individuals. In order to do so I have repetitively used a series of key-concepts such as 'public space' versus 'private sphere', 'family'; 'fundamental rights guaranteed by the *European Constitution*, 'freedom of expression', 'freedom of the media', 'media representations of women' versus 'women's rights'. These concepts are interconnected and my entire essay has been built on them. I used them in order to mark oppositions for, on the one hand we deal with a masculine representation of reality and human rights suited for men and, on the other hand, with the reality women live and with the absence of suited rights, laws and statements. Moreover, some of men's rights and freedoms violate the constitutional rights granted to women, as shown. From my point of view and as it results from my short study, the *European Constitution* needs to be reviewed so as to include the specific problems and needs of women, to provide protection and rights in the private sphere and to sanction discriminatory and objectifying representations of women in the media.

As long as the *European Constitution* does not provide women with laws defending them against domestic violence, marital rape, lack of freedom, etc., inside the family as well as in the public sphere, as long as the *European Constitution* does not address women's specific problems concerning public space, we cannot say its laws are

gender neutral, but gender blind. The women have been silenced, both as subject and object, and made invisible, while simultaneously being present in society in so far as the reproduction of the species is concerned and also in terms of their function to help men perform their conventional public roles (Ashworth, 1999:261).

References:

- Adams, M., Coltrane, S. 2005. "Work-family imagery and gender stereotypes: television and the reproduction of difference" in *Journal of vocational behaviour* [Online] Available: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/00018791> [2007 February 25]
- Ashworth, G. 1999. "The silencing of women", in T. Dunne and N. J. Wheeler (eds.). *Human rights in global politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Beck, A. 1999. *Prisoners of Hate: the Cognitive Basis of Anger, Hostility and Violence*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers
- Burch, C. 1995. "Transforming human rights from a feminist perspective" in J. Peters and A. Wolper (eds.). *Women's Rights, Human Rights*. New York: Routledge
- Callamard, A. 1999. *A Methodology for Gender-Sensitive Research*. Amnesty International Publications and the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development;
- Denfeld, R. 1997. *Kill the Body, the Head Will Fall: A Closer Look at Women, Violence and Aggression*. New York: Warner Books
- Dworkin, A. 2003. "Landscape of the ordinary: Violence against women" in R. Morgan (ed.). *Sisterhood is Forever: the Women's Anthology for a New Millennium*. New York: Washington Square Press
- Dworkin, A. 2001. *Războiul împotriva tăcerii* (transl. R. Dascăl). Iași: Polirom [1988]
- Gottman, J.; Jacobson, N. 1998. *When Men Batter Women: New Insights into Ending Abusive Relationships*. New York: Simon & Schuster
- Hyden, M. 1994. *Woman Battering as a Marital Act. The Construction of a*

Violent Marriage. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press

Online Dictionary [Online] Available: <http://www.brainydictionary.com/> [2007, February 25]

Locke, L. M.; Richman, C. L. 1999. "Attitudes towards Domestic Violence: Race and Gender Issues", in *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, February issue; Merriam-Webster Dictionary [Online] Available: <http://www.merriamdictionary.com> [2007, February 25]

The European Constitution. 2004. [Online] Available:

http://europa.eu.int/constitution/en/1stoc1_en.htm [2007, February 25]

Further websites:

<http://www.playboy.com>

<http://www.hustler.com>

<http://www.fhm.com>

<http://www.cosmomag.com>

<http://www.elle.com>

<http://www.vogue.co.uk>

About the Authors

Olivia Bălănescu graduated from the University of Craiova in 1999. She is an assistant lecturer at the University of Craiova and also a PhD student in English and American Literature at the University of Bucharest. She published 2 books on Business English (1999, 2004) and several articles in professional journals on gender and discourse, cultural studies, sociolinguistics, new criticism and Renaissance drama. Her research focuses on

the British postmodern feminine novel. She is currently lecturer at the University of Delhi, New Delhi, India.

Diana Elena Boncescu is currently a 2nd year MA student in American Studies at the University of the West in Timișoara and an English teacher at the elementary school in Sacoșu-Turcesc. She has also worked for six years as a journalist for Radio Timișoara and Europa Nova where she has produced and presented numerous talk shows and debates concerning Governmental Policies and Human Rights. Her area of interest has gradually developed towards International Relations. Consequently in 2005 she published a paper on “Romanian Anti-Americanism”. The moment marked the opportunity to start a research group focused on Anti-American feelings speculated in the Romanian mass media.

Lelia Chilărescu is an assistant lecturer at the University of the West Timișoara. Her main academic interests include cultural and media studies, as well as intercultural communication. Her major publications are “The Impact of the New Mass Media on Youth” in *PGV Proceedings: L’Innovation dans L’Europe Elargie* (2003); “The Symbolism of the Walls in Timișoara, Romania” in *EGE Proceedings: (City in [Culture] in City]* (2004); “Multiculturalism but one Humanity and one Global Media” in *the 8th Congress of the International Association in Semiotics AIS/IASS: Signs of the World. Interculturality and Globalization* (2004); “The Impact of the Homogeneous Global Advertising on the Multicultural Reality” in the *WIT International Conference “Human Perspectives in the Internet Society: Culture, Psychology and Gender”* (2004).

Korinna Csetenyi is Assistant Lecturer at the Department of English at the University of Szeged. Her main academic interests are American popular fiction, Gothic and horror literature and the place of Stephen King within this genre, together with his impact on contemporary culture. Forthcoming publication includes a paper on the relationship of writers and the reading public in *Misery* by King.

Reghina Dascăl teaches British Studies and Gender Studies at the English Department of the University of Timișoara. She holds a doctorate in cultural anthropology (her thesis was entitled *House and Dwelling in a European Cultural Context*) and she has so far published four books: *Casă/Locuire* (1999); *British Topics* (2000) *Feminist Perspectives* (2001) and

British Studies Course (2005). Her collection of essays on Christine de Pizan is under print. She is Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies at Timișoara University. Over the years she has presented and published papers in the country and abroad and has also edited and co-edited several publications. Polirom has published her translation of Andrea Dworkin's *Letters from the War Zone*.

Diana Dămean holds an MA in *Gender, Differences, Inequalities* and is currently a PhD student at the "Babeș-Bolyai" University working on a thesis about the media construction of gender. She is interested in topics such as the media representations of femininity/masculinity, the construction of postmodern identity and gender and mass-culture. Her published studies include: *De la femeia-obiect la imaginea-identitate: reprezentări ale feminității în cultura de masă* (Ed. Lumen, Iași, 2006), *Imaginea femeii în tranziția postcomunistă (1990-1995)* (în Delia Popa, Gim Grecu, Diana Dămean, Mihai-Bogdan Iovu, Silvia Făt: *Cercetări, studii și abordări în științele umaniste. Filozofie - Științe Sociale*, Editura Lumen, Iași, 2006, pp.157-209), *Media and Gender: Constructing Feminine Identities in the Postmodern Culture* (in JSRI, No. 14, summer 2006: *What Does Feminism Need? Challenges and Developments in Gender Studies*).

Anemona Filip Alb is a graduate of Bucharest University (a Major in English). She is currently Lecturer at Oradea University, Department of English, where she teaches British Cultural Studies and Contemporary British Literature. Apart from Gender Studies, her academic interests cover Discourse Analysis (mainly straddling on Media Discourse and Political Discourse) and British Literature. She has published papers in Gender Studies, British Literature, Media Discourse and Political Discourse. Among the books she has co-authored the most recent ones are: *Contemporary British Writers* (Popescu, D (ed), Oradea University Press, 1997) and *Lancdoc Working Papers* (Sunderland, J (ed), Lancaster University Press, 2000).

Vladislava Gordić Petković is Associate Professor of English and American Literature at the University of Novi Sad, Serbia. She has published widely on women's writing in English and Serbian. She has published so far books about the short stories of Ernest Hemingway and Raymond Carver and two collections of essays. Forthoming is her book of essays dedicated exclusively to gender issues.

Nataša Karanfilović works at the University of Novi Sad (English Department), where, among others, she contributes to a course on Gender and Narrative. Her major publications include a monograph, *Three Faces of Australian Fiction* (2004), which is based on her MA thesis defended in 2003. Her other interests include postcolonial theory and literatures in English. She is currently working on her PhD focusing on the issues on identity, history and storytelling in the novels of the American-based Australian author Peter Carey.

Andrea Kriston graduated from the University of the West in 1997 and currently works as senior lecturer at “Tibiscus” University, Timișoara. She is a PhD student in English and American literature at the University of the West, her thesis focusing on dilemmas of the body and strategies of pleasure. Her main interests lie in the area of gender studies from the perspective of late 20th century novels.

Bożena Kucala is a lecturer in English literature at the English Department of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland. She has published articles on contemporary English fiction, mainly on fictional evocations of the past as well as connections between historical and literary narratives. Her current research interests focus on intertextuality and neo-Victorian fiction.

Catherine MacMillan is a lecturer in the English Language and Literature department at Yeditepe University, Istanbul. She is also currently completing her PhD thesis, on the EU's Justice and Home Affairs policies, at Marmara University, Istanbul. In addition to EU affairs, especially migration and JHA and their application to Turkey and Central and Eastern Europe, she also has a keen interest in European Culture, particularly the image of the Turk in Europe and the ancient Celts.

Adriana Răducanu has a BA in English and Spanish literature from the University of Bucharest, holds an MA from Yeditepe University, Istanbul and at present is a Ph.D candidate at the University of the West, Timișoara. Her research interests include Gothic novels, Jungian criticism, post-colonial and gender studies, comparative mythology.

Magdalena Roibu is a legal translator and interpreter and holds an MA in Translation Studies; she is assistant-lecturer at the Faculty of Law, University of the West, Timișoara and teaches Legal English and Legal French.

She has so far published: *The In(n)s and Outs of Legal Translation* (2005), *The Legalese: Ars aequi et Boni?* (2005), *Archetypes Revisited: Prisons as Power Labs* (2005), *Old Ghosts, New Ghosts: A Lock-Up History* (2005), *Overlawyered* (2006), *The Dreary Affair of Death* (2006), *Sexual Harassment Beyond a Taboo* (2006). She co-authored a book: *The Language of Law* (2006).

Remina Sima is a graduate of the English Department of the University of the West, Timișoara. She holds an MA in Gender Studies from the same university. She teaches English at the Millennium High School in Timișoara and her academic interests include 19th century women's history and a gender perspective on the private/public divide. She has published several articles at students' and teachers' symposia such as: *Women's Self – Esteem - the Way to Women's Self-Contentment* and *Equality - Women's Main Concern*.

Andreea Șerban graduated the Faculty of Letters (English-French) from the University of the West, Timișoara in 2003 and completed her MA in Translation Studies. She is currently a junior lecturer at the English Department of the University of Timișoara and a doctoral student. Her PhD thesis focuses on wilderness as integral part of Canadian identity in Margaret Atwood's novels. Her broader research interests cover cultural studies and women writers.

Smaranda Ștefanovici is an associate professor at “Petru Maior” University of Târgu Mureș, Faculty of Sciences and Letters, Philology Department. She holds a PhD in American Literature. She teaches Linguistics and American Literature. Her current research areas include linguistic studies, nineteenth-century American literature (with special emphasis laid on the study of Nathaniel Hawthorne within and without national/international borders), as well as gender studies. She has published a number of books among which *American Literature Tests*, *Maxwell Anderson's Verse Drama*, *Highlights of American Literature*, *Images of Women in American Literature*. She has also contributed, besides other members of the English department to *Limba engleză – teste*

pentru admiterea în învățământul superior și pentru studenții de la Litere. At present she is working on a new course entitled American Culture and Civilization.
