



# **Women's Space and Men's Space**

edited by  
Katarzyna Ostalska



WYDAWNICTWO  
UNIWERSYTETU  
ŁÓDZKIEGO

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Łódź 2017

Katarzyna Ostalska – University of Łódź, Faculty of Philology  
Institute of English Studies, Department of British Literature and Culture  
Pomorska 171/173 St., 91-137 Łódź

INITIATING EDITOR  
*Urszula Dzieciatkowska*

REVIEWER  
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TYPESETTING  
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## “YOU GRANT ME SPACE, YOU GRANT MY SPACE:” THE GENDER OF WOMEN’S OWN ROOMS

**KATARZYNA OSTALSKA**

Institute of English Studies, University of Lodz

You grant me space, you grant my space. But in so doing you have already taken me away from my expanding place. What you intend for me is the place which is appropriate for the need you have of me. What you reveal to me is the place where you have positioned me, so that I remain available for your needs. Even if you should evict me, I have to stay there so that you can continue to be settled in your universe. (Irigaray 47)

The cited fragment comes from Luce Irigaray’s philosophical study *Elemental Passions*, published in Britain in 1992. In brief, it captures a number of arguments connected with how women tend to perceive space. In the quoted passage, space is viewed as the territory of gender control, and, as such, it can be allowed to be inhabited solely under the specified conditions. The access to this space is “granted,” therefore, it can be also regulated, constrained, partially or temporally denied. In the use of the bolted pronouns: “**you** grant **my** space,” one can clearly perceive a conflict in gendered standpoints. The statement refers to the context when masculine “you” issues permission to the female dwelling in “her own space.” According to Young, “to own the space is to have autonomy over admission to the space and its contents” where “a person should have control over access to her living space, her meaningful things, and information about herself” (74). Consequently, the question arises how one can argue that the space is “her own” when the regulations to its access and management are controlled by somebody else. Bearing it in mind, instead of recognising the space as hers, the female speaker in *Elemental Passions* identifies it as assigned to her, and, for that reason, appropriated. In other words, this qualified space can be occupied by the female persona as long as she meets the conditions of her “settlement.” Inasmuch, Irigaray’s text renders the discourse of manipulation and loss (“you have already taken me away from”), of the debilitating enclosure (“away from my expanding place”), the sense of being taken advantage of (“the place which is appropriate for the need you have of me”), the feeling of being objectified (“you have positioned me, so that I remain

available for your needs”), the lack of security resulting from the potential withdrawal from the tenancy of the place (“if you should evict me”).

Taking all into account, the overall image of the space inferred from that passage is that of the men-controlled territory which women might inhabit as long as they fulfil men’s expectations. In view of that, the speaker asks rhetorically: “What then becomes of space? An attribution of places, of sites in the universe of your being as a subject?” (Irigaray 71). Hence, it comes to be conspicuous that the female voice does not feel “at home” in her allocated area. Lexically, the notion of space is close to expansion, openness, freedom, nonetheless, the implied concepts in the analysed percept indicate the opposite. In other words, women who wish to inhabit this area have to challenge the alleged neutrality of space’s gender. The female voice in *Elemental Passions* conveys the problem as follows:

And you meet me only in the space that you have opened up for yourself. You never meet me except as your creature – within the horizon of your world. Within the circle of your becoming. That protective shell which shelters you from an outside of you might question the matter with which you built your house. (Irigaray 47)

As demonstrated, the speaker feels that to encounter textually her addressee, she has to abandon her own discourse and do it on his terms. The inter-gender communication cannot take place on “her territory;” she can be heard or seen only as a complement to “the horizon of **his** world.” The autonomy of women’s identity is qualified, which finds its expression in a multiplicity of the second person pronouns: “the space that **you** have,” “Within the circle of **your** becoming,” “shell which shelters **you** from an outside,” “opened up for **yourself**.” The sole expression of the female subjectivity is weakened by the preceding negation “You **never** meet **me**.” As a result, the female voice feels self-effacing, as if she were textually imprisoned in the circular phallogocentric discourse from which she cannot escape.

The phenomenon that women have to function on the territory that is not “their own” has been noticed not only by feminist critics but also by sociologists. Scott writes of women “invading the space” with regard to how they perceive themselves in relation to being “out of place in the elite social space that is run by and for men” (41). In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf relates her similar, real-life experience of “audaciously trespassing” the male Oxbridge world of academia, when literally and metaphorically diverting from a non-scholarly, woman’s path:

It was thus that I found myself walking with extreme rapidity across a grass plot. Instantly a man’s figure rose to intercept me....Nor did I at first understand that the gesticulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut-away

coat and evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation.... I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me. (6-7)

In the cited passage, the gendered encroaching on the male professional space is related by Woolf with irony and distance. It demonstrates, however, a forbidding case of the space separation where (female) intruders are punished with ostracised contempt. For centuries, the turf trail of the formal, higher education was not allowed to women. They had to satisfy themselves with the gravel path of the informal, hardly ever existent, home tuition. Mill in his canonical 1869 publication *The Subjection of Women* explains that the restrained access to, and men's control over the space of women's education were meant to condition women into “meekness, submissiveness, and resignation of all individual will into the hands of a man” (149). Bearing it in mind, Mill advocates the need for women “to be educated as solidly, and in the same branches of knowledge as men,” promoting “their admission into professions and occupations hitherto closed against them”(146-147). He maintains that men shaped the artificial concept of *women's nature* according to their own needs and demands (Mill 155), thus, appropriating women's space. According to Mill, it is education, or rather the lack of thereof, and the myth of femininity that enabled men to dislodge women from their spaces of autonomy. Since “the subjection of women to men being a universal custom, any departure from it quite naturally appears unnatural” (Mill 146).

The idea that women are culturally constructed to be men's space of Otherness is elaborated on by Irigaray in *Elemental Passions*. In the referred to book, the metaphor of the house represents the spatial, gendered representation of the female identity and the female body contained within a restricted, discursive enclosure. Claiming that “I was your house...this dwelling place, I do not know what to do with these walls of mine. Have I ever had a body other than the one which you constructed according to your idea of it?” (49), the speaker in *Elemental Passions* argues that in men's discourse, she feels de-materialised in her carnality, reduced to an abstract, bodiless, binary oppositional construct, an empty, self-less abode.

Following this line of thinking, critics frequently draw attention to the fact that the division of space reflects the division of the gendered-grounded influence. For instance, within a confined, living space under the shared roof, a woman's private study might indicate that her professional work is regarded to be of a considerable (economic) importance. Virginia Woolf's idea of the room of her own signifies women's access to the safe, physical space where they could, undisturbed, put pen to paper to produce fiction, or any other literary works. In the past, as noted by Mrs Honeychurch, a character in Forster's *A Room with a View*, “women who (instead of minding their houses

and their children) seek notoriety by print" (169-170) were held in derision and observed with suspicion. As a narrator in Forster's novel ironically remarks women's "mission was to inspire others to achievement rather than to achieve themselves" (52). In contrast to that assumption, the room of their own becomes the women's imaginative space whose "very walls are permeated by their creative force, which has, indeed, so overcharged the capacity of bricks and mortar that it must needs harness itself to pens and brushes and business and politics" (Woolf 114). Applying Woolf's concept, Boiling stresses that for women, it has always been fundamental to be able to claim the space as their protective refuge where they could "nurse the wounds of the ego, and to lend depth of feeling," develop ideas for the future and cultivate their current aptitudes (77-78). For Woolf, "a room of her own" stands for much more than simply a private comfort of the four walls, it means the personal space where women can devote themselves to their own artistic commitments, pursue their own literary interests, or do what they consider significant for their self-realisation:

The rooms differ so completely; they are calm or thunderous; open on to the sea, or, on the contrary, give on to a prison yard; are hung with washing; or alive with opals and silks; are hard as horsehair or soft as feathers—one has only to go into any room in any street for the whole of that extremely complex force of femininity to fly in one's face. (Woolf 114)

In the cited passage, Woolf does not essentialise women, and she is perfectly aware of differences within and among women. She admits: "The rooms differ so completely," denoting dissimilar interests, objectives and aspirations that women might have. She advises them to transform the suppressed energy of years' subdual into art. The common misconception regarding Woolf's thought is reading the examined metaphor as women's exclusion from the outer reality, and being separated from the world in a "room of her own." Contrary to those assumptions, Woolf appeals: "So that when I ask you to earn money and have a room of your own, I am asking you to live in the presence of reality, an invigorating life, it would appear, whether one can impart it or not" (144). For that reason, the writer does not encourage women to be locked inside their homes, but to enter much more extensive space of a world of their own, not purely fictitious but related to the experiential reality:

I am talking of the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals...if we the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality;...our relation is to the world of reality.... (Woolf 148-149)

As demonstrated, Woolf inspires women to have courage to make the outer world – a room of their own. Such understanding would also correspond to Irigaray’s philosophical thought in which the critic states that women, trapped in men’s cultural, conceptual limitations, should leave this discursive space in search of their own infinite territory. In Forster’s *A Room with a View*, female characters are accustomed into appreciating a view from their rooms and being satisfied with a “window,” male-mediated vision of the reality rather than exploring the outdoor space individually. One of the characters, Mr Emerson sums this gendered difference as follows “Women like looking at a view, men don’t” (Forster 11). In Forster’s novel, men treat the whole surrounding as their own space, therefore, the room, with, or without a view, seems to be nothing more than a confinement hindering their expansion.

Unlike in men’s case, rooms have been places where women of the past would spend most of their lives, hardly ever leaving the house unaccompanied, or without a crucial reason. As Woolf puts it, “For women have sat indoors all these millions of years” (114). Women as the goddesses of Home and Hearth were the prisoners of the convention which would expect them to stay indoors, away from the looks of other men and temptations of the open space. Their duties were also connected with domestic and household chores. Unpaid and underappreciated household routine was supposed to become the “true” destiny of each woman and the female one and only “fulfilment.” In the course of time, the lady of the house might turn into a “mad woman in the attic,” frustrated, agitated, lonely, soon abandoned and replaced with its more docile successor. The paradox of the gendered-based territorialisation results from the fact instead of being a safe haven, a place women defined as their “home” could become the very space where their autonomy was most severely restricted.

As outlined briefly, the notion that space has a gendered dimension is neither new nor a contemporary phenomenon. It goes back to the division into the public and private spheres, the indoor realm and its outer, communal dimension. The articles included in this collection refer to the contexts where the gendered concept of space gets interrogated and where it is put under the scrutiny. The authors who contributed to this collection are young scholars, researchers, Ph.D. students, university graduates and future candidates for doctoral programmes. They graduated from different universities; they specialise in different academic fields and represent different academic approaches. Apart from a literary and cultural perspective, they would examine the concept of space from geographical, sociological and psychological standpoints, applying new and old methodologies that have been re-interpreted by them.

The following book is divided into three sections. The opening part, entitled THE GENDERED SPACE OF LITERATURE, is devoted to the interpretations of fiction. The section commences with the essay by Jędrzej Tazbir "A descent into departure and an exploration of absence – Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* as a portrayal of the space of literature." The article examines Danielewski's experimental novel *House of Leaves*, applying Maurice Blanchot's notion of "space of literature," shared by all the participants in the reading/writing process (including the characters from the novel), which forces them to confront the "textual dislodgment from the household" of the unequivocal or comforting textual reassurance of the stable meaning. Karolina Ćwiek-Rogalska, the author of "A White Room in a Gothic Manor. Spaces of the Heroine in *Adelheid* by Vladimír Körner" examines the spatial construction of the novel *Adelheid* (1967), written by the Czech novelist Körner. Depicting German-speaking inhabitants of Czechoslovakia *Adelheid* is analysed comparatively with regard to socialist realist *Nástup* (1951) by Václav Řezáč. The spatial point of the reference constitutes the Gothic "white" room, formerly occupied by a daughter of the Heidenmanns. The last essay in this section is entitled "Defying genre stereotypes in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* and *A Little Princess*." Its author, Karolina Marzec, looks at the political and social space of children's literature, analysing two canonical books by Burnett. Applying the postcolonial and feminist methodology, the author reads the examined novels "against the grain," disclosing many contexts hidden from view. The feminist interpretation of *The Secret Garden* and *A Little Princess* proves that regardless of the morality and standards of the times in which both these novels were written, their heroines could become positive role-models for young women.

The section two SPACE, VISION AND A GENDERED PLACE commences with an essay by Marta Olasik, entitled "Towards Lesbian Studies in Poland." The article challenges stereotypes and fallacies concerning the teaching of Lesbian Studies in Poland. Olasik outlines an innovative approach to the subject; she offers a new methodology and clarifies a number of misconceptions, regarding the long-standing terminology and its range. From that perspective, her pioneering research might be regarded as opening new spaces in that area. The article by Magdalena Banasiewicz and Jan Rusek entitled "Gender Stereotypes and the Place Identity" offers an insightful analysis of the two case studies of gendered places in Poland: women-centred café Babie Lato in Częstochowa and men-oriented hairdresser's salon in Gdańsk, called The Barbers. The authors of the article examine the importance of gender and its impact on the social and cultural construction of the public space. Searching for the

characteristics of a gendered place, they critically re-interpret the notion of the place identity with regard to a gender variable. In her article “From the Kitchen to the World – Changes of Women’s Status and Attitudes on the Example of the Mexican Indian Villages in the La Huasteca Hidalguense Region” Zofia Piotrowska-Kretkiewicz examines a geographically specific region in Mexico, and she studies how the outlook on life and the social status of women coming from Nahua Indians have changed over the recent years. The author has conducted long-termed research in this area, and its results, published in the article, are based on her own findings as well as on the theoretical works concerning the subject matter. The third article in this section by Katarzyna Wojtanik explores “Space, Shape, and Movement in Signing and the Gendering of Visual Languages.” Having in mind the indicated in the title categories, the author focuses on the visual dimension of the sign language, not overlooking its gendered aspect. Her article offers a comprehensive, linguistic reading of the space in the context of the sign language.

The concluding section of the collection, THE GENDERING OF SPACE AND CULTURE, comprises the articles from the film, media and cultural studies. The final part of the book commences with an article by Agnieszka Kurzawa, entitled “Transgressing the Spaces in Film Adaptation of W. Somerset Maugham’s *The Painted Veil*.” The paper probes the separate and shared gendered spaces of the two main protagonists in *The Painted Veil* film to study the critical moments of their divergence, overlapping and intersecting. The author decodes the visual and spatial contexts in which the interactions between Kitty and Walter Fane take place. Antonina Kuras, the author of “Witches Now and Then: The Image of a Witch and Differences in the Perception of Female Witches During Sixteenth, Seventeenth Centuries and Nowadays” compares stereotypes and beliefs about witches in the past and at present. In canonical, historical texts, the author examines the roots of prejudice against women during the period of the witch-hunting, to establish which of these biased opinions have remained till now, and how they have evolved. Then, she relates to the cultural representations of witches in contemporary mainstream films and traces the attempts to reclaim the concept by the feminist activists in the 1960s. The collection terminates with a text by Joanna Trojak, entitled “Jackie, Marilyn or Someone Different – Male Constructed Myths of 1960’s Women in TV Series *Mad Men*.” Referring to seminal feminist publications, the author analyses three female characters from the titular TV series (Betty Draper, Joan and Peggy) to find the correlation between them and corresponding archetypal female icons.

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## SECTION ONE

# THE GENDERED SPACE OF LITERATURE



# A DESCENT INTO DEPARTURE AND AN EXPLORATION OF ABSENCE – MARK Z. DANIELEWSKI’S *HOUSE OF LEAVES* AS A PORTRAYAL OF THE SPACE OF LITERATURE

**JĘDRZEJ TAZBIR**

Institute of English Studies, University of Lodz

The article examines the content, form, and structure of Mark Z. Danielewski’s complex and enigmatic debut novel *House of Leaves*, in the context of Maurice Blanchot’s theoretical postulation of the “space of literature” – a conceptual space encountered by the writer seeking to produce a literary work of art, marked by absence, withdrawal, which renders the writer essentially alone, alienated, and separated from the work, incapable of expression or fulfilment, and instead put in the incessant presence of death and of speech without a source or an end. The novel, the essay argues, through its depiction of the eponymous house as well as its compositional and narratological experiments, both represents such a space in a more palpable, physical form, and portrays the impact it exerts upon those who come into contact with it – the protagonists, the narrators, and finally the readers all face the space which denies them immediacy, ownership, or fundamental knowledge, which dares and condemns them to venture into its abyss, where the self is brought into the danger of dissipation, and only the echoes of erased and lost meanings still resound.

Since its release in 2000, *House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski has stood as an intimidating challenge to prospective critics. Containing multiple narrative layers, affixed with a baroque web of references, invoking both fictional and authentic names with no inhibition, making use of avant-garde like manipulation of text as a physical object, incorporating poetry, images, collages, while at the same time playing with incompleteness and expurgation of content, the work seems ready to undermine any attempt at composing an exhaustive critique of its subject matter. It even pre-empts such endeavours by already including fictional critical comments within its own pages, many of which appear to be written in a faintly satirical manner. On the other hand, however, the text definitely offers tantalizing opportunities for literary researchers willing to follow up on numerous threads the book puts forward. Among these threads are various quotations inserted in the text without much

in the way of additional comment. One of the more mystifying instances of that is a quote from a translation of the work by Maurice Blanchot, “whoever sees God dies” wrongly described as a translation of a phrase from the Latin Bible (388). The strange, cryptic way in which the French philosopher’s words find their way into the novel definitely suggests that analysing the relationship between *House of Leaves* and his writings may be a worthwhile line of critical inquiry. This essay aims to present just such a link between the novel and one of Blanchot’s crucial concepts, mainly that of the “space of literature” (*l’espace littéraire*). It will seek to show how the unnatural interior of the house together with the layers of narrative weaved around it can actually be said to represent that space and how the often distressing if not fatal experiences of the novel’s various narrators are a result of engaging with it as authors. It will also trace how the theses developed by Blanchot could inform Danielewski’s creative decisions made during the composition of his *magnum opus*.

To indicate *House of Leaves*’ main protagonist is to select one of the multiple strands of the book’s narrative as paramount, which is hardly the proper course to take. The eponymous house of leaves is on the surface a name for the setting of the novel’s central events, yet only one of the three – or four, as it could be argued – main perspectives so much as sets foot in there. What is more, that perspective in particular only comes to us in a mediated form, as the “core” text of the novel is an extremely elaborate description and commentary of a largely one-man’s handheld camera documentary, which, as the text’s more prominent editor hastens to inform the readers right in the book’s introduction, is by all indications a pure fabrication of the writer’s mind. The “hero” of the plot is hence a character intratextually declared fictional right from the outset, and his story is in turn related – in a near academic style, which however becomes in places twisted and distorted – by a man who at the starting point of the novel is already deceased. The task of actually assembling and preparing the text for readers’ consumption falls in turn upon yet another character and voice in the text – one whose unorthodox approach to editing involves not only liberally providing his own interpretation or more general deliberations on certain passages, but also interspersing the text with lengthy accounts of his own personal life as it unfolded during and before his occupation with the manuscript. As a result, it is the editor – Johnny Truant’s – identity that is rendered the most familiar to the reader, despite his apparent lack of any direct association with the core text. Meanwhile, the identity of the actual author – who goes by the name Zampanò – remains shrouded in mystery. This remains the case even though Johnny, far from maintaining a professional detachment from the work he edits, is set on finding out the

reason why the author – who he soon realizes was blind – would undertake to create such a vivid and comprehensive account of an apparently fictional audiovisual work.

This matter of the work's genesis turns out to be even more pressing as Johnny's life becomes alarmingly transformed by the task of bringing Zampanò's legacy to life – the task undertaken for no discernible reason other than having witnessed the text lying in a pathetic heap inside of the dead man's virtual hermitage. Confronted with the text's various mysteries, which he believes can lend insight to the mysteries of Zampanò and his sad fate, Johnny's interest in the account takes the form of an obsession taking a toll on his physical as well as mental health. Johnny's repressed past is stirred by the narrative content, is brought to haunt him alongside the apparent manifestations of unknown entities referenced in the text. Horror emerges as a near constant feature of his existence, the very foundations of which now come for him into question.

But what is it about the text that exerts such a profound effect as to invade Johnny's own subjective reality? The documentary Zampanò's work so painstakingly portrays is a found-footage film registering the experiences of a family – led by a photographer and the movie's creator Will Navidson – which, after moving into a house somewhere in Virginia, suddenly starts observing certain physical anomalies. These start out in innocuous enough forms (such as inconsistent dimensions of a room when being measured from the inside and when from the outside), which however turn out to herald an inexplicable manifestation of an opening to a vast, immeasurable, dark dimension of endless and constantly changing hallways, stairways and abyssal open spaces, accessible and discernible only from inside of the building, to an unequivocal contempt of the scientific laws supposed to govern our reality. The account, titled *The Navidson Record*, found by Johnny in the form of a bundle of disjointed pages, itself represents a veritable literary maze featuring countless footnotes, appendices, and experiments with the text's composition, rendering his task infinitely demanding and time-consuming. The text refuses to acknowledge its fictional nature, firmly positioning itself as a serious treatise on an authentic cultural phenomenon, and reinforcing this notion by referencing and incorporating quotes from all sorts of real world commentators, from film and literary critics to psychoanalysts, celebrities, and Hollywood producers, all of which are deemed fake by Johnny. All the effort put into creating a convincing hoax, effort cut short by Zampanò's abrupt death, was apparently aimed at substantiating the reality of a profoundly disturbing and inhuman dimension residing within the Navidsons' house – a space of limitless passages from within which no "outside" can be reached, passages of palpable darkness, of

obscure, fluid proportions, of suspended physical laws; a site of indefinable dread, “a house in which one can never be fully at home, defined by its absences,” to quote Melanie Waltman (7). What could this space represent? Johnny is convinced that despite all the evidence of the actual video footage being non-existent, there is some sort of truth at the heart of *The Davidson Record*. This truth, as the essay intends to argue, is one that Johnny’s narrative also comes to express, and it concerns the nature of experience shared by writers since the formation of literary art, namely the experience of what Maurice Blanchot terms “the space of literature.”

The basis of Blanchot’s concept rests on the assumption that language, especially in a literary context, is not a means of representation. Rather, it is a means of negating the reality composed by things the words (on the surface, at least) symbolize. No thing and no idea can be apprehended in writing except as “a retreat, an obscuring or effacement,” a withdrawal that “opens the space in which beings appear” (6); beings which do not belong to the physical world, nor to the mind of the artist, but whose sole reality is that of the text. Essentially, “[l]iterature’s space is like the place where someone dies: a nowhere” (9), a void that forbids entry. For the writer, no relationship of direct presence can be attained with that space. It may offer “the strange immediacy, foreign to presence and to any present, of remoteness itself” (11), but at the same time it puts him in the position where nothing can be grasped or appropriated, where the work “calls upon his weakness, the incapacity in him to achieve anything at all; it *inspires* in him a kind of numbness or stupefaction.” Thus, it is also a space of exclusion and degradation, an “interminably affirmative No, which keeps on revoking all achievements” (13), leaving the writer in a state of irrevocable dissatisfaction with the work, which he cannot make to signify more than its own mere being, and of which what belongs to the writer is but a “mute collection of sterile words, the most insignificant thing in the world” (22). What is more, this thing, once written, repulses him, puts him again in “that ‘separation’ which he first entered in order to become attuned to what he had to write” (23). The writer is compelled to start over, but his aim remains ever “interminable.” He devotes himself “to a language which no one speaks, which is addressed to no one, which has no center, and which reveals nothing” (25), condemning himself in turn to both solitude and anonymity, incapable of expressing either his own *I* or anyone else’s, with the *I* of his work becoming no one’s, endemic only to the literature’s void.

The above paragraph naturally could only scratch the surface of Blanchot’s theory of literature’s space. Yet even such a brief overview reveals multiple points of applicability to the content of Danielewski’s work. An analysis of the space manifesting itself within the novel as a metaphor for

Blanchot's space of literature should take into account the space's features rendered by the text and the impact it exerts on the characters as well as, to some extent, on the reader. One can start by recapitulating that, as an actual entity, the house exists only in textual form even within the novel, and as such, it is "not taking place in the form of any object that exists" (Mallarme, qtd. in Blanchot 42). Furthermore, not one of the narrators writes about it from the position of direct familiarity. Everything the readers learn about the house comes from a source explicitly claiming to be mediating another source; a claim that is further compounded by the apparent fictitious status of the original source, as well as by the fact that, due to the stated nature of that source (a film), it could not have been directly experienced in full by the narrator, since he is identified as blind. What follows is that the house is removed from the reader by several layers of separation, to the extent that nothing he or she reads about it can be taken at face value. It is this very space between the house and the reader that comprises the actually accessible body of the text. All information about the house comes already in the process of withdrawal and consequently does not *reveal* anything of substance, all that it conveys comes concealed in ambiguity, not to be seized by any firm grip of knowledge. The epistemic status of the text could hence be described as "the resurgence of the distance at which we must place anything we wish to understand or aim to grasp" (Blanchot 11).

The fact that *The Navidson Record* describes the house not directly, but by employing this style of mediation, may reflect Zampanò's resolution to do away with the illusion of authorial ownership of the text. By means of festooning the core text with footnotes containing remarks attributed to other people – often, but not always, fictional – he fashions an imitation of a profoundly decentralized text. Katherine Hayles claims that the use of such format indicates that the novel advocates for understanding subjectivity as a "communication circuit" and for understanding literature as "remediation" (803). Yet how can there be communication when the main voices in the text never come into contact with one another and how can there be remediation when by all accounts what is actually mediated is nothing? Instead, I would posit that Zampanò's approach is on one hand an act of obfuscation, for even the authentic persons are in the context of the text made fictional and non-existent outside of its bounds, yet on the other it is also an admission of the text, together with the space it maintains, resides in, and recedes from, existing independently, always at a distance from any mind engaged in writing. The constant, almost obsessive footnotes and intertextual references may well be an attempt at demarcating those boundaries separating the space occupied by the text from that occupied by Zampanò – just like the measurements visibly performed in his room were an attempt at demarcating

the material immediate space which the abyss would not be permitted to infract on. Both these attempts would then have to be deemed unsuccessful, for while the text is always outside of the writer's grasp, the writer does not enjoy the same sovereignty, but is interminably in danger of losing his selfhood to the void.

This danger, faced by virtually every significant character in the novel, definitely corresponds with what Blanchot intimated to be one of the main sources of writers' anxiety. According to his theory, a writer setting out on a pursuit of literary art is met with a feeling of "extreme repugnance at losing his grasp upon himself in the interests of that neutral force, formless and bereft of any destiny, which is behind everything that gets written" (27). While the elderly Zampanò seems reconciled with this state of things, using what is likely a pseudonym (taken from Fellini's *La Strada*) as a signature, and leaving behind a note expressing the hope that his writing will forever fade in time, which would mark the end of any sign of his existence (Danielewski xix), others are not ready to respond to that impression with such placid passivity (which, again citing Blanchot, is "perversely" demanded of the writer (12)). The characters featured in *The Navidson Record* who undertake an exploration of the house face a real test of will. One of them, an outdoorsman named Holloway, ends up going mad, fatally shooting one of his companions before taking his own life. He is, however, shown to be desperately clinging to his identity during his final moments, with the footage recording his endlessly repetitive recital of his personal details. This suggests that even in a less than lucid state the man was somewhat aware of the damage this alien space was inducing to his mind. Navidson himself proves far more resilient to the house's influence, managing to keep a head on his shoulders throughout his multiple excursions. Yet even he, at the end of his story, when the hallways and stairways eventually give ground to a complete abyss that engulfs him, arrives at the point of giving up; his state being described as "forgetting," which the narrator equates with "dying" (Danielewski 483). One of the fictional critics cited by Zampanò makes a comparison between the house and "an immense isolation tank" where the subject "begins to create his own sensory [ ]" (330). What the individual projects (the blank space in the quote is likely meant to indicate a section of the text being illegible to Johnny), however, is consumed and negated by this space. It is impossible to leave a lasting imprint on the void, but the void itself drains those who come into contact with it of their own definition.

No character's experience of the loss of self is rendered as acute as Johnny's, though. His distress at the impersonality of the text which came into his material possession is evident, prompting him to try to ascertain as

much information about its author as he can, in part so that he can later insert it into the text by way of his comments, alongside his own biographical narrative, which could be viewed as an effort of “enshrining” an authorial consciousness into the writing *post factum*. Johnny lashes out at the abyss he perceives in place of the author’s presence in the text, restlessly puzzles over the paradoxes and contradictions emerging in part from the fact that a text with such an intense focus on the visual was apparently written by a blind man. The most fundamental lines of his inquiry remain unresolved, however. Confronting the tidbits gathered about Zampanò the man with the output of Zampanò the writer spurs only further incredulous questions and futile speculations. Some of these questions start to concern Johnny himself. As the task of compiling and editing the text usurps an increasing portion of his daily life, doubt is cast on his very ontological status, with Johnny confessing that on one occasion an accident where black ink got spilled on his hands made him experience a vision where “for a blinding instant I have watched my hands vanish, in fact all of me has vanished” (72); a vision accompanied by another apparent delusion in which he was stalked and attacked by “a beast” from the text’s pages (the explorers express suspicion that an nonspecific beast is roaming the hallways, though no conclusive evidence of that comes to light. Hayles interprets the beast’s function as that of “a signifier of absence and negation,” (paraphrased in Scarano and Krause 4)). This encounter with the void likely provokes his later digression, where he articulates a notion that the text is “inventing me, defining me, directing me until finally every association I can claim as my own . . . is relegated to nothing” (Danielewski 326). In his choice to become a part of the work, Johnny undergoes self-alienation, the receding of the *I*, just as all objects recede while within the space of literature. In Blanchotian terms, he perceives “[himself] become no one, [his] interlocutor turned alien” (27). Entering the site of the work he unwillingly cedes the grasp upon his selfhood.

The cost of one’s identity is not the only price levied upon those who enter the house. Another is that of facing the prospect of irremediable dissatisfaction and lack of any gratification for their efforts, or even, to take it further, a realization of one’s essential impotence. Just as a literary work, while setting out unique tasks for every writer, never offers a sense of completing or achieving something of value, so does the house refuse to offer any of its visitors a passage marked by a definitive end or containing anything that could be interpreted as a reward for one’s persistence, despite shifting the pattern of its interiors in response to each of them (Danielewski 165) – Zampanò’s narration states that “many inter-communicating passageways encountered by individual members, even with only a glance, will never be re-encountered by anyone else again” (118), which is consistent

with how the experience of literature is singularly unique and transient for each author or reader. In Blanchot's interpretation, the act of writing is a mediation of "what cannot cease speaking," called by the philosopher also "giant murmuring" (26), and what hence must be silenced and simultaneously made manifest by that mediation. Similarly, the explorers of the house venture into a space of infinite dimensions and boundless permutations – accompanied, one should note by an audible roar – which apparently can only cease with their departure, since, as is hypothesized in the text, the house's changes are in some way responsive to the visitor's mental state. As a result, they must elect to stop their exploration, inevitably incomplete, leave all signs of their presence to be erased by some unknown force within the house (Danielewski 162), in order to relay "their" account to the outside world.

The account will necessarily be one of a failure to capture the essence, the truth of that space, in any way that could be shared. The video and photographic recordings used by Navidson and his crew fail most patently at this, being said to "ineffectually confront the impenetrable wall of nothingness" (155) concealing the house's scale and dimensions. The mediated text of *The Navidson Record* fares better in that regard, thanks both to the power of language to convey that which footage gripped in darkness and without points of reference is unable to, and to the experiments with the text's composition, meant to highlight and render more tangible the concepts describing the space and its traversal – such as the void, an endless fall, or a laborious ascent. Literature turns out to be capable of conveying more about a reality in the state of withdrawal and absence – one should also note that another means of doing so utilized by Zampanò is an almost interminable list of things which were *not* found in the house, included in a footnote carving its way across multiple pages, as if to make the absence even more physical – It is, after all, a state that mirrors its own nature, and its property of placing the writer at a distance from what he strives to render, as opposed to the 'immediate' medium of ortographic recording, also definitely factors into it.

At this point it would be pertinent to mention that, despite being a man of images, Navidson apparently comes into contact with the written account of the house's space as well. In what ranks among the most enigmatic and arguably symbolic scenes in the novel, the photographer, after arriving at a dead end in his final exploration, brings out a book never before mentioned to be in his possession, entitled *House of Leaves*, and starts reading it, using the light emanating from the very book's burning pages as a source of illumination, eventually having it fully devoured by flames immediately after finishing the read. There are certainly manifold ways to view this episode, but applying the theory selected for this essay, one may conclude that it

represents the literary space of the house finally and decisively repelling Navidson from within itself (as afterwards the man starts falling down a bottomless abyss only to emerge, with the help of his girlfriend, back in his familiar worldly surroundings). The text, the book both produced by and containing this space, manifests to him, but only in the act of its own effacement, irreversible destruction. Navidson experiences the space in its true form, but in doing so he is separated from it, witnesses it fall silent and mute, instead of capturing and preserving it, as he set out to do with his ineffectual recordings. His efforts are hence frustrated and diminished just as he fleetingly becomes intimate with what he cannot hope to remediate.

That is, however, not to say that the novel's "writerly" voice does not have to cope with the sense of frustration and powerlessness as well. It has already been mentioned how Johnny fails to ascertain any conclusive answers to his most burning questions. His engagement with Zampanò's legacy finally expires after he encounters the text he has been working on, including his editorial input, in the hands of randomly met strangers. It is left ambiguous whether this should be read as a consequence of his – unmentioned – previous actions, or as another indication of Johnny's suspect ontological status. In any case, the situation prompts him to bring his work, by his own admission incomplete and one which he does not "entirely understand" (514), to an end, as if he was sensing the text withdrawing, pushing him away. This resolution – later actualised by burning the manuscript, in accordance with the writer's inability to maintain relation with the work – causes a semblance of inner solace to return to his psyche, the underlying fear and tension giving way to a lull. However, at this point, Johnny is aware of "a Voice, which though invisible to the eye and frequently unheard by even the ear still continues, day and night, year after year, to sweep through us all" (518). The voice is likely that of literature, inspiring the always returning urge to take up writing again, to try to finish the interminable. Nonetheless, Johnny's feeling of being released from the text leads him to come to an important and apparently final conclusion regarding his past. Still, the conclusion's resounding conflict with the established facts makes one wonder where that newfound conviction originated from, whether it was not the result of Johnny realizing the absence of what he used to believe defined him, and using that realization to craft fictions which would render his existence more bearable. The memory of his mother attempting to kill him as a child is in the course of Johnny's story first brought out of the limbo of repression and then erased by the abyss, leaving room for a new narrative.

In this way, Johnny's denouement appears far more optimistic than that of Zampanò. The latter, perhaps in some part due to his blindness, heard the "Voice" so insistently that silence could come only by means of his death

– self-inflicted in some capacity, judging from a letter he left immediately prior to it. A passage from Blanchot on the subject of fascination appears pertinent in this context:

[f]ascination is solitude's gaze. It is the gaze of the incessant and interminable. In it blindness is vision still, vision which is no longer the possibility of seeing, but the impossibility of not seeing, the impossibility which becomes visible and perseveres – always and always – in a vision that never comes to an end. (31)

In these words may lie an answer to one of Johnny's queries: the meticulously detailed account left behind by the author would then be indicative of a vision far more pervasive and overwhelming than any physical sight – a vision sprouting from fascination with literature, before which manifested literature's space of solitude, of an endless, all-consuming darkness of absence and self-negation.

Zampanò could not sate the vision with any amount of written output – when interrogated by Johnny, one woman who used to visit Zampanò “remarked that ‘whatever it was he could never quite address in himself prevented him from ever settling’” (xxii) – nor could he finish it in a satisfactory manner, as evidenced both by the abruptness and tonal inadequacy of the existing ending, and the pieces contained in the appendices indicating a different and far more grim direction for the story being planned (ii). Planned, though not realized, as Zampanò chose death over further preoccupation with the text, with no prospect of an end in sight. And as Blanchot asserts, the writer, “in order to sustain [the incessant Voice], has necessarily made it stop – has, in this intermittence, rendered it perceptible” (36). It is a disquieting paradox that the artist must terminate that which resounds interminably in his head and which defines him to such a great extent, must assume a stance of passivity even while an inner compulsion urges him to continue the work, and by doing so sever his connection with the text which materializes only as already withdrawing and forbidding him entry. The irresolvable nature of this quandary and the alienation deriving from it may be why the figure of a writer is so often a tragic one; it may also be treated as an argument in favour of Hayles' idea of a communication circuit as an alternative to the writer's solitude. Nonetheless, the idea does not find expression in the novel, Johnny's awareness of others picking up where he left off may factor in his subsequent relative tranquillity, but it does not prefigure any reciprocal engagement with those people – whose presence manifests in the book as notes from the conspicuously anonymous “editors.” Each authorial figure in *House of Leaves* acts and speaks in isolation.

Isolation, in turn, puts one in the presence of death, and indeed, according to Blanchot “[t]he work requires death, the source, to be in the work; it demands that in it the ending, which initiates all beginnings, swell up as the essence of all swelling, all unfurling and flowering” (6). Death and the consciousness of it pervade the text, the house is compared to an ancient tomb, though perhaps, as a place of loss of definition and of absence [absence to be distinguished from simple nothingness, as pointed out by Chandler Bullock, who defines the house’s absence as “an ever present perpetuation of Being” (5)], it should rather be compared to “the place where someone dies.” Zampanò’s death initiates the plot, allows the resurgence and promulgation of his work, but there are other deaths inscribed in the text. Some of them explicitly, like those of Johnny’s mother, Pelafina, and Delilah – a girl photographed by Navidson while at the edge of death – which are shown to be constitutive in turn of those characters and their narratives. Yet there seems to be another death of unspecified identity residing beneath the surface of *The Navidson Record*, with the scrupulously erased – and even more scrupulously retrieved by Johnny – references to the mythical Minotaur meant to hint at its presence; the presence of a consciousness swallowed by and enmeshed in the labyrinth of the text. According to some theories, the Minotaur in question stands for Pelafina, who was sentenced to exile inside the confines of an asylum. Others, however, point to Johnny himself, whose voice in the text would then be a creation of one of the other voices. The implications of the latter possibility are quite beyond the scope of this essay, though.

Just as Navidson, in his attempts to study the house, to penetrate its abyssal darkness in search of substance so as to repel the recurring memories of Delilah, tries to counteract the presence of death, so does Johnny, by working to impose order and function upon Zampanò’s manuscript, struggle to nullify the death that pervades it and that its tangled, cryptic form represents. Katharine Cox writes that “[t]he loss of his mother is the unfathomable abyss that infiltrates the labyrinth” (8). This essay’s line of interpretation would rather state that it is the encounter with the abyss that conjures the loss. The space of the house is a space where death’s presence is acute and inescapable, immanent to its interior. By compiling and editing the book Johnny could be aiming at bringing it to “life” and simultaneously pacifying it (Waltman maintains instead that Johnny intends rather to “bind the book together and bury it, take away its power, kill the monster inside it” (10), though the fact he only “buries” or destroys it after seeing its copy circulating among others seems to go against such interpretation), but in doing so he is trying to force it into a form that is not appropriate for it. Rather, it is this initial jumbled pile of pages that more accurately represented

the nature of the work – chaotic, manic, unfinished and unconstrained, which “expresses nothing except the word being” (Blanchot 21).

Thus, one comes to surmise that the warning placed at the beginning of the novel – “[t]his is not for you” (Danielewski xix), may be a piece of advice worth heeding. For to enter the space of the house, the space of the texts comprising Danielewski’s novel, is to become submerged in a dimension where immediacy is rendered unattainable, where objects and images fall to be dissolved and withdrawn, leaving a landscape of sterility, darkness, and endless void, where no meaning can be ascertained and no resolution reached. To be ensconced in a site whose provenance is in death, and where one loses one’s relation to the self and others, is to come into solitude and be hounded by the underlying murmur of speech which relays only its own being, and yet also be called upon to sever one’s ties to the unalterably unfinished and unsatisfactory work, and to be subsequently isolated from it for ever. Still, despite all that, the mystery and the elusive potentialities of this space serve to continuously attract the minds sensitive – and susceptible – to its reality. *House of Leaves* presents the readers with multiple individuals seduced by this allure, fatally in one case and near fatally in others. By its creative and eclectic use of extremely varied and daring stylistic devices, it offers genuine insight into the actual nature of that space, unrepresentable by direct means. It confronts the readers with and puts them in the position of the minds engaged in the search of literary art. It does so by distancing them from the text, by rendering the text ambiguous and suspect, by providing a near incalculable number of threads to explore, none of which can appease the readers’ lust for revelations, finally by fashioning a narrative invoking an ontological anxiety, inspiring a sense of unease regarding the immutability of the laws governing the material world. The anguish of the characters lost inside the dark and inhospitable hallways of the house, witnessing the disruption of their identities and the undermining of their agencies, engenders itself, to a certain extent, to the readers as well, so that all partake of the solitude of one – even momentarily – no longer at home with mankind.

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## A WHITE ROOM IN A GOTHIC MANOR. SPACES OF THE HEROINE IN *ADELHEID* BY VLADIMÍR KÖRNER

**KAROLINA ČWIEK-ROGALSKA**

Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences

To say that the actions of literary characters are played out in a certain cultural-historical space seems trivial. However, there are many novels in which the spatial construction of the fictional world becomes particularly meaningful. Descriptions of space start to be significant, and the space itself ceases to be a mere background to the protagonists' actions, and it begins to affect them, to tell its own story. It is no different in the case of *Adelheid* (1967), a novel written by the Czech writer Vladimír Körner. The rules of the spatial construction in the world that Körner shows us are disturbed, which leads to the disappearance of the familiar distinction between the public and private. This is due to the situation in which the characters are placed: the world described in *Adelheid* shows the post-war situation in Czechoslovakia just before the organised expulsions of German-speaking inhabitants of the country, the end of the 700-year-long coexistence of Czechs and Germans.

In this text, I analyse one of the most significant places that are described in the novel. It is a room of the daughter of the previous owners, located in the manor where the main character arrives to become a new administrator of the estate. The problem of the post-war re-settlement of the Borderlands and the way in which the issue is conceptualised and described is highlighted by comparing *Adelheid* and the most famous Czech novel concerning the same period, a socialist realist work by Václav Řezáč entitled *Nástup* (1951). Such a comparison is justified because even the names of the towns where the action takes place in both novels are interrelated: Grünbach (*Nástup*) and Schwarzbach (*Adelheid*). While the protagonists of Řezáč's novel look at a new world full of possibilities, those from *Adelheid* are far from such enthusiasm. In Řezáč's work the name suggests a green area, and, therefore, flowering, spring, the beginning of new life – which is, of course, brought with the new Czech settlers. Therefore, it is not surprising that Řezáč's characters from time to time contemplate the beauty of the resettled village. Meanwhile Viktor, the main character of *Adelheid*, arrives in Schwarzbach, an unfriendly place, connoting darkness, decline and fear. Moreover, it is seen as such by the hero himself. The novel by Řezáč was written shortly

after the war, at the time of “post-war euphoria of the end of the war and liberation” as well as “attempts to fulfil the theses of socialist realism” (Tomáš 77). Körner, writing *Adelheid* in 1967, already had a large enough distance to the war itself as well as to the “liberation.”

The use of the novel *Nástup*, and not some other books of the epoch, as a counterpoint for *Adelheid* can also be justified in another way. The work by Řezáč embodies the essence of the socialist realist way of writing about the borderland: “*Nástup* is its peak partly because most works written after *Nástup* only try to problematize the theme ..., but also because *Nástup* represents a motivic and thematic synthesis of previous works” (Tomáš 78). Körner must, therefore, be aware that his narrative steps into a world already so suggestively outlined by Řezáč in the minds of readers. Consequently, the narrator in *Adelheid* speaks to us not only from a different cognitive and ideological point of view, but it also uses other tools.

Viktor Chotovický, the main protagonist of *Adelheid*, arrives at Schwarzbach with a precisely defined purpose. He has to look after a German estate, namely the manor of Alfréd Heidenmann, one of the prominent local Nazi officials. The house, which Körner frequently refers to as a “little castle” (Czech *zámeček*), is located outside the village. Amazingly, this makes it similar to a transit camp for Germans, which is also placed somewhere outside Schwarzbach. Thus, the standpoints of Viktor and the former inhabitants waiting to be expelled are similar, as they are social outcasts who remain on the margins of society. The impression is intensified by the fact that Viktor, although he is Czech, has just come back from the West. He spent the war in England, in the auxiliary service of the RAF. In his homeland, now under a communist regime, he is, therefore, not welcome and he seems suspicious.

Viktor is looking for peace and quiet. However, the mere sight of Heidenmann’s estate gives the impression that peace will be hard to achieve there – unless we mean the eternal peace. The manor or, as Körner wants it, the “little castle,” a property of a German awaiting trial in Olomouc, is a grim building in the pseudo-historicist style, which, at first – but only at first glance may look appealing. Viktor, coming from the fields, can see:

At the end of the alley ... the house and the greenish sheet metal of the copper tower .... The manor at the end of the alley was quiet and the last beam of sunlight was reflected in the windows, as if light was already turned on inside. A sandy path forked next to a neglected rose-bed and joined again at the sandstone stairs where a mattress and some gilded frames lay scattered around. (Körner 23)

The pseudo-light in the windows suggests the will-o'-the-wisp, leading wanderers astray, as well as the lights in the windows which a hero of fairy tales notices, while wandering through the woods. Like them, the lights in the windows of the manor disappear when Viktor comes closer. A neglected flower-bed and the visible signs of looting can be regarded as a symbolic representation of what is left of German culture in the region. To quote the Russian literary scholar Vladimir Toporov: "the abandonment of space, the disappearance of its constant elements ... arouses trepidation in the human soul" (47). The manor itself, without its inhabitants, who disappeared from there, can cause such feelings in the hero. Gradually approaching the building, Viktor sees all the elements of horror in Heidenmann's house:

Mature plane trees put the front of the house in deep shade, on plastered wooden rails strained and blushed the wild vine, sharp crosses of the Knights of Malta were silhouetted against both towers, and ... the gaping mouths and heads of gargoyles: the little devils and lizards. (Körner 23)

The manor is, therefore, equipped with all the elements vital to Gothic horror fiction. The house, pictured as in the nineteenth-century Gothic novel, not without coincidence, raises similar associations in one of Viktor's guests: "You live here nicely .... Perfect Middle Ages" (Körner 76). The Gothicism of the manor is also highlighted by the first book leafed through by Viktor – lying open on the lectern, there are poems by Walter von der Vogelweide. Also the inside of the house bears the hallmarks of the Gothic. The view that greets Viktor after he enters is "a suit of knightly armor scattered on the floor like a shadow of a sleeping or dead man" (Körner 23). The first association with the scattered knightly armour which Viktor has is of a sleeping or dead man. However, there can be another interpretation of this view, which is the result of the actions of the looters. The abandoned weapons and armour can create the illusion of a sleeping knight. His role was to defend the house when the worst danger came. However, he could not wake up on time, leaving only sad remains, no longer needed by anybody: even to the looters they did not seem valuable.

But this is not the only knight on the estate. Heidenmann's house is full of signs of its former glory, also glory of arms. In the garden there is "a statue of St. George ... a dimmed, bronze lizard ... covered in mud" (Körner 53). Similarly to a scattered suit of armour, Saint George stands in the corner of the garden muddy and abandoned, as if the chivalrous ethos "appropriated" by the previous owners left this world for good. The last knight in the house is a portrait of a crusader, hanging in the living room on the ground floor of the building. What especially frightens Viktor is a cage, located in the garden of the estate. On the basis of the dried blood stains, whips and leather straps

which he finds inside it, he concludes that this is where Heidenmann used to keep foxes or disobedient hunting dogs (Körner 31). He is, however, informed that he is wrong: "That's what a medieval pillory looked like, it's a copy. Old Heidenmann sometimes locked in here some Polish prisoners. He had them working in the forest. He comfortably let them go without food for two days and one got beaten by him just at the stairs" (Körner 35). It brings associations with Gothic images of slavery in American literature, as described by Ellen J. Goldner. This kind of discourse does not have to be rational and based on facts, as Goldner argues. Instead, it has to show the distortion of the lens through which we look at certain social phenomena (Goldner 60). This is not the last clue which tells us to think about the meaning of Gothic stylization used by Körner in *Adelheid*.

A cage, as I try to prove further, is a recurring theme in the novel. An uncanny concatenation of German love of the Middle Ages, the romantic surroundings of the manor, and, at the same time, the cruelty attested by the cage, is a combination typical of stories about the Nazis. The greater problem arises when the title heroine of the novel, Adelheid, appears. She is sent there as a maid, but she turns out to be the daughter of old Heidenmann. She does not speak Czech, Viktor does not speak German. They communicate in a kind of sign language; actually until the end of the novel they do not have an opportunity for a normal conversation. As the narrator shows us the events from the perspective of Viktor, we can trace the way the protagonist tries to understand Adelheid and her story by exploring the surrounding area: the Gothic mansion, and later also Adelheid's room from her childhood years.

This process of the transition from open to smaller, closed places, as in this case from Heidenmann's manor as a whole to a small room in its distant part, is similar to the process described by Toporov. The Russian scholar treats the closing of space around the characters as an analogy of transition from a wide and open living space to the narrow and confined space of death (Toporov 43). Viktor's feelings could, therefore, be connected to the death that fills the property of the convicted German – through the dried blood in the cage, through the spirit of past Nazi glory, and through the fate of the characters of *Adelheid*. Here, too, the fact that Körner stylizes the space of the whole manor as that of a Gothic mansion has its meaning. As Paul Lewis writes, "it escaped the attention of many readers and critics that, for all its tawdriness, the Gothic novel by presenting mysteries raises and often answers important questions about man, society, and the universe" (207). He is right when he points out that the often ridiculed setting of Gothic novels is not just a tool of building horror, but it can fulfil other functions. How, then, can it be interpreted in Körner's novel?

Lewis notes that the authors of Gothic novels often used the genre to ask the question about the nature of evil. I think that Gothicism in *Adelheid* has a similar function. This stylization is, to a certain extent, a story of cruelty which rules in this fictional world. What is Gothic here shows its simplest face and one that is easiest to discern. Through the stylization, Körner distances himself from the demonization of German culture – he himself, through the images described here, demonizes it up to the limit of absurdity – present before in the earlier-mentioned *Nástup*, as well as in other works from the epoch, and he draws attention to the space in which cruelty can easily pass unrecognised: an apparently innocent “white room” of Adelheid. The bottom line lies in the realm of human relationships which are full of incomprehension and the obstacles to dialogue, based on suspicion, prejudice and false preconceptions.

In this context, the “white room,” discovered relatively late by Viktor, proves to be an important space in Heidenmann’s house; equally important are the objects therein. For, as Toporov writes, “things not only constitute space by determining its borders and separating space from non-space, but they also organize it structurally, giving it gravity and importance (semantic management of space)” (30). There are things in the “white room” – which turns out to be the former room of Adelheid – that will provide Viktor with the clues as to how to understand the past of the woman. They will also make the definite sense of this past.

At the beginning, Viktor notes that Adelheid has not visited the room since she was sent to the mansion as a maid, because everything is covered with dust, despite the protective covers on the furniture. Viktor names the room “white” because this colour dominates over others in terms of the decoration and interior design. Soon he discovers that the room once belonged to Adelheid, who from the owner of the house turned into a servant. The dominant piece of furniture in the room seems to be the piano, but it is silent – as noted by the hero: “every touch of the fingers remained noticeable in the dust, he could write down on the lid” (Körner 40). The fact that it is Viktor who gives the name to the room puts him in a special position: naming something makes him the discoverer, someone who makes a place his own. In this way the “white room” starts to belong more to him than to Adelheid. When we interpret the space in this way, it reveals other meanings.

Viktor’s attention is drawn by a singing picture hanging on the wall, whose mechanism still works. It plays one of the songs by Haydn – a quite frivolous, yet depressing song of a young man proposing a love-meeting to a girl. As noted by Viktor, the tones of the mechanism and the song itself do not fit in with the elegant room of a lady from the mansion, but the picture would rather hang in a rural cottage room (Körner 40). The image of Adelheid is

becoming more and more ambiguous; it is also worth noting the words of the song. Körner quotes only a fragment of it, and it is difficult to understand that the song is actually addressed to a nun, and not just to the girl whom the boy wishes to meet. Can the “white room” play the same role as the monastery walls, be a kind of cage? Eventually, the picture sings to Viktor: “Halten Klostermauern dich nochso streng gebunden” (“The monastery walls keep you closed so strictly”). It is said in the novel that Adelheid took the picture as the only possession from her old house when the family moved into the manor. May it suggest that somehow she identified with the nun to whom the song was addressed? And later, was she not a prisoner of the “white room” which, in addition to the necessary objects for a young lady from a good family (a dusty piano), contains also the things connected with National Socialism? Viktor finds in the room a paperweight with the words “Alles für Deutschland” and Heidemann family photos demonstrating their relation with the regime.

The hero – before his look is directed to the girl’s desk, with its paperweight and framed photograph – also finds a family album. There are two very different pictures of the Heidenmanns in it. The first must have been taken in the 1920s: Adelheid is still a girl, her brother is held by the parents. The fact that the family is still nothing more than one of many average German families of the First Czechoslovak Republic is visible in the setting of the photo. The Heidenmanns are sitting on a birch bench, behind them is a garden and a large Silesian house (Körner 41). The last photograph in the album, the same which stands on the desk in the frame, presents the same, yet now a completely different family:

old Heidemann looks firmly into the camera, the passing years have made him bolder and more straight, next to him a slightly older woman in a wheelchair for the seriously ill has bent her head; beside his father stands a young man in uniform and, in harmony with them, a young woman in the shirt and scarf of the League of German Girls. (Körner 41)

As can be seen, it is not simply that time has passed between one photograph and the other, but also a certain epoch. While the first photo depicted the Heidenmanns as one of many German families in Czech Silesia, the second is already a portrait of Nazi supporters, with a son in the Wehrmacht and a daughter in the League of German Girls. In this way from a nice family picture we pass on to the photo which is proof of sympathy with the Nazi regime. The photo is dated 12th October 1939. Six years after the photograph was taken, nothing is left of the arrogance of old Heidemann and the Wagnerian glory of his family. In the ashes of the former glory there stands a

stranger – what is more, a Slav – holding in his hand the memorabilia of a proud family.

Because of the symbolism of the white colour, the “white room” should supposedly be a witness of the girlish innocence of Adelheid. However, the things stored in it make this space more ambiguous. It could also be a prison from which Adelheid never managed to escape, because the past has caught up with her even when she is a humiliated representative of those who lost the war. In this room, we can see the traces of a bygone era of Nazi rule: a paperweight and a photo on the desk. Neither is there an escape for the heroine from the duties imposed by the zeitgeist. At the same time, Viktor’s search in the room can be seen as an attempt to exorcise the evil elements of this space, as noted by Toporov (68). This exorcism as yet seems to be unsuccessful.

But how to interpret the fact that the space is presented through Viktor’s eyes, and not Adelheid’s? Does Körner draw our attention to the fact that we know as little about the heroine as Viktor does?; assuming that she is beyond simple imagination – and, thus, it also cannot be put into propaganda stereotypes of Czech Germans? How can we connect Heidemann’s house as a Gothic manor, as Viktor sees it, and the “white room” of Adelheid placed in the middle of it? Since it is named “white” by Viktor, it should be located at the opposite, symbolic end.

To conclude, the fact that we get to know the “white room” through Viktor’s eyes makes us doubt, as he doubts, the accuracy of his interpretation. Viktor is unable to know Adelheid, because he does not know how to talk to her. As a result, he interprets her behaviour, searching for answers in the artefacts of her past, closed in the “white room.” This seemingly innocent – “white” room turns out to be a collection of the contradictory histories preserved in the things it contains, and it is the evidence of such a confused interpretation. The “white” room stands in contrast to the dark Gothic mansion, as silent Adelheid stands in opposition – at least in the initial idealistic conception of Viktor – to Heidemann, considered to be a criminal. However, this innocence originated in Viktor’s imagination, and on closer inspection it turns out to be more ambivalent. At the same time, the search performed by Viktor in the “white room” is another sign of an invasion of Adelheid’s privacy: she is deprived of the rights to the house, and later she is also exposed by so thorough a search of her old room. The heroine becomes a foreign intruder in her own home. She becomes almost a ghost, because she loses any impact on the spaces in which she is enclosed. If we consider the Gothic trappings present in the novel, Adelheid may appear to be a “white lady,” a ghost imprisoned in her former place of residence, of whose previous life only traces remain. The place where these traces are particularly

accumulated is the “white room,” which for Viktor becomes another enigma concerning Adelheid. An examination of this room, based on the understanding only of what is visual and non-linguistic, does not allow Viktor to decide whether Adelheid is an innocent victim of history or a co-participant of the events. The interpretation of the meaning of the things stored in the room leads Viktor only to a deeper fascination with the character of Adelheid.

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# DEFYING GENRE STEREOTYPES IN FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT'S *THE SECRET GARDEN* AND *A LITTLE PRINCESS*

**KAROLINA MARZEC**

Institute of English Studies, University of Lodz

Children's literature is a vast genre which employs many tropes and motifs worth discussing, however, it has been, surprisingly, ignored by scholars for many years. The genre, until recently, has been undervalued as light reading, and although it is educational for the young recipient, it has not been considered as providing deep analytical meaning and insight. Books of this genre were to help children adapt to rudimentary social norms, standards of behaviour and propriety. Since adults were considered educated when it came to these terms, this style of writing was recognised as irrelevant for them. Nevertheless, things have changed and, as Paula S. Fass states, "the history of children and childhood is a new and energetic field of inquiry that provides critical insights into the human past and contemporary social experience" (xi). Being one of the scholars who research children's literature, Fass underlines the significance of the genre as a valuable testimony of how societies change and develop, but, most importantly, she explains how literature for the youngest readers has finally gained its respect:

This explosion of historical scholarship into previously underexplored or unexplored arenas was one of the signal achievements of social science in the second half of the twentieth century. Social history broke down the tight walls of earlier historical scholarship that was largely confined to an exploration of the people at the top and the politics of power. In breaching those walls, scholars allowed children to come into view. (xi)

The moment children started to be perceived as significant members of the society, the role of literature solely devoted to them and about them also rose. The messages one finds in children's literature speak not only about the child's position, but they also characterise the writer who conveys them. One has to remember that it was by all means adults who were responsible for some of the most prominent fiction dedicated to children. And among them, there is also Frances Hodgson Burnett. The moment, however, when an adult

starts analysing a work for a younger generation, they find depth and allusions that were not obvious for the original target readers.

While children are often the perceived audience for these texts, adult perceptions of the difficulties at the heart of the project mean that they provide a richer, multilayered reading experience for adults as well as children. Of course, it must be remembered that the childhoods portrayed in fictions, whether based on an ideal or an author's own, are always a fiction; a construction dependent on the Romantic image of the innocent linked to the feminine. The awareness of the adult writer and adult reader of the desire to portray this lost world in fiction deepens the sense of loss. It is the growing self-consciousness of this fictionality that marks the difference in tone in children's literature as we move toward the Modernist period. (Thacker 54)

As Thacker puts it, there is a hidden message of a lost world that the author communicates throughout their work, and which can be understood only by another adult reading it. These are the messages that are yet to be discovered when the child reader grows older, bearing in mind the fondness for the book they once read, or messages that should be there in plain sight for the adult reader, who also might learn something new from reading a children's novel. Yet, some adults might display a considerable reluctance to a children's book. One must, thus, understand that the writers who have achieved success in children's literature usually touched upon political and social issues. What is the most interesting, however, is the fact that Burnett's writing consists of a strident critique of the status quo in the British society and of proposals of changes which can, and, should be implemented by her readers. These are definitely notions which are way beyond the understanding of the youngest recipients; nevertheless, a close reading by a more mature audience allows them to realise the importance of the discussed novels.

Although for many readers Burnett is only recognisable as the author of timeless children's novels, she was an established and popular writer, with a substantial number of published titles:

Burnett published more than fifty novels, most of them for adults, and wrote and produced thirteen plays. She was the highest-paid and best-known woman author of her time, and from the time she was eighteen and published a short story in *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine* her work was never turned down by any publisher. (Gerzina ix)

Her own life and experience can exemplify the breaking of the stereotype of an obedient housewife who lives only to serve within the patriarchal system and who follows the rules she does not agree with, and submissively waits all her life for a man to provide for her. Being the self-made woman Burnett

truly was, she tried to put some of her own experience into her books, and inspire younger generations to change the world they live in or at least change the way they perceive it. Many critics, nevertheless, do not see the notions conveyed in her books as the ones reaching beyond the standard and obvious motifs. For some scholars, for example for Roderic McGillis, *A Little Princess* is a standard "school story" (*Gender and Empire* 17); for others, *The Secret Garden* is merely a story about dealing with a loss of a beloved person. One of the critics claims that "*The Secret Garden* is about the completion of a process of mourning. It is the completion of this process, for Mary, for Colin, and for Colin's father, moreover, which makes possible the image of the family restored with which the book concludes" (Gohlke 899). All these observations may be true within different analytical aspects, however, they show a very typical way of approaching Burnett's work. Nevertheless, since different scholars point out different features of the novels as the most prominent ones, this paper is meant to prove that, above all, Frances Hodgson Burnett was displeased with the British society and the values it represented, most importantly, with the space of the genre stereotypes that ruled within the industry of children's literature and among ordinary people in her times. The analysis is to prove that by writing her novels, Burnett sends timeless messages to her readers and inspires generations, as the values she cherishes are still on demand even in our times.

The beginning of the twentieth century was marked by many social changes; it was the time of women fighting for their independent position within the society. As Jenni Murray says, "the twentieth century will, without doubt, be viewed by historians as the Woman's Hour;" Burnett must have been influenced by the changes of which she was a witness. The author watched women grow more powerful in their willingness to change their situation, and although they were not very successful at the beginning, they began the struggle and infused many other people with their ideas and spirit. Murray notes that the suffragists "were unsuccessful in their immediate objective;" nevertheless, "in the early part of the century the suffragists argued powerfully, but peacefully for the vote." From the position of a writer, Burnett could also inspire the younger generations, and although she does not openly support the women's movement, she opposes to the stereotypes ruling children's literature. Jan Susina points out that:

Victorian children's literature reflected the culture's separate spheres for men and women with different types of books written for girls and boys. Stories for girls were often domestic and celebrated the family life, such as Alcott's *Little Women* or Kate Douglas Wiggin's *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903). Stories for boys, such as MARK TWAIN's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

(1876) and its sequel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), encouraged boys to have adventures. (182)

Gender thus had an immense influence on children's literature, as writers had a tendency to create different stories depending on the target reader. If the story was to be read by boys, it had elements of adventure and danger, encouraging the readers to idealise the protagonists and favourably follow their examples. The same point of view was applied to stories for girls, however, young women were to follow the domestic lifestyle, learn how to behave in society, respect customs and traditions, and play the part of "the angel in the house." Nevertheless, Susina argues that it was not only the fictional protagonist who played a major role in the distinction within literature:

Children's literature historically has been more open to women as authors and illustrators because it has been considered less significant than adult literature and because publishers have regarded women as more capable of teaching and raising children. Children's literature also began to segment itself in terms of social class as penny dreadfuls, or dime novels, were produced for the working class and more high-minded literature was produced for the middle and upper classes. (183)

One may say that Burnett, being a woman, had surprisingly an easier start as a children's literature writer. Nevertheless, she did not write stories in the already presented manner, which made her a pioneer of a kind, a person who defies the already accepted norms. Her books present a slightly different aspect of what was usually credited as literature for girls and young women. That is why she had to show great determination in getting her messages across and reaching such a broad readership.

*A Little Princess* shows a plethora of examples how Frances Hodgson Burnett points out the mistakes and cruelties of the British society in her times. By following the story of the protagonist, one is shown that children were looked down upon, treated like objects, not able to speak for themselves. Miss Minchin – the owner of the school Sara goes to – looks at the child only through the perspective of her personal benefit, not allowing the girl to speak when necessary and constantly expressing her frustrations over Sara's sudden impoverishment. A French lesson where Sara is not asked whether she can speak the foreign language is one of the most prominent examples showing Miss Minchin's attitude:

'As your papa has engaged a French maid for you,' she [Miss Minchin] began, 'I conclude that he wishes you to make a special study of the French language.'

Sara felt a little awkward.

'I think he engaged her,' she said, 'because he – he thought I would like her, Miss Minchin.'

'I am afraid,' said Miss Minchin, with a slightly sour smile, 'that you have been a very spoiled little girl and always imagine that things are done because you like them. My impression is that your papa wished you to learn French.'  
(*A Little Princess* 23)

This attitude is presented throughout the scene: Sara is forced to talk to the French teacher without being able to explain that her mother was French, and that she has been speaking French since as far as she can remember. It is the French teacher, astonished and amazed by the girl's fluency and accent, who finally allows her to speak and, thus, allows her unintentionally to prove Miss Minchin wrong:

'Ah, madame,' he said, 'there is not much I can teach her. She has not *learned* French; she is French. Her accent is exquisite.'

'You ought to have told me,' exclaimed Miss Minchin, much mortified, turning on Sara.

'I – I tried,' said Sara. 'I – I suppose I did not begin right.'

Miss Minchin knew she had tried, and that it had not been her fault that she was not allowed to explain. (*A Little Princess* 26)

This passage can serve only as a small example of how the girl is treated throughout the book: always scorned, never allowed to speak for herself.

In the case of Sara, however, it was also the financial status that played a major part in the way she was treated by adults as well as her peers; for the benefit of the plot a personal vendetta of Miss Minchin was used to somehow justify the cruelty. The child is not given a voice of her own and she is often enough spoken for instead of listened to. Within the issue of child labour and child abuse, the character of Becky plays a dominant part as she is most inhumanely exploited, whereas Anne, a beggar girl who is helped by Sara, serves as a self-reliant respectable girl who, when treated like a human being, changes her position from a victim of poverty to a child with perspectives, and who is arguably the girl with the best chance to be treated as an equal subject in the whole story. These are definitely uncommon issues for a children's novel to be presented.

In *The Secret Garden* Burnett continues to criticise the British society, but she shows a different approach, focusing on the imperialistic issues which influence children's well-being. The colonial child she presents both in Mary Lennox and in Colin Craven is juxtaposed with the image of the Romantic child – a healthy and strong young person. Although one has to be aware that Burnett cannot be perceived as a postcolonial writer, she shows traces of a

changing mindset. The neglected and disagreeable Mary is, thus, presented as emotionally detached because of her parents' focus on the Empire and entertainments:

Her father had held a position under the English Government and had always been busy and ill himself, and her mother had been a great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay people. She had not wanted a little girl at all, and when Mary was born she handed her over to the care of an Ayah, who was made to understand that if she wished to please the Memsahib she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible. So when she was a sickly, fretful, ugly little baby she was kept out of the way, and when she became a sickly, fretful, toddling thing she was kept out of the way also. (*The Secret Garden* 1)

This is the passage that opens the book, proving from the very beginning that the author does not express any sympathy or fondness towards Mary's parents. Later in the novel, an objective observer comments on Mary's father and mother, as well as on their attitudes towards the child, once it is noticed that the child is spoiled and contrary:

'Perhaps if her mother had carried her pretty face and her pretty manners oftener into the nursery, Mary might have learned some pretty ways, too. It is very sad, now the poor beautiful thing is gone, to remember that many people never even knew that she had a child at all.' (*The Secret Garden* 9)

By presenting the parents as the most detestable guardians, Burnett takes an anti-imperialist position, proving that Mary's overuse of power over servants derives from her parents' egoistic approach. Again, a brave idea to present such matters at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Even though these books – from the historical point of view – cannot be classified as postcolonial ones, the tropes of postcolonialism become more prominent once the reader realises that the stories are about a child who is not allowed to speak for themselves or about the imperialistic power abuse that is manifested in the way a protagonist treats a servant. The above mentioned examples in *A Little Princess* (1905) and in *The Secret Garden* (1911) can be perceived as a critical comment on the British society. Nevertheless, from the contemporary point of view, they show the marks of a postcolonial thinking and Roderick McGillis states that “obviously, Burnett's evocation of India in both *The Secret Garden* and *A Little Princess* has a colonialist aspect that has remained unnoticed until recently” (*Voices of the Other* xxvii) and that the novel written in 1911 “is a decidedly ‘colonial’ book, but one we need to examine from a postcolonial perspective” (“Postcolonialism, Children, and their Literature” 11).

In the sense of defying the genre stereotypes in both books, the idea of imperialism, colonial writing, postcolonial criticism and gender should also be discussed, as some of these notions played a crucial role in the literature which inspired Burnett to take such a critical stand in her own writing. Deborah Thacker states that

The colonising force of fiction to inculcate hegemonic ideologies or to reinforce gender roles is powerful through the history of children's literature, yet there are also texts which seek to resist or challenge this controlling process. The element of the fantastic, and the various attempts to speak directly to children in the most enduring texts of the late nineteenth century, offer an appeal to the 'feminine' and an entrenched loyalty to the Romantic image of children of the early part of the century. (54)

It is already known that Burnett criticised the British society, nevertheless, it was not yet mentioned specifically in terms of gender roles and female stereotypes. One of the books that was popular and had a profound impact on the young readers and writers was *Robinson Crusoe*, a novel by Daniel Defoe strongly pervaded with colonial values. McGillis comments that

It set the standard for the boy's adventure story, and it presented a strong argument for Britain's imperialist enterprise. Many are the books that appeared in the nineteenth century telling the story of one or more young men, and sometimes women, marooned on some tropical isle or lost in some barren land where they claim possession of the land through their ability to cultivate it and fashion a garden in the wilderness. (*Gender and Empire* 11)

When McGillis talks about cultivating a garden, he raises an uncomfortable issue again. Burnett created in the discussed books two female protagonists who oppose the genre standard and who take up the roles of adventurers of their own kind. Although the novelist could not represent the ideas of the postcolonial analysis of literary texts, she lived in a world that was already undergoing pivotal changes in the mindset. McGillis points out that "part of the postcolonial enterprise is a liberation from the diminishing placement of people according to their racial origins, their religious beliefs, their gender, or their sexual preference" ("Postcolonialism, Children, and their Literature" 13) and this is what the author does – she puts her protagonists in situations which were not common for young girls, breaking the habit of putting them in inferior positions, applying tropes of the adventurous books written for the male audience. McGillis points out that

Burnett cannot completely escape the imperial ethos of her time. In fact, little Sara is something of a Crusoe at home in that she manages to construct for herself civilized living space in a modern urban wasteland represented by

Miss Minchin and her single-minded business practices and by the poverty visible in the London streets. She manages to do this not with the rational, ordered, businesslike acumen of Crusoe himself but with imaginative flare and feminine sympathies. (*Gender and Empire* 13)

The scholar juxtaposes *A Little Princess* and Defoe's book, claiming later that *Robinson Crusoe* represents the rational and *A Little Princess* the romantic aspect, nevertheless, the similarities of the protagonists dealing with hostile and unfavourable environment still remain. Sara deliberately represents the female virtues, as a new protagonist, not a copy of a male hero, but one who demonstrates that women are capable of coping with disadvantages and still retain emotions they are stereotypically associated with. When it comes to *The Secret Garden*, McGillis writes that

Burnett . . . did participate in the debate over women's roles, and her position is present in her fiction. . . . As in *The Secret Garden* (1911), Burnett's position is ostensibly conservative. She champions the female as nurturer, a dispenser of largesse and a person willing to sacrifice for others, especially for men. The complexity here has to do with Burnett's incorporation and feminine revision of what I think of as the "Crusoe syndrome". The "Crusoe syndrome" is simply the imperial enterprise that was all pervasive late Victorian England. Indeed, as Edward Said has noted, one did not have to be a conservative to sympathise with England's imperial designs: "With few exceptions, the women's as well as the working-class movement was pro-empire." Burnett's female version of the Crusoe story accepts the imperial myths while it also promotes the woman's cause. (*Gender and Empire* 11)

The passage shows the complexity of the story, nevertheless, one may argue that if Burnett truly champions the idea of women sacrificing for the benefit of men, then, it does not follow why Mary should be a strong figure who focuses throughout the book mostly on her own well-being, although the way she does that crucially changes at the end of the novel. She is not a character willing to put herself at stake for the benefit of a male protagonist. The incorporation of the imperial myth of conquest and cultivation of land, however, is visible once the reader starts perceiving Mary also as the coloniser who wishes to control not only her life, but also the garden – she finds an abandoned, uninhabited piece of land and through her work she makes it thrive. Donald Hall points out that Mary "is participating in the same project that her colonial parents did; by exposing the hidden and taming a wild place, she is rendering secure a potentially threatening world" (53). It was as far as Burnett could go in reversing the stereotypes considering gender in children's novels, however, her message is clear when she puts Mary in charge of the story, making her the protagonist who is active and opposes the

implied role models one would like to impose on a young girl. Susan McLeod writes that *The Secret Garden* "is a mystery novel of sorts, where a clever girl encounters two puzzles and in solving them discovers that they are related" (424); and to put it simply, Mary as an active and adventurous protagonist embodies what books for boys and with male protagonists usually presented. McGillis states that

Indeed, at the end of the century one of the main challenges for the woman writer, especially one who supported women's rights, was to present successfully the female's role in the expanding British Empire. Because literary convention had emphasized the gentle and passive nature of the female – the so-called angel in the house ideal put forth by Coventry Patmore – the thought of the young woman taking part in dangerous exploration in the barbarous lands was not readily countenanced. (*Gender and Empire* 12)

Nonetheless, the moment when the books are published qualifies as the beginning of the next century, and that is why Burnett has more courage to stand up to the stereotypes concerning not only the plot but also the way the protagonists are created. The usual "angel in the house" image is dismissed in order to design protagonists who are honest, rebellious and who present traces of independence. Sara Crewe is definitely in defiance when she does not want to express her feelings in front of Miss Minchin. She also presents persistence, patience and assiduity when it comes to her new position in life. McGillis comments that "*A Little Princess* has much to say about a female's strength of character, her imaginative ability, her ability to learn, her education and her place within the social order" (*Gender and Empire* 11). Nevertheless, and above all, Sara is rebellious. One may argue that she persists in her stubbornness because she is a well-raised child; still, it is not only Miss Minchin that Sara feels so passionate about. When Becky is accused of stealing, she vigorously defends her. When Lottie, another girl studying at Miss Minchin's school, is bullied by other girls, Sara is the one to defy them and to look after the younger student. McGillis says that "she has passion, and passion that can burst out uncontrollably" (*Gender and Empire* 24) and he cannot be more right. He additionally points out that "the narrator admits that Sara 'was not an angel' . . . , reminding us just how her character differs from the standard Victorian 'angel in the house'" (*Gender and Empire* 24). Throughout the book Sara shows the autonomy of her character, regardless of her financial status. She is never helpless and makes her own decisions.

Although Mary in *The Secret Garden* has less possibility to show her independence, she is a strong character who also does not fit the Victorian stereotype. As Marion Gymnich and Imke Lichterfeld state, Mary Lennox "is

no demure little angel in the house” (11). As an active protagonist, she presents herself as an explorer and adventurer, who seeks and finds the garden. She has to solve the mysteries of the manor, as well as undergo her inner metamorphosis, nevertheless, she does not conform to the stereotype of the silent and obedient young woman. She does what she pleases, speaks her mind without hesitation and artificial shyness. There are, nonetheless, many scholars, such as Lisa Paul, Elizabeth Keyser or U.C. Kneopfmacher, who claim that Mary fades from the view, as Colin dominates the last third of the book, nevertheless, they are dismissed by Gunther who comments that they are missing the point of the whole book (159). The scholar takes issue with such statements and says that

children do *not* see Mary as displaced by Colin, and, until it is suggested to them, nor do most adult readers. My sense is that these readers believe she is *not* displaced but in fact remains the key figure throughout. In quest terms, she advances so much further along the path of self-discovery than does Colin that we cannot help but experience her as more important. Add to this the fact that what Colin does achieve is predominantly a product of Mary's wisdom and effort rather than his own, and we begin to have a true picture of the impact of this book. (Gunther 160)

Mary stays the dominant figure of the book, as she claims the garden and passes her knowledge to Colin. Gunther additionally goes as far as to say that it is Mary who “remains the initiator in their relationship” (161), granting the girl an active position which some critics deny her. Burnett creates a protagonist who is dynamic and undergoes an inner transformation. In the discussed novels, the author does not conform to the stereotypes ruling the genre, and she presents the reader with two young girls who are willing to develop, show the strengths of their characters and inspire younger generations to be brave, independent, energetic and determined.

Frances Hodgson Burnett, influenced by the changes within the society, presents characters who oppose the stereotypes and influence target readers, yet these are not only the narrative figures of her novels who defy the norms in the children's literature. In her stories, Burnett demonstrates a severe critique of the British society, commenting on the position of a child in general, as well as the colonial influences on their upbringing. Focusing on the characters of Sara and Mary, the author converts the typical colonial image suggested by novels such as *Robinson Crusoe* to her own needs. The writer presents the girls in the seemingly domestic environment, however, she also allows them to embark on their own adventures, which, at the same time, opposes the stereotypical space of literature for young girls. She, thus, dismisses the popular image of the “angel in the house” and forges rebellious

and active characters who were usually associated with male target readers. Sara is passionate and willing to provide help for other people, and Mary, although underestimated and undervalued by some critics, is still bold, independent and she undergoes a marvellous transformation throughout the book, offering a new role model to follow. Gymnich and Lichterfeld accurately conclude that Mary's "hot temper, her strong will and her bonding with male characters on largely equal terms turn her into a predecessor of female heroines of later twentieth-century children's literature" (11). This could not be a better summary of what Burnett did in the discussed novels – she shaped the grounds for the future writers to form female protagonists who inspire readers, and most importantly, who challenge the status quo.

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## SECTION TWO

### SPACE, VISION AND A GENDERED PLACE



## TOWARDS LESBIAN STUDIES IN POLAND

**MARTA OLASIK**

Institute of Applied Social Sciences, University of Warsaw

The role of this article is to present a valid suggestion regarding a respectful and inclusive way of conceptualising contemporary lesbian studies. Although technically based in the Polish social and academic reality, where I am attempting to introduce a pioneering lesbian-studies discourse, I have pursued my scholarly activity mostly abroad. As a consequence, I am very much engaged with the re-investigation of the “Western” rhetoric available to date. A necessarily interdisciplinary character of the project of lesbian studies requires a joint intervention from a number of perspectives, including sociology, geography, philosophy, or feminist epistemologies. The article herein is an overview of my academic activity in this regard, with a special consideration of the intersection between the sociology of sexuality and the geographies of sexualities. By means of a unique interpretation of queer perspective, which serves as a framework for the critique of the discourses to date, the purpose herein is to encourage a new way of conceiving of a plurality of lesbian subjectivities that would eventually translate into full lesbian citizenships across various localities.

Conceptual in nature, the article begins with the clarification regarding my work and methods, and it goes on to introduce the discipline of geography and its role in re-construing gender and sexualities. These two aspects can, then, serve to envision a programme for a new discourse on lesbian studies that would be free from the “Western” mistakes and omissions. With queer in the background, language plays a vital role in the considerations herein; footnotes are, therefore, essential for the meta-analysis and respectfulness that a scholarly work of this character demands.

This article contains an overview of my work in the field of academic lesbian studies. As much as the limited space herein makes it impossible to cover all the many aspects of this enterprise – both in general and when undertaken within the Polish socio-temporal space in particular – it is my objective to present one possible path to introducing a separate scholarly

discourse on non-heterosexual women in Poland. My PhD dissertation<sup>1</sup> is a conceptual reinvestigation and recognition of the multiplicity of lesbian sexualities and identities, its pioneering character manifesting through the lack of local lesbian-studies discourses to date, on the one hand, and the application of queer perspective as a method, on the other. Although a full elaboration on this subject would require additional space, I believe some highlights can, nonetheless, be pointed out. First and foremost – and for the enterprise of mine to be successful – the concept of the *lesbian subject* needs to be looked into in queer terms, so to say. Because my background is queer sociology,<sup>2</sup> I am quite often asked about how I manage to reconcile the lesbian with the queer and whether these terms are not contradictory. My response remains the same, i.e. it all depends on how one chooses to interpret the term “queer.” If one sees it as an unambiguous and unreflective deconstruction of everything and everyone, then, I agree that there is not much political potential here.<sup>3</sup> Instead, I choose to understand *queer as a method and a tool, through which the lesbian would be achieved most effectively*. In fact, I tend to explain to students and academic audiences alike that “queer theory” is not a correct phrasing at all, because “queer” and “theory” are contradictory notions. Traditionally, the purpose of any theory has been to capture a general and universal understanding of a given state of affairs, leading to an explanatory grand scheme.<sup>4</sup> This, in fact, is everything that queer cannot be. Instead, then, queer should be interpreted as a *perspective*, because it is supposed to tell grassroots stories of various individual experiences of exclusion, and plurality and the uniqueness of these experiences remain at its core. Hence, a perspective – literally understood as “[s]ubjective evaluation of relative significance” and “[t]he ability to perceive

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<sup>1</sup> Almost completed and due to submission at the moment of submitting this article.

<sup>2</sup> I came to consider the “sociology of sexuality” phrasing as somewhat more accurate in the Polish socio-academic space, although there is no official distinction and the choice of mine does not represent the history and internal divisions of a similar differentiation between geographies of sexualities and queer geographies. See Knopp 2007 and Brown 2007 for a basic idea of what the distinction within geography involves.

<sup>3</sup> Although this “definition” is much simplified, it is unfortunate that most of the contemporary readings of queer continue along this path. I therefore detach myself from such understanding of queer as – indeed – a theory, and, contrary to more common accounts, I choose not to devote much space to this tendency.

<sup>4</sup> Although since the 1960s the notion has been explored and re-defined, its traditional meaning remain the default framework. Along these lines, I tend to describe my lesbian-studies explorations in terms of social theory rather than sociological theory, the latter one being the most common – if inaccurate – convention. See Seidman 1991 for a full explanation of the much significant difference.

things in their actual interrelations or comparative importance”<sup>5</sup>– seems to offer a more accurate conceptual framework. Another fine example of how queer can be conceived of and used is, quite simply, through queer studies.<sup>6</sup>

This said, the basic and yet most crucial way in which queer manifests is through language.<sup>7</sup> Thus, what is characteristic of my lesbian-studies elaborations is that – abiding by the queer method – I use and promote the term “lesbianity” in place of the only available dictionary form “lesbianism.” This is a symbolic measure above all and results from the fact that – as Michel Foucault made it a point to reveal<sup>8</sup> – the “-ism” ending was invented by the late 19th-century psychiatry and its role was to indicate a problem, a disorder, a pathology or, in the best case, a sin.<sup>9</sup> I, therefore, choose to subvert this history, as queer does, by conceiving of a more positive and accurate alternative, which is what the “-ity” ending provides.<sup>10</sup> The same situation takes place in my native Polish language, where *lesbianizm* is the only functioning option; I promote *lesbijskość* instead.<sup>11</sup> It is, however, of paramount importance to acknowledge that this symbolic gesture of mine is merely a queer way of inviting the lesbian agency contemporarily and it is by no means supposed to offend second-wave feminists, who would very proudly cling to the term “lesbianism” and identify with it. They had very different objectives and agendas back then than mine are today, but their lives, experiences, and self-identifications continue to matter just the same. The queer modification of mine must, therefore, be understood as merely a symbolic upgrade designed to draw attention to how language perpetuates cultural oppressions.

Taking all of this into account, one level where my queer background operates is through a conceptual deconstruction of the lesbian by means of a socio-cultural comment. For this to be done, I would often begin my

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/perspective>.

<sup>6</sup> And, on a side note, any binary distinction between queer theory and queer studies is a false one and cannot be tolerated, let alone accepted as a valid academic paradigm.

<sup>7</sup> Which may partly be due to the fact that post-structuralism has been considered one of the roots of queer studies and as such remains its primary expression. The two strands are closely related in that they share the eagerness to *re*-construct cultural contents rather than simply question them.

<sup>8</sup> See Foucault 1998.

<sup>9</sup> This, again, is a simplified summation.

<sup>10</sup> I have recently discovered that Tamsin Wilton chose to apply the term “lesbianness” for quite similar reasons. The difference, however, lies in this author’s scepticism towards queer as she rejects what it represented in her times. See Wilton 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Linguistically, the Polish “-ość” is the equivalent of the English “-ity” and as such is a neutral ending with more positive connotations than negative ones.

considerations<sup>12</sup> by enumerating the many stereotypes pertaining to lesbian women and break them into parts in order to show how the mechanism of at least double exclusion works in the case of non-heterosexual women, and why the lesbian needs to be culturally excluded in such an elaborate way. For the purposes of this paper, I am going to omit a basic deconstructive section of this kind and re-focus on another aspect of the project instead, namely *the question of lesbian citizenship as explored through the institutional lens*. One important caveat is in order here – I always make it a point to make my work as interdisciplinary as possible, and the paper herein is no exception. The explorations within lesbian studies should always belong to a number of academic perspectives rather than represent a single paradigm, for the question of womanhood itself is by no means one-dimensional as it permeates all personal, social, political, and academic spheres. Therefore, although technically it is the sociology of sexuality I operate within, my work immensely derives from the discipline of geographies of sexualities on the one hand, and feminist epistemologies on the other. It is particularly the geographical lens that reshaped the very core of my research purposes and tools.<sup>13</sup> I came to proudly represent the academic environment of geography by incorporating its concepts and areas of interest into the local spatial and temporal context; just how significant it is will hopefully become visible soon enough.<sup>14</sup> The question of lesbian citizenship is one place where this interdisciplinary experience manifests.

One aspect of my queer politics of multidimensionality when looking into – and for – the lesbian is recognising the multiplicity of lesbian identities and sexualities when it comes to gender. In this regard, referring to the lesbian per “she” is only conventional. Indeed, my initial idea when enrolling in the PhD programme several years ago was to plan and conduct semi-structured interviews with “biological males”<sup>15</sup> who self-identify as lesbians. While this task would have been by no means impossible, I came to see it as ineffective in introducing lesbian studies in Poland specifically, and, thus, it was my decision to leave it for some later stage of my academic pursuits; to do queer research like that one without first setting the very theoretical bases for the lesbian subject in the Polish academia would, quite simply, make no sense.

<sup>12</sup> Both in the course of academic events like conferences as well as across the pages of publications. See Olasik “Lesbian Ethics Re-Investigated: A Socio-Political Comment” and “Becoming a Lesbian Citizen: A Path of Reflection.”

<sup>13</sup> See Olasik “Location, Location: Lesbian Performativities That Matter, or Not.”

<sup>14</sup> On a side note, and as will be elaborated on further in the article, no field of geographies of sexualities exists in the Polish institutional context. It poses an extremely valid problem and as such should be subject to a separate analysis.

<sup>15</sup> A problematic notion as well.

The main issue, however, seems to remain the same regardless of the time or space of lesbian-studies pursuits. Namely, who is a lesbian? I continue to be very clear, if radical, about this one: *there should be absolutely no consensus as to what defines a lesbian*. Definitions in this field have resulted in intricate paths of multi-faceted exclusions for decades, this being particularly visible within feminist discourses on the one hand and the so-called lesbian communities on the other. Of course, it is clear that moments of “strategic essentialism”<sup>16</sup> are advisable in politics and public life, because it is not necessarily desirable to explain to a prime minister of a given country what a *queer* lesbian is, but other than these very tangible political moments, the social and academic preoccupation with the lesbian identity – that is fixed by definition – should stop, for it reproduces and reinforces the profile of a lesbian whereby she embodies the stereotype-driven image of false – or, more to the point, failed – womanhood.<sup>17</sup> I tend to conceptualise this matter in terms of the object-bject continuum, where the timeless cultural process of objectification of women has additionally been reinforced by Julia Kristeva’s *abject*-ification.<sup>18</sup> This clarified, and to escape the position of lesbianity as that of either the object or the abject, I daresay that lesbian identity should give way to the exploration of lesbian *subjectivity* instead. I firmly differentiate between these two in that, unlike the socially fixed and academically exploited notion of identity, subjectivity is about *actively taking control over the process of one’s own auto-creation and self-understanding*. A fine expression of lesbian subjectivity will be when the statement, “[Y]ou are a lesbian if you say you are (at least to yourself)” (Faderman 36). becomes the only social parameter in ascertaining one’s emotional and sexual life. Although much simplified, this stage is preliminary to considering the matter of citizenship.

The fundamental question for contemporary lesbian praxis – one that I had already asked<sup>19</sup> – is, who is a lesbian *citizen* and where is (s)he? Although it may not seem so at first, this query is much different from the one raised above. With the latter one it is inevitable to enter the already mentioned field of geographies of sexualities. Considerations of the

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<sup>16</sup> See Browne and Nash 2009: 187.

<sup>17</sup> It is in this context that, as already stated, I usually begin my considerations with the deconstruction of stereotypes as items restricting the understanding of the so-called “true femininity” by protecting its heterosexual character. See Olasik “Lesbian Ethics Re-Investigated: A Socio-Political Comment.”

<sup>18</sup> Kristeva’s “abject” is something miserable, despicable and without dignity, and as such goes beyond objectification and needs to be socially rejected. Using this rhetoric, Judith Butler called lesbians “an elaborate form of abjects.” See Kristeva 1982, Butler 1990 respectively.

<sup>19</sup> See Olasik “Becoming a Lesbian Citizen: A Path of Reflection.”

disciplinary aspect of the matter aside, it is essential to provide a brief overview of the theme of citizenship. The notion traditionally relies on the exclusion of womanhood, for the only way a woman could be a citizen is through motherhood, but even then she can enjoy social benefits for the price of her body being socially controlled and/or exploited. Also, worth noting is the fact that even this dimension of female citizenship is not everywhere the case.<sup>20</sup> Although this, again, is a much simplified explanation, the question of citizenship is, of course, even more complex for the lesbian subject. In the 1980s and 1990s, some geographers dared to pose questions about sexuality and erotic desire – questions that were quite inconvenient for the mainstream of their environment, whose education and research had nothing to do with such issues. Parallel to this line of enquiry, the concept of sexual citizenship was eventually suggested by a sociologist, David T. Evans, in his 1993 classic titled *Sexual Citizenship: The Material Construction of Sexualities*. Considered a classic in several subfields within geography, the author may be responsible for the most natural intersection that has occurred between sociology and geography to date. A very popular notion since, sexual citizenship flourished mostly within the subdiscipline of geographies of sexualities that emerged around that time. The purpose now, as one of the key figures of the field put it, was “to demonstrate how citizens are normatively constructed as (hetero)sexual subjects and, related to this, offer a way of analysing the resultant inequalities faced by ‘excluded’ citizens in terms of the institutionalization of heterosexuality” (Richardson 257). Thus, authors actually began to consider *non-heterosexual* people as citizens in scholarly, analytical, and social terms. Along similar lines, other areas of interest came under scrutiny with regard to the role in maintaining sexual citizenship, e.g. the market, economics, or the private/public divide. Indeed, not only would it be hard to recount the history and dissemination of these disciplines here, but it would also be diminishing for the actual immensity of those increasingly overlapping intra- and inter-disciplinary enterprises. Suffice it so say that this might have been the finest time of gender and sexuality as analytical notions, with newly-emergent sociologists of sexuality speaking of “intimate citizenship”<sup>21</sup> or “moments of citizenship.”<sup>22</sup> It became clear that, as Sally Munt writes, “[I]dentities are produced, expressed and authenticated by and through space” (174). With space and time being complex notions central to geographical endeavours, it was now natural for geographers of sexualities to

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<sup>20</sup> Which is one of the focal points within the discipline of social geography contemporarily.

<sup>21</sup> See Plummer 1995.

<sup>22</sup> See Weeks 1995.

investigate how these work in the case of lesbians and gay men specifically as they attempt at organising themselves across various spatialities.

All this said, geographers of sexualities have traditionally been quite essentialist in how they explored the ways in which identities are enacted, allowed for or/and forbidden. They failed to problematise sexual categories at all, so, not surprisingly, these elaborations involved quite a fixed and limited understanding of the notion “gay.” This coupled with the fact that the “gay and lesbian” phrase – or the LGBT acronym, for that matter – is an impossible enterprise on the one hand and another male-dominated space on the other, lesbian women were hardly represented in those enquiries. It turned out that the gender of geography had been very masculine – possibly even more so than that of sociology – and, as a consequence, the field was still quite deprived of a strong lesbian component. Since, again, it is not my objective to describe the chronology of those intra-disciplinary events, suffice it to say that *feminist* geographers came along to aid this issue as they took up the question of gender,<sup>23</sup> while in the late 1990s *queer* geographies emerged with a more inclusive agenda that continues to develop to this day. With a bit of a postmodern touch, so to say, they exist in order to properly emphasise “the lived experience of sexual dissidents” by “includ[ing] a greater critical awareness of the material conditions for the production of ‘knowledge’ about sexuality” (Bell and Binnie 224). In this respect the sub-discipline has come to be preoccupied with all sorts of sexual desires, trans experiences, queer bodies, cyberspaces, and the heteropatriarchal system in general. Again – while the exact timeframes and peculiarities are not too significant for the purposes of the article herein, it is crucial to be aware of how complex geography actually is as a result of those disseminations. I apologise for any oversimplification; the brief introduction to the discipline I have just offered certainly does not do justice to the multi-facetedness of the phenomenon. Worth noting is also the localised and particular character of the discipline within the academia. Namely, the whole dissemination within geography originates from the British context and is representative of it, with both feminist geography and later geographies of sexualities being part of a broader field of human geography, which also encompasses social geography. Geographies of sexualities emerged as a sub-discipline here. Meanwhile, broad and fundamental as the field is, human geography does not exist at universities in Poland. Not surprisingly, then, no institution in the Polish space has taken up geography of sexuality. As I have mentioned elsewhere,<sup>24</sup> a fine summation of the status of research into sexualities within geography is

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<sup>23</sup> See WGSJ 1997 and Laurie et al. 1999 for classic texts of that thought.

<sup>24</sup> This whole point has been elaborated on in my PhD dissertation.

offered by the key authors of this discipline, who say, “Most work by sexual geographers is still located within the broader subdiscipline of social and cultural geography. [...] There are also those who could be defined as ‘sexual geographers’ who do not work within the discipline of geography” (Browne, Lim, and Brown 5). I am proud to fall into this latter category.

All this clarified, with rather essentialist and man-centred attitudes to sexuality offered by the mainstream of early geographers of sexualities,<sup>25</sup> it was only natural that lesbian geographies should emerge. Dealing with how non-heterosexual women organise their desires and identifications across urban and rural spaces, this relatively new<sup>26</sup> sub-discipline can be part of both geographies of sexualities or queer geographies, which usually depends on the framework and objectives. What is crucial is that the lesbian has finally been recognised as a “partial or unjust citizen” of various localities and geotemporal realities (Richardson 263). It is in this context that my academic activity can be situated.

In the course of my first encounter with the discipline of geographies of sexualities, I was told a particularly important thing about the nature of all academic pursuits in general and sexuality-profiled ones in particular. I was made aware of the fact that *what you talk about always depends on where you talk about it*.<sup>27</sup> As I tend to explain, lesbian subjectivity here in Poland will be quite different than it is in pluralist France or in South Africa, where corrective rapes done to lesbians by male family members are still very common and not recognised by the law. Then, of course, there are urban areas and rural areas and any research in sexualities – as well as any consideration of lesbian studies – needs to take these into account.<sup>28</sup> This said, though one of my objectives has been to lesbianise space<sup>29</sup> in Poland, the concepts I have been pursuing and developing are much relevant to the already established

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<sup>25</sup> For it should be acknowledged that the subfield has by no means ran out of potential; new approach has been adopted and the discipline is now more self-reflective and inclusive, and continues to problematise the notion of sexuality. See Bell and Binnie 2000 as well as Browne, Lim and Brown 2007 for classic works of this character.

<sup>26</sup> New compared to the already existing sub-fields at that time. First representatives of lesbian geographies appeared around the year 1993. The two most renowned representatives include Gill Valentine and Diane Richardson.

<sup>27</sup> I continue to express my thanks to Kath Browne for the profound change in my academic profile that these words resulted in back then.

<sup>28</sup> Another interesting and common research subject in this context includes the migration of sexual ‘dissidents’.

<sup>29</sup> A direct reference to Sally Munt when she speaks of her own “lesbianizing of space” (Munt 173, spelling original).

lesbian-studies programmes in the so-called “West.”<sup>30</sup> For this instance, the notion of womanhood and femininity needs to be continually problematised regardless of a locality in order for our culture circle to get *unstuck* regarding the arbitrary gender divisions. Therefore, a sociological analysis of why *femininity is merely an idea rather than an actual identity* ought to be an essential point of departure for any lesbian-studies programme regardless of the geo-spatial reality. Since, unfortunately, a lesbian will culturally always be a woman first – her own self-identification notwithstanding – and only then non-heterosexual, a re-construction of lesbianity is necessary for dismantling the supplementary role that the “Western” world created for her.

All this said, in my pursuit of a separate academic discourse of lesbian studies in Poland, I am interested in how space is confined and misused with regards to lesbian subjects, as well as how to open spaces of various kinds that would be specifically lesbian. Above all, however, I investigate how the lesbian in annihilated and pathologised so that it can remain at a disadvantaged and invisibilised cultural position. As already clarified, my point of departure is queer perspective, which enables *the creation of a powerful lesbian possibility and the recognition of lesbian multiplicity*. All in all, it would also have to be an educational project that would reveal the relevant cultural mechanisms on the one hand and envision *lesbianity as a space, an energy or an attitude that can potentially be inhabited and explored by any person regardless of the actual sexual component*.<sup>31</sup> The queer dimension would be also to include lesbian story-telling as opposed to truth-telling, because truth has always been a political and contingent notion, and for this reason the so-called “scientific objectivity” cannot be relied on, for it is a tool of heteropatriarchal matrix for conveying selected contents to the mass. This, however, is an entirely different subject – one, whose immensity deserves a separate analysis. Ultimately what is hoped for is lesbian visibility, which is not a straightforward concept at all. One of my favourite quotes in this context is, “Visibility is a tricky thing. Is someone visible when you can point her out in the crowd, or when you understand what her life feels like?” (D’Erasmus qtd. in Heller 67).

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<sup>30</sup> Although this article does not focus on queer approach to language, I always make it a point to mark these common and allegedly explanatory categories as random and contingent. Their sole role is to maintain the artificially-constructed binary character of the world accessible to us, with one part of the dualism always superior to the other. Other examples include heterosexual-homosexual, man-woman, white-black, civilised-uncivilised, etc. “West” and “East” are perhaps the most arrogant situations ever created. I therefore tend to use these categories only conventionally for the purposes of successful communication, placing them in single quotation marks as a way of my subverting their harmful character.

<sup>31</sup> For comparison see Adrienne Rich’s notion of “lesbian continuum” (1980).

A question remains about how to do lesbian studies and how different this is from the already existing programmes and paradigms. It is a well-known fact that gay liberation throughout a number of decades failed to represent lesbian meanings. While male domination within those environments already provides an explanation of this state of affairs, it is also crucial to realise that the mechanism of discrimination and exclusion that non-heterosexual women experience is much different from that of gay men's. Gay movements aside, then, the history of feminisms also shows a particularly acute insensitivity to the question of lesbianity, which remains a controversial issue to date. It is vital to acknowledge that there is – and never has been – *one* feminism; it was never a homogenous movement even within a single wave. This said, what I call the mainstream of feminisms has always been very much erotophobic and homophobic, these including so-called lesbophobia, biphobia, and transphobia all the same. Though another oversimplification must follow here,<sup>32</sup> for it is impossible to recount a full history of those tendencies across these pages – nor is the purpose – suffice it to say that lesbian women within mainstream feminist movements have been considered the “Lavender Menace.”<sup>33</sup> Why I am using present tense specifically is that even though the hostility of that era seems to have passed, it is too easily replaced with silence. Due to historical and social circumstances connected with the rise of communism, and contrary to many an opinion, *Poland has never seen consecutive waves of feminism* in the first place, much less a diversification of the current feminist tendencies. The public has been broadly familiar with always the same three or four feminist figures, who are referred to as radical even though their agendas have never gone beyond what is usually considered the liberal feminist interest, for all they seem to have been concerned with over last two decades is the equality and visibility of women in public and political spheres. In this light it is unsurprising, though still unfortunate, that *a separate lesbian component has not been established*. Crucially, it was within lesbian feminism that heterosexual matrix and marriage as a compulsory institution were first acknowledged in the “Western” context, which is one of the reasons why lesbian feminism and separatism of the 1980s resulted in what I call *the greatest era of lesbian*

<sup>32</sup> e.g. I am forced to disregard alterations and differences between the consecutive waves and movements. Suffice it to say that the most typical differentiation covers the liberal feminisms, radical feminisms, cultural feminisms, material feminisms. There is no simple chronology here as these strands overlapped. Generally speaking, lesbian feminism followed as an extension of cultural/radical feminisms on the one hand and a reaction to all available feminisms back then, particularly the liberal movement that outraged many.

<sup>33</sup> As (in)famously termed by Betty Friedan during one of the National Organisation for Women meetings in 1969.

*visibility and productivity*. Poland has not shared that experience, which, as I will further point out, has both advantages and disadvantages.

The role of feminisms clarified – albeit in a limited way – it is now essential to justify the existence of academic lesbian studies specifically. Many gender studies and women’s studies departments<sup>34</sup> at universities were created as early as 1990 and gradually introduced all over the world – Poland included – but I remain doubtful about their purposes and the potential for investigating non-heterosexual femininity. With a new academic year approaching last year,<sup>35</sup> I randomly looked up current gender studies programmes in Poland, France and the USA alike. Even a brief look at them provoked one question in particular – *how do you do studies on gender without a serious mention and consideration of sexuality?* Because, frankly speaking, there is none, for the overwhelming amount of time is taken up by theories of feminist histories, philosophies, theologies, law, or biographies. Gender does not seem to be an analytical notion at all, which is unreasonable enough, for not only is the question of masculinity and its harmful consequences for contemporary men equally essential,<sup>36</sup> but the construction of femininity in the first place does not seem to be covered, too. As a result, these programmes appear to be very one-dimensional and far from interdisciplinary, and do not accomplish their purpose. With this attitude towards gender, it is hardly surprising that sexually is much less common component, while the answer to that earlier question of mine should be – *you do not*. Even if the sociology of gender were properly added, it would not be sufficient, for it is a myth that gender is that analytical notion that feminists should worry about, while sexuality studies or queer studies are what gay people are concerned with. *It is inappropriate and substantially incorrect to do one without the other, because gender and sexuality were designed to complement each other and as such they are inextricably linked. Gender is designed in order for sexual desire to be justified, so any mention of one without the other does not explain, much less dismantle, the cultural programmes and mechanisms behind our identities.* Due to the fact that the majority of gender studies all over the world have been constructed around the mainstream “Western” feminist ideals of the 1980s, they will be deprived of the sexual component by default. The point is, then, that gender studies need serious revising, since the way they are today shows how *not to do*

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<sup>34</sup> The difference between these two being very unclear and problematic.

<sup>35</sup> i.e. the academic year 2016/2017. An academic year in Poland always begins in October and ends mid-July.

<sup>36</sup> Fortunately, a separate body of masculinity studies do seem to appear in university programmes more and more often.

lesbian studies, for there can be no lesbian citizenship as long as one focuses on a single dimension of gender *or* sexuality. Not only is it of paramount importance to look into both at the same time, but it is necessary to investigate them in detail. This said, I am perfectly aware of the fact that gender studies are not supposed to be lesbian studies, but, first, the point was to demonstrate how female non-heterosexual sexuality has never had academic space within what is often considered the most woman-friendly environment. Second, these two do not really work separately. It is therefore my hope that new, *proper* lesbian studies can emerge and constitute a necessarily interdisciplinary project that would lead to the lesbian presence and visibility within the academia and the society – whichever that would be – alike.

Within these new lesbian studies, sociology of gender and sexuality would have to be of paramount importance. It is hard to imagine a lesbian-studies programme that would not begin with a sociological deconstruction of cultural mechanisms that I had mentioned.<sup>37</sup> Other than this, however, there are many themes to be taken into account for a lesbian subject to emerge. While it might be harder for European universities to engage with human rights debates due to the lack of the US-specific history of minority movements on both social and legal planes,<sup>38</sup> these should nonetheless be taught as they encourage attempts at finding specifically local means of emancipation in place of unreflective emulating the US ways.<sup>39</sup> One framework worth considering in European contexts is that of post-colonialism; it is through post-colonial studies – perhaps coupled with basic ideas of anthropology – that comparative analyses can be offered to the “Western” audiences regarding the construction of what we here tend to call lesbian identities and womanhood. Close to feminist discourses on the one hand<sup>40</sup> and cultural studies on the other, this could turn out revealing for how

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<sup>37</sup> While it is not a requirement that all lesbian-studies programmes should be as openly queer as my pursuits are, I nonetheless consider this framework a default one, for it is impossible to reconstruct a subjectivity without first revealing its cultural roots and meanings, which is what queer embodies.

<sup>38</sup> I am alluding to the history of the US civil rights movement or anti-war movements, whose experience facilitated non-heterosexual and feminist strategies.

<sup>39</sup> It is a common mistake to generalise the US experience and apply it to the current interests worldwide. These attempts are absurd, futile, and harmful, as they fail to consider specifically local historical and social conditionings. One example is a discourse of three waves of feminisms in Poland that could allegedly take place within twenty years of the country’s independence even though it took a century in the USA. This kind of discourse is, first, untrue, and, second, conceptually impossible.

<sup>40</sup> In fact, it can be considered obligatory to use bell hooks as a point of departure here, which would engage with the problematic character of white feminist ideals at the same time.

it is that we perceive our own identities both in relation to the self and to what we came to call as the other. The de-construction of these is then vital. It would then be logical to look at literary studies, where the lesbian is said to belong naturally, for it has always been through the written word that non-heterosexual women in the “West” engage with the ubiquitously oppressive surroundings. It is in this context that, as Tamsin Wilton put it, “This lesbian *is* a textual creature” (133, emphasis original). A lot has already been said about the engagement of women with the printed word, with the earliest record of non-heterosexual desires from the era before “a lesbian” was invented – so to say – to the relatively recent feminist critical analyses regarding the femaleness of texts.<sup>41</sup> Literary criticism has focused on the identification and appropriation of womanhood on the one hand – both regarding the author and the reader – and the recovery of the past by reclaiming authors’ identities on the other. In this context, and as Wilton again asks, “[I]s the dyke’s *Orlando* a different book from the homophobe’s *Orlando*, and how is that difference significant?” (118), where the latter one is exemplified by any reading of the classic volume that simply erases the question of Virginia Woolf’s biography and sexuality, whatever that would actually be.<sup>42</sup> Literary studies is a fascinating field, whose research material can be easily incorporated into any lesbian-studies programme, for it allows for the engagement with non-Western authors, whose texts and identities have often been erased intentionally. However, its immensity and attractiveness should be captured in a thoughtful way so that not to discredit other lesbian-studies components that should take an equal amount of space.<sup>43</sup> Then, I believe there should be place for a variation of lesbian art, or transgressive female artistic initiatives at the very least.<sup>44</sup> It is also significant to touch on linguistics and reveal how women in general, and non-heterosexual women in particular, have lacked the means within language to express their identities, desires, and futures. An analysis of language pertaining to sexual practices of both gay men and gay women could make for a good start, but it would obviously have to encourage a meta-reflection regarding the superiority of the English language over other forms; perhaps a comparative analysis would be in order here. As far as the humanities are concerned, both geography and philosophy are important in the context

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<sup>41</sup> e.g. Hélène Cixous’ *écriture féminine*. See Cixous et al. 1976.

<sup>42</sup> It should never be the purpose to cross the border of autonomy by the practice of *identifying* the author for them; it is rather necessary to acknowledge their own self-expressions.

<sup>43</sup> All this with the assumption that a university lesbian-studies course or programme will last no more than one or two terms.

<sup>44</sup> For, again, it is not exactly the point to define what lesbian art is.

herein, but they deserve a separate elaboration, for lesbian studies should be geographical and philosophical by default rather than merely incorporate these into a programme. It is perhaps equally vital that as much as sociology ought to serve as a starting point, the social-sciences dimension should also be visible in how psychology can be covered. This discipline is particularly problematic for any minority studies discourse in general, and non-heterosexual movements in particular, for it was psychiatry of the 19th century that invented the three rigid sexual categories in the first place, two of which has been labelled in derogatory terms. Contemporary psychology and psychiatry students continue to be taught about the classification and “correctness” of sexuality more often than they are encouraged to acknowledge its fluidity, which has dramatic consequences for the way societies are, since it is psychologists – not sociologists of sexuality – that regular people come to for an explanation regarding own desires. An urgent intervention is therefore necessary into how much authority psychology gains nowadays and what this “expert knowledge”<sup>45</sup> constitutes. This said, it is not only the humanities or the social sciences that have much to offer to contemporary lesbian studies; it is equally important to look at how womanhood has been constructed in science, meaning the so-called exact sciences. One fine example is the case of Vera Rubin, a leading astrophysicist who, despite enormous achievements, struggled with sexism more than with scientific questions.<sup>46</sup>

The above-mentioned list is by no means exhaustive. It has merely been constructed by me to point out that *any of these fields and sub-disciplines needs to be seen through the lesbian lens and the ‘here and now’ context in order for the lesbian to be able to inhabit new dimensions*. As to prospective problems that could emerge in realising the potential of an academic faculty of lesbian studies – there always be some. For instance, a question arises about who could run a course like this and on what basis? And who can attend? A standard concern will surely be whether a “biological male” can teach lesbian-studies stuff, no matter how qualified and what that qualification actually means. The queer perspective I represent allows for an escape from this type of classification at least to some extent. One concern that should not be easily dismissed, however, pertains to the content and methodology of a course like this under scrutiny. Namely, *capturing the lesbian in terms of another object of research should be avoided at all costs*. It has been a way of traditional anthropology to objectify groups in order to

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<sup>45</sup> See Giddens 1990.

<sup>46</sup> See <https://qz.com/873189/vera-rubin-the-scientist-who-discovered-dark-matter/> for a full story.

describe their properties externally. The sociology of deviance in the USA of the 1950s is an infamous example of that tradition and shows what harm it can do regarding social discourses; within this field gay and lesbian “subcultures” alike would be studied in terms of gang groups, with the researcher doing everything in his<sup>47</sup> linguistic power to depict them as the dangerous other. This aside, a lesbian-studies enterprise is also bound to spark debates over the definitions of lesbian women and lesbian contents. As I said before, to a very limited extent strategic essentialism is necessary, but not so much when it comes to a real person exploring their own sexual and emotional possibilities, because they will always get dragged into a norm. Interdisciplinary “coalitional politics”<sup>48</sup> among lesbian subjects and social educational initiatives will therefore be far more effective and should be considered a starting point. This said, there are many more components to be taken into account and resolved, but this should be done from a localised perspective rather than a generalised point of view.

Back to the fundamental question I posed earlier in this article, it is only through a conscious selection and distribution of educational contents that lesbian citizenship can be conceived of, assumed, and performed. In this context, a lesbian citizen would be. Again, a rigid and one-dimension definition is unwelcome, but *a lesbian citizen would be a fulfilled lesbian subject – neither an object nor an abject – whose lived experience would be based on conscious choices regarding one’s own gender/sex/behavioural/visual traits*. It is in this manner that one can become *actively involved in the project of Self by re-creating own sexual and emotional ethics*. This, however, is not supposed to be a restrictive concept, but an open field of possibilities instead, and as such should be properly developed and elaborated on.<sup>49</sup> While essential for any geo-temporal contexts, histories, and circumstances, lesbian citizenship is also always dependent on these, which is what makes the relationship symbiotic. It is my hope that the multiplicity of new projects of contemporary lesbian studies will emerge in order to accommodate for that need to understand and assume what has been termed “the other” on the one hand, and to develop and enhance the already existing lesbianities on the other.

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<sup>47</sup> These were men almost exclusively.

<sup>48</sup> Which Judith Butler defines as “a set of dialogic encounters” (Butler 19-20).

<sup>49</sup> In fact, my own understanding of this notion is constantly evolving. See Olasik “Becoming a Lesbian Citizen: A Path of Reflection” for its earlier version.

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# GENDER STEREOTYPES AND THE PLACE IDENTITY

*MAGDALENA BANASIEWICZ*

*JAN RUSEK*

Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw

This paper draws on a larger project we were working on in 2012 which explored the impact of the place cultural identity on the behaviour of coffeehouse customers and the dimension of femininity/masculinity proved to be essential to understanding the differences between coffeehouses. The article starts with discussing the concept of the place identity and its relation to gender. This section is followed by a brief presentation of the reciprocal relationships between perceptions of a given place and its users, and their possible effects. Then, we discuss the issue of gender stereotypes, the doctrine of two spheres, and stereotypical characteristics of a gendered space. Finally, we illustrate these issues with two case studies concerning the gendered public places.

A place is a geographical space filtered by human perception and past experiences. The contents of these cognitions – how a place is perceived and what meaning it conveys – constitute the place identity. Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff, in one of the first psychological papers on the concept, described the place identity as:

a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, (...) memories, ideals, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of behaviour and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical settings that define the day-to-day existence of every human being, (...) a potpourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas, and related feelings about specific physical settings as well as types of settings. (59-60)

Although some authors point out to an individualistic bias in the psychological research on the place-identity (Dixon and Durrheim), the collective nature of relations between identities is evident. These cognitions themselves are personal, nonetheless, they occur in social contexts and they are facilitated by socialization. This generally makes them culturally shared, although Massey notes that places have no single, unique identities, and that

the internal conflict lies in their nature (see: the case studies). Because places can be defined in terms of social relations, they are also highly dynamic (Massey).

In a word, the place identity can consist of an infinite variety of cognitions, limited only by the person's engagement with her environment (Proshansky). The infinite range of possible perceived traits of the environment allows the features to be arranged into configurations corresponding to cultural or stereotypical structures, such as gender. Moreover, its intertwinedness with personal and group identities suggests that the features defining social identities (such as gender) may also be important in the process of creating place identities.

The relationship between personal and space identity was researched by social scientists mainly as an instance of the impact of a context on one's perceptions and actions. For example, Guinote and Fiske analysed the way one's place of evaluation can exacerbate stereotyping, keeping with the category activation theory framework. In a different study, Gosling et al., inspired by the Egon Brunswik's "environment as lens" model, tried to explain how observers infer from personal environments the information about their occupants. In the model introduced by the authors, a two-step process links observers' perceptions of people's dispositions to their habitats. At either step, the observed phenomena (environmental residue or behaviour) can activate perception-influencing stereotypes. Socially shared stereotypical impressions are conditioned by the similarity of stereotypes held by observers, which is more probable for common stereotypes, such as those relating to one's race or gender.

The line of research discussed above suggests that elements of the physical environment which bring up associations with stereotypical femininity, such as certain colours or accessories, can lead to the stereotyping of people who use/ occupy that environment. This means that the physical space can not only be *gendered*, but also *gendering*, leading eventually to self-fulfilling prophecies, or even discrimination. The activation of stereotypes about the person's social group may also cause "a stereotype threat," that is anxiety about conforming to these activated stereotypes, which negatively affects one's performance in an array of disciplines. The presence of stereotype activating stimuli introduces a risk of self-stereotyping, which also affects self-evaluations and performance in related tasks.

Gender stereotypes are a very important and a wide field of research in psychology and social sciences. In the *Gender Studies Encyclopedia*, stereotypes are defined as "fixed, popular images of particular phenomena or social groups, usually simplified in the cognitive layer and strongly axiologically and emotionally marked" (Lisowska 520). Specifically, gender

stereotypes consist of beliefs about one's mental qualities, behaviour, appearance, profession and other characteristics of men and women (Brannon).

Origins of gender stereotypes and their influence on the social life and lives of individuals are not easy to investigate. It is believed that gender stereotypes have no connection with any innate or biological features of women and men, but they are closely related to socially constructed gender roles and patterns of masculinity and femininity (Brannon). On the other hand it is false to believe that gender stereotypes are completely divergent from reality. They play a role in shaping beliefs, attitudes and behaviour – also in stereotyped groups through imitation and attempting to adapt to a pattern (Lisowska). Some authors believe negative stereotypes to be an instrument of power over the stereotyped groups. In particular stereotypes of women play a role in maintaining patriarchy and help men to retain their privileged position and power in society (Vianello and Caramazza).

As in the case of modern stereotypes about women, the duality of women's and men's spheres was born in the nineteenth century. Because of the industrial revolution, the way of living in many upper and middle class families in Europe and North America has changed. Men started to work mostly outside the house and women took care of home and children. That was also the time when the cult of "true womanhood" was born, with piety, purity, submission and domesticity as four virtues of "true women." Consequently, man was meant to display opposite qualities—hardness, confidence, high position and even aggressiveness (Brannon).

The doctrine of two spheres assumes that women and men have separate spheres of influence. According to the doctrine, women are meant to stay at home and take care of the family and house, whereas men are dedicated to the outside world and work (Brannon). This of course, had a huge effect on segregation relating to space, and other inequalities. Modern studies confirm that the spatial gender segregation still correlates with the lower social status of women in relation to men's status (Spain). It also means the physical separation of women from valuable knowledge and other resources. Gendered spaces usually reinforce the status quo in genders' status differences which are taken for granted. In reality, this often means limiting women's power over space to the boundaries of the household, or even only the kitchen.

The two spheres doctrine can be found in some modernist architects' works which were interpreted as products of beliefs about gender identities, i.e. that domestic buildings' exterior façades mirror the part of masculine

identity hiding its feminine side (the interior), and as such should separate it from the outside. This was criticised for failing at the level of gender equality and implicitly attributing the public sphere to men, while maintaining that woman's place is in the home (Rice).

Attempts to overcome the distinction took the form of, for example, publishing guide books. The *Przestrzeń Kobiet* Foundation designs sightseeing routes in Polish cities to show the connections between women's movement and the public space (Furgał). Since Polish name for travel guides, *przewodnik*, means "male tour guide," the foundation subversively publishes the series under the name *przewodniczka*, "the woman guide" (full title was *Szlaki kobiet. Przewodniczka po Polsce emancypantek*). Other efforts include postulating renaming streets after famous women (Miloch), and entrepreneurial work, which is discussed in further detail later.

There are many stereotypes about how women's and men's space should look like, or how it often looks like. For instance, features of the home interior design have been associated with the femininity – masculinity dimension. Not surprisingly, the characteristics frequently associated with particular genders predominantly correspond to underlying perceptions of stereotypical gender characteristics, and not so much to specific pieces of furniture or decoration. For example, "manly" design is often characterised by roughness (raw materials), simplicity (straight lines) and dominance over nature (antlers, hunting trophies, leather) (Mitchell). On the other hand, femininity in design is often defined as fragility (flowery patterns) and comfortability (soft materials).

These features can be seen as a continuation of nineteenth century stereotypes and ideals of femininity and masculinity: the stereotype of a woman as a domesticated, pure and innocent creature, and the stereotype of a man as strong, imperious and bearish (Brannon). In an article published by the online housing magazine *Curbed*, entitled "It's Time to Stop Describing Spaces as 'Masculine' or 'Feminine,'" the authors argue that gender labelling of the living space by design writers may have a negative impact on the readers less comfortable with current societal expectations concerning gender roles. This is in line with the research on stereotype facilitation by elements of the physical setting, discussed above. The authors noted that masculinity is often characterised by rawness, while femininity is considered to be of an "additive," embellishing nature, translated to decorative efforts, including flowers, lace, stemware, etc. A place, then, seems to belong to men's sphere by default, whereas women need to put in extra work in an effort to take possession of the public (or virtually any) space. Indeed, women were found to use more personal items in order to personalise their private offices (Dinç).

Although sex differences were reported with regard to functioning of the visual system (Abramov et al.), and, for example, the impact of the room light on cognitive processes (Knuz), there are no biological explanations for gender stereotypes concerning space. However, it is probable that these views are being reinforced since one's early childhood, for example, by providing girls and boys with toys and accessories that differ in various respects, and especially in colour ("pink for girls, blue for boys") (Pomerleau).

The following article would like to present two examples of gendered places, which, in our opinion, illustrate well the issues discussed above. *Babie Lato* café was founded in 2004 in Częstochowa. Its name is a word pun and could be understood as "spider kiting," but also "women's summer." The place no longer exists, but, at that time, similar cafes in other Polish cities were established. It was a place set up by women, employing only women and dedicated to women clientele. As one can read on the website advertising the place: "Here we do not have to listen to conversations about cars, mechanics, fights with the traffic police, or the results of football matches, and who can drink more alcohol. Here we can talk about children, bras cuts, whether a sweater is pleasant to the touch, and athletes—but not about their results, but whether they looked nice in shorts" ("*Babie lato*"). The decor of the premises was also peculiar. On their official website ("*Babie lato*"), there are several archival photographs of the interior showing many different shades of pink dispersed over the walls and floor. On the table, at the entrance, pink flowers were placed, and over the table golden balloons hung down from the ceiling. A different picture shows images of female models plastered on the walls and a poster advertising a male erotic dancers' show.

What is important, men could enter the premises only with a colourful wig put on, which effectively discouraged many men from spending time there. One such a visit without a wig ended up even in court. A male client did not want to wear a wig and he was not admitted to the premises by the waitress. The court saw no discrimination in these actions and explained that economic freedom was in force and the café owners could direct their services to whom they wanted (*Drywa*). One of the owners commented on that situation: "He wanted to make a fuss and he did it. We do not try to get into nightclubs for gentlemen. If they (men) don't want to come, they don't have to. Is it really so dishonourable to wear a colourful wig?" (*Ogórek*).

From the café's description on the website, there emerges a very black and white picture of the feminine and masculine worlds. Women and men in the eyes of the owners have completely different interests and worldviews, and they did not understand the troublesome client. The place's interior

design is depicted as stereotypically feminine and the café itself may be even seen as a type of extension of the house, which is traditionally considered to be a women's place (Brannon). Maybe a café for women *had* to be stereotypically feminine since it is hard to indicate any other patterns of femininity? Unfortunately, according to social studies discussed earlier, this could lead to stereotyping the patrons, and subsequent negative psychological consequences.

On the other hand, for women, public places may serve as an escape from domesticity, male dominance and control. For example, public and semi-public spaces like department stores or coffee shops for many women are spaces of freedom from classic roles of a housewife and mother (McDowell). Statements from the café owners confirm this assumption—they say that their café is a place where women may freely enter in their casual outfit, without makeup and are free from men's talk (Ogórek). It is also noteworthy that the business was established by forty women, and a role of a businesswoman is far less stereotypical than a businessman. *Babie Lato* café provided a partial emancipation both for their owners and clients. It was an attempt of going beyond the stereotype of a good mother and housewife, but eventually it ended up still being trapped in stereotypes.

Another example is a male hairdresser's salon from Gdańsk, under the name of *The Barbers*. In April 2017, the place became known after one woman wrote a letter to a newspaper and described a situation in which she was asked to leave the premises because of her gender (Rychcik). The woman accompanied her friend, however, the workers stated that women were not allowed inside and firmly asked her to leave. The woman was also shown a sticker on the counter with a crossed-out woman's silhouette. The woman felt offended and discriminated against. A person associated with the barbershop commented on the situation as follows: "We do not prohibit admission to women, we only ask them to leave the establishment. The reason? Our lounge is very small and customers complained about the loud behaviour of waiting partners of other clients. They said they didn't feel free to discuss men's issues. Since we introduced this principle, the gentlemen feel comfortable and it created a nice atmosphere, which our customers praise very much" (Włodkowska).

The decor of the shop, judging from the promotional photos from *The Barbers*' page published on *Facebook* ("The Barbers"), is in many ways stereotypically masculine (Mitchell). The interior is raw and industrial with the wooden board on the floor, exposed bare red bricks at the walls, and leather armchairs for clients. Additional decorations come down to several items hung on the walls: a bicycle and a few black and white photos. Among many promotional pictures showing the interior or the barbers at work, there

are two photos with a sexist theme. One of them shows a client reading *Playboy* magazine while having his hair cut. The second one, carefully arranged, presents a client sprawled out in an armchair while a young woman dressed in a corset, stockings and high heels is shaving his legs. In that same page the fact that place is dedicated to men is very strongly emphasised: "Male (and only male) hairdresser's salon. We cut hair, shave beards, advise in care."

Barbershops (such as the one in the photograph, see fig. 1) seem to give men a sense of belonging to the male community where they can celebrate "manhood," feel manlier and enhance their male identity (Brett, Al-Assaf). Masculinity is possibly the most important piece of barbershops' place identities. But there is also the other side of the coin, and that is consolidating the existing gender roles and resisting changes in attitudes and stereotypes toward women. Franklin explored it during his insightful research conducted in the 1980s in the male Black barbershop, based on "participant-as-observer" methodology. He showed how important masculinity is in such a place, and how clients and barbers negotiate and discuss gender roles. Conversation topics taken up in the barbershop varied, nevertheless, the issues of gender roles and male-female relationships predominated.

Stereotypes about males and females were strongly visible in conversations at the barbershop investigated by Franklin. Common themes included, for instance: the behaviour of women is based on emotions and instinct whereas men act in accordance with logic; women get raped because they ask for it; women should stay at home and take care of children and the house. Significant individuals in the barbershop setting presented a pro-masculine perspective. It included many stereotypically masculine features: toughness, decisiveness, self-control, powerfulness, aggressiveness, and above all the "No Sissy Stuff" aspect of masculinity, which means a complete separation from stereotypically feminine characteristics and the denial of any feminine side of self. There was an unwritten rule in the barbershop, and that was "to establish sufficient distance from femininity." The language used by male clients was also noteworthy, often vulgar with the persistent rendering of sexual epithets defining women, devaluing femininity and placing women in a submissive position. When females occasionally entered the shop, the climate quickly changed, conversations stopped, subjects were changed and voices were muted.



Deluxe Barbershop

Business partners Alonzo Roberts and James Chandler have been giving haircuts at the Deluxe Barbershop for 50 and 39 years, respectively. Original owners included James Dixon, Jr. and Bill Hardy, who operated a barbershop in the same location around the turn of the century. In March of 1995, the current owners moved across the street to the northside of the square. The newly constructed building will continue the one-hundred-year old tradition of a continuously operated barbershop in Hannibal Square.

Fig. 1. Peter Schreyer, *Deluxe Barbershop*, Winter Park Public Library, USA, 1995

In the case of *The Barbers*, excluding women is the best proof of distancing from femininity. Only when they excluded women from the shop's space, the clientele felt free to discuss "manly" topics (and what topics are manly?). Also their sexist promotional photos show a devaluing approach to women. Nonetheless, we do not have enough information about staff and clients behaviour to say, how they understand gender roles. Franklin's case study is not enough to draw conclusions about *The Barbers*, but it provides threads that are worth exploring. It would be very interesting to conduct the research similar to Franklin's, but at a present-day barbershop. All in all, barbershops

may still be the habitats of gender stereotypes, but they may not be as strong as thirty years ago, and definitions of masculinity and femininity surely have evolved during this time.

To sum up, we would like to recommend further steps necessary to understand relations between the place identity, gender stereotypes and the gendering of places. This is necessary if we want to fight with negative phenomena such as gender discrimination and gender stereotypes. The high quality quantitative and qualitative research in these fields is needed. As our case studies showed, gendering places may lead to the discrimination and exclusion of persons identifying with other genders. It is possible that when stereotypically constructed gender is an important part of the place identity, gender exclusion and discrimination is more common in that place. What is interesting, it seems that the place identity of “feminine” places may be in different relations with gender stereotypes than in case of “masculine” places. Babie Lato café in some ways contradicted gender stereotypes about women, whereas The Barbers barbershop celebrated stereotypes of masculinity. These are just hypotheses that would need verification during research and there are many more threads worth exploring.

Psychologists really do not fully realise how important role the physical environment plays when it comes to forming and reinforcing gender stereotypes and all the other psychological phenomena linked to it. While conducting such research, it would be favourable to cooperate with initiatives striving for gender equality in the public space. Conclusions would be very useful in overcoming the potentially negative aspects of gendering places and places connected gender stereotypes. It could also help improving the quality of public spaces and decreasing gender related discrimination. In the environmental psychology, the aspect of gender is still not pronounced loud enough and it needs to change.

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# FROM THE KITCHEN TO THE WORLD – CHANGES OF WOMEN’S STATUS AND ATTITUDES ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE MEXICAN INDIAN VILLAGES IN THE LA HUASTECA HIDALGUENSE REGION

**ZOFIA PIOTROWSKA-KRETKIEWICZ**

Institute of Regional and Global Studies, University of Warsaw

The aim of the paper is to present the changes of the status of the indigenous peasant women in Mexico on the example of the small Huazalingo municipality in the La Huasteca Hidalguense region. The majority of inhabitants of the municipality are Nahuatl Indians. The paper is based on the results of the multidisciplinary investigations carried out in Huazalingo municipality since December 1999 till the present time, consisting of prolonged periods of fieldwork and numerous sporadic visits. Huazalingo municipality is located on the periphery of the Hidalgo state and the La Huasteca region, therefore, the market access for its agriculture produce is very limited. Changes of economic conditions compelled the Indian peasants to construct some kind of the nomadic community or the nomadic culture – i.e. the existence and the survival of the families and village as a whole was made possible thanks to the periodical or permanent migrations of the younger generation. The agricultural production does not provide sufficient wealth to cover the family expenses or to make investment for the future. At the same time, with the increasing migration rate and the absence of young men in the villages, the status of women has changed, and, accordingly, the tasks they have to fulfil in the community have been modified.

Changes in the women’s status that have come about in the traditional Indian villages for the several decades are of both positive and negative nature. On one hand, due to the absence of young men in the villages, women gained more autonomy, better access to education and, consequently, they became more independent. On the other hand, currently, they have to fulfil more extended domestic chores and the emergence of new tasks means that, like in the past, their working hours are much longer than those of men.

La Huasteca is a geographical-historical and socio-cultural region located in the north-eastern part of Mexico. The precise extension and the limits of the region are not defined univocally. In accordance with the broad definition,

it comprises the eastern part of San Luis Potosí State, the north-eastern part of Hidalgo, the northern part of Veracruz, the south-eastern part of Tamaulipas and the north-eastern part of Puebla. Notwithstanding, it has become commonplace to distinguish three separate regions (or three *Huastecas*): the Huasteca Hidalguense, Veracruzana, and Potosina. Already in the pre-Columbian era, *La Huasteca* was considered by the Aztecs to be a mysterious and mythic territory. It is a region of many contrasts. Although it is rich in natural resources and its environment is favourable for agriculture, it represents one of the poorest regions of Mexico. Paradoxically, the area with such an abundance of natural and valuable resources that have many potential usages, is inhabited by millions of indigenous people suffering poverty and endemic underdevelopment. According to the census conducted in 2010 (*Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010*) the La Huasteca region was inhabited by almost 3.5 million people, 23.6% of them belonged to one of the indigenous groups (Indians). The most numerous group were the Nahuas (nahuatl speaking group).

La Huasteca hidalguense is a part of La Huasteca that belongs to the Hidalgo state. The region is a hilly terrain that is affected by the soil erosion. It is composed of 10 municipalities. 88% of its population are Nahuatl Indians (*Panorama Sociodemográfico de Hidalgo* 13). The main economic activity of its inhabitants is agriculture. Notwithstanding, their farming activities are characterised by a very low rate of technicality. The main reason for this situation is the mountainous topography, dynamic landforms, steep, stony slopes that make it impossible to use the modern equipment and machines.

The Huazalingo Municipality is located on the periphery of the Hidalgo State and the La Huasteca region. The territorial area of Huazalingo is 107.38km<sup>2</sup> and it represents just 0.52% of the territory of the State. Its total population is 12,779 inhabitants (i.e. just 0.48% of the total population of the state). Huazalingo is located at an altitude of approximately 890 m above the sea level (*Anuario Estadístico 2014*). According to the official data, Huazalingo belongs to the group of municipalities the most severely affected by poverty in the Hidalgo State. According to the official publications (*Anuario Estadístico y Geográfico de Hidalgo 2014*), (*Medición de Pobreza Municipal 2010*), in the period of 2008-2010 and in 2010-2013, Huazalingo was one of the municipalities with the highest social marginalisation rates at the State level.

The population of Huazalingo is very young. The median age of Hidalgo State inhabitants is 25 years (24 for men, 26 for women), whereas in the case of Huazalingo the median age is 22 (men 20, women 23). In the case of the capital of the Hidalgo State, Pachuca, the median age is 28. The numbers

indicate the relatively high population growth and the high fertility rate. The annual population growth of the Huasteca Hidalguense in 1995-2005 was as high as 1.1%. (Vázquez Sandrin 3). The fertility rates are particularly high among the Indian women. The fertility rate of nahuatl-speaking women in la Huasteca Hidalguense in 1995-1999 was approximately 4.1%, i.e. higher by 0.4 than the average for the whole the La Huasteca Hidalguense region and higher by 1.3% comparing to the average for the whole Hidalgo State (Vázquez Sandrin 4).

The author of this article has carried out the field research in the Huazalingo Municipality since December 1999 till the present, collaborating with the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS). The principal research method is based on the participant observation and the extended case study, which involves a comparison of the results of the empirical research with the source literature. The author's main place of residence during the investigation was the community of San Juan and most of the data was collected in that community. San Juan is located at the distance of around 2 kilometres from the municipal seat, Huazalingo; the road leading to Huazalingo divides the community of San Juan in two not equal parts. In 2010, the total population of San Juan was 454 inhabitants.

Since the Conquest, the diet of Mesoamerican Indians was based on local products obtained through plant cultivation, livestock farming, hunting and gathering, and the surplus was sold or traded for other agricultural products in order to diversify their diet or to buy household utensils. Notwithstanding, nowadays, the agricultural production cannot provide sufficient surplus for living expenses, or offer the financial means to buy industrial products. Therefore, the peasants are looking for the optional livelihood strategies. The focal point of all of their activities is corn as the core element of their rituality, cosmology and the religious life. At the same time, corn represents the staple food crop and the major source of calories. Corn constitutes half of the total amount of food consumed every year and it provides almost half of the calorie requirements. The main dish, *tortilla*, provides half of the calories and one third of proteins consumed by the inhabitants of Mexico. These figures are much higher in the rural sector, i.e. 65% of calories and between 50 and 70% of proteins (Massieu-Trigo 283-284). Corn represents also the main component of the daily and festive dishes and it is an essential ingredient of religious and healing ceremonies. During recent years, there has been an increase in consumption of meat and processed food, refined sugar, sugared soft drinks, biscuits, candies, etc. The higher calorie intake and the increase in consumption of the processed food have had a major influence on the devastating twin epidemics of obesity and diabetes.

The inhabitants of the villages of the municipality practise subsistence agriculture. The increasingly poor agricultural product price to industrial products price ratio, the difficult access to the market, to credits and bank accounts, an excessive number of people comparing to the cultivable land (in San Juan, Huazalingo the maximum plot is 4 ha, although a number of landless peasants called *avecindados* is growing very quickly) – make it impossible for the peasants to maintain their families on the basis of the agricultural activity, however paradoxically it might sound. As mentioned above, the prices-scissor of agricultural products and economic crisis in the agriculture sector, observed in Mexico since 1990's, forced the Indian peasants to diversify their income and their search for alternative complementary strategies (Tiedje 265; Piotrowska 117-502). Their decisions, although conscious and deliberate, are constrained by the options that are available to them, given the overall context and the conditions in which they operate. Many of them find work as bakers, craftsmen, carpenters, ambulant vendors or traditional healers (*curanderos*). Although migrations represent only one of the many optional solutions and social-economic strategies carried out by the Indian peasants in order to balance the family budget, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it became a preferred option for solving the acute problems faced by them.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, such actions are facilitated thanks to the improvement of transport conditions, technological development (the media, radio, internet), allowing for an increased range and duration of migrations. Young people migrate from their communities in search of employment<sup>2</sup> and the migration constitutes the major source of income for their families. Summing up, we can say that the la Huasteca Hidalguense region and San Juan village live on the residents' migration.

The first waves of migrations in the La Huasteca Hidalguense region started since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Since the 1980s till the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the main centre attracting migrants from the rural areas was the capital, Mexico City. Other important directions of migration from the region are Pachuca (capital of Hidalgo state), Tampico, Guadalajara and, in the last few years, Monterrey. Currently, the most important form of economic migrations is connected with a seasonal work (generally lasting several

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<sup>1</sup> The results of the populations census confirm the high mobility and migration rates of Mexican Indians. According to the census of 2000, more than one million of Indians were born in different federative entity than one where they were registered in the census (García et al. 67).

<sup>2</sup> The first migrations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were directly related to the issues of the land ownership and the struggle over land (*lucha por la tierra*). Some Indian peasants escaped from the persecutions of big landowners, others tried to obtain financial resources for future investments in land freshly recovered from them (Vázquez-Flores, and Hernández Casillas 73).

months) in the modern farms located in the north-eastern part of Mexico (the Indian peasants are hired for cattle breeding, fruits, vegetables and flowers-picking, etc.) especially in the farms producing for the export market (Sánchez-Saldán 2).

When describing the situation of poverty, the following factors are usually analysed: location, geographic zone, remoteness or proximity to big urban centres, ethnic origin and gender. The poverty rate and the marginalisation of the Indian communities are substantially higher than in the non-Indian communities, when taking into account income, access to goods and services, health, education, employment and decision-making power. Although men and women share the same conditions of poverty, women are much more affected by this situation. Women head the majority of single-parent households and have to face the lack of work and access to productive resources. It is generally recognised that the Indian women are doubly or even triply discriminated, because they are Indians, because they are poor and because they are women (Tiedje 268). The situation of Indian women is extremely difficult because they have to face various levels of discrimination and gender-based violence. In the 1980s, some feminists from developing countries started to analyse the phenomenon of poverty from a gender perspective, and they identified a series of conditions that affected the situation of women. At the same time, they emphasised that the number of poor women was much higher than men, the poverty of women was more extreme, and that increasing women's poverty was a noticeable trend. In order to summarise the whole set of phenomena they used a term *feminization of poverty* (CEPAL. *Entender la Pobreza* 13).<sup>3</sup> It is obvious that the background for poverty, violence and discrimination experienced by women is multi-factorial and it constitutes a by-product of a warped hierarchical society that due to the vicissitudes of history favoured men over women and Europeans over Indians (Herrera and Duhaime). However, taking into account a growing number of women active in the labour market and being the heads of households, the exacerbation of women's poverty provokes a slowdown in the local and global economic growth (Buvinic).

The traditional Indian communities tend to maintain conservative standards with regard to the traditional gender roles. The women carry out their daily activities in the specific spaces determined by custom and legitimised by standards (Alcalá 142). It is commonly agreed that Indian women in rural communities are confined to the domestic domain, while the public or political sphere is dominated by men. The term "domestication of

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<sup>3</sup> The term "feminization of poverty" is attributed to Diana Pearce.

women” that served as a title of an important study of Barbara Rogers (22-26) perfectly describes the condition of discrimination against women and their confinement to the domestic sphere. The Indian women, trapped in the kitchen and in their traditional gender roles, were considered to be the nurturers of the family and they did not have to have contact with people outside their native community. The traditional division of labour by gender implied sharp distinctions between the masculine and feminine roles, and it was particularly visible in the case of the agricultural division of labour.

Nahua women in the Huazalingo Municipality generally do not have to engage in the agricultural activities. Notwithstanding, within the local food system, they have to comply with the rules that assign them certain duties depending on their age. As a rule, men have to participate in the majority of the agricultural activities, for example, those related to sowing and animal breeding, i.e. the first stage of the food system, the production of food, whereas, women first of all prepare meals, i.e. they are active in the final stage of the food system. The additional work necessary for the daily cooking tasks, for example, fetching water and wood, should be done by both men and by women as needed. Ever so, during the large festivities, the participation of all the family is required; women with girls prepare meals and men with boys make flower arrangements and decorations (flower necklaces, arches decorated with yellow and orange marigolds called in nahuatl *cempoalxóachitl*).

Preparing meals and washing clothes are two main activities of women that consume the majority of their daily routine and they represent a real challenge in a region having a changing climate. The clothes get dirty very quickly because of humidity, and in the rainy season, they dry much slower than in other climate. Women also play a very significant role in the upbringing of children. They have to carry hot lunches for their children in the primary school and kindergarten, participate in parent-teacher-meetings, help children with their homework, sew clothes and prepare decorations needed for school celebrations. Simultaneously, they are obliged to clean the school buildings periodically in accordance with the schedule (the schools in Indian villages do not employ professional cleaners and all the cleaning work is performed by the mothers).

Time represents probably the only resource that the poor people have at their disposal in an abundance. Nevertheless, many studies have demonstrated that in poor families the average man has at his disposal more leisure time than the average woman (Buvinic). Edward T. Hall included the traditional Latin-American cultures in the group of the societies that he called *polychronic cultures*. The specificity of such cultures is based on doing multiple things at a time, whereas the modern societies, as the typical

representatives of *monochronic cultures* prefer scheduling, planning and doing one thing at a time (Hall). This definition is even more true in case of women. Indian women take children with them when leaving house to assist meetings, or carry firewood, and, in the meantime, they are breastfeeding, embroidering napkins or just gossiping. Nevertheless, the status of women as well as their roles in the family and in the public sphere are constantly changing over time. Many scholars and government agencies report a gradual increase in women's status and the improved access of women to education, health care and management positions among the traditional indigenous groups of Latin American and Asian countries (Binh 136).

According to the traditional cosmology of the Nahua Indians, the secret of women's fertility carries a symbolic meaning and it is related with the cult of Earth and with agricultural rituals. Motherhood possesses an enormous importance for the indigenous communities and it seems to be perceived as a destiny of woman. Generally, indigenous women have more children, comparing with the average national rate. Notwithstanding, when analysing the past decades, there is a considerable decline in the birth rate. Currently, women utilise various birth control methods, however, in spite of the state policies and programs of the birth control, there are still many teen mothers. The families are patrilineal and patrilocal i.e. women leave their houses to live with their husbands, yet there are many female-headed households that are more vulnerable and poor when comparing with others. It is also the case of young women who escaped from their husbands because of intra-family violence. Peasant women rarely ask their husbands to pay for the child support. There are no divorces, few marriages but a lot of unofficial separations. In some villages, several men have two unofficial wives, frequently sisters. It is the case of San Francisco village that is "famous" for having many families, consisting of two women and one man. Just 40-50 years ago, parents chose a husband for a girl, and the majority of women married very young, being 15 or even 13 years old. Currently, young people choose their partners in an independent manner, frequently, while working as temporary farm labourers, notwithstanding, there are only few legalised marriages.

The most important "revolution" that enabled to cut the time that the Indian women had to spend in the kitchen with no doubts dealt with the preparation of meals on the basis of the most important cereal in Mesoamerica, i.e. corn. Traditionally women "reign" in the kitchen and they have to spend much of their time preparing meals. Up to the early 1970s, women had to get up very early to perform all the procedures related to the transforming of *nixtamal* (tortilla dough) into tortilla. The introduction of manual *nixtamal* mills, *tortilleras* (tortilla presses made of wood or metal),

and, then, electric nixtamal mills, revolutionised all the process of preparing of the sacred and most important meal (tortilla) and saved women's time and work, although some of elderly men were not eager to accept the modern techniques. Other inventions that have improved the lives of women, or at least, saved their time are blenders (it means that women do not need *metate* grinding table to grind chili pepper, cacao, etc., that is very hard and time-consuming work), and refrigerators (they can prepare dough for two or more days and store it in a refrigerator). The next stage of the development of the tortilla preparation is *tortilleria* (tortilla bakery). Currently, in San Juan a group consisting of 5 women operates one electric nixtamal mill and other women have to pay a small fee for milling corn dough there. The majority of women do not have manual mills yet, therefore, once, when suddenly power went out in San Juan, it caused a great deal of confusion. The same group of women operates also the *tortilleria* bakery that they put into operation only in case of big orders because they do not wish to dirty the machinery while producing a small amount of tortillas. In spite of the important revolutionary changes in the food-preparation processes, the rural women have to dedicate almost twice as much time to prepare meals as women living in urban centres (Pederzini 37).

Although till 2017 women were not allowed to participate in the cargo system (*sistema de cargos*, i.e. a system of local authorities, constituting a hierarchy of secular and religious posts held by the members of Indian villages in the form of unpaid responsibility), they have to fulfil some of the duties of their relatives in their absence in the village. Due to temporary migrations of young males, their female relatives (mothers, sisters or wives) are obliged to replace them and perform their duties related to the cargo system, i.e. participate in the meetings of community members, play the roles of *mayordomos* (organisers of patronal festivals), perform *faenas* (communal work obligations), pay contributions to the village authorities, etc. In San Juan, the only cargo of *mayordoma*, i.e. a female organiser of the patronal feast, was the *mayordoma* of the feast of the Immaculate Conception (one of the three patron saint festivals in San Juan).<sup>4</sup>

A constant increase in the number of working women in the rural regions of Mexico that started in 1980s, was paralleled by the crisis in the rural economy. During the decade of 1970s, the majority of the Mexican peasants experienced increasing difficulties to earn their living from agriculture. They had to diversify their economic activities and find new livelihood strategies.

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<sup>4</sup> In 2018, for the first time in San Juan, a woman was elected to the position of *mayordoma* of the feast of Santiago. In 2017 and 2018, two women were assigned tasks within the framework of the cargo system, although they do play auxiliary roles only.

It is not individual but collective, common effort and the decisions are made by the whole domestic groups because the results of the changing of traditional gender roles resulting from migrations affect all family members (Klein and Vázquez-Flores 30). While some family members stay home to work the land and fulfil the duties related to the cargo system, others leave to find jobs as day labourers, industry workers or merchants, or migrate to urban centres.

With no doubt, the importance of financial resources provided by women for a family budget has grown significantly (in consequence of price scissors in agriculture, the agricultural activity has to be complemented by the resources coming from other economic sectors, for example, door-to-door selling, artisan work, and work as traditional healers). Notwithstanding, it is relatively difficult to assess the share of women's earning contribution to the family budgets on the ground that the estimates of women's work appear to be on the low side. Whenever they perform work for the community (village) or the family, the work of women is often defined using a disparaging term "help" (García et al. 35). The main problem they have to affront is the necessity to combine two goals – productive and reproductive, because they are very much involved in the process of bringing up children. It means that they have to take jobs that allow them to meet both these responsibilities. Such jobs generally may be found in the informal sector and, therefore, they are poorly paid.

Trade, especially door-to-door trade, represents the type of work preferred by women because it enables them to combine flexibly domestic chores, childcare and income generation, allowing them to adapt their sales times to the requirements of the domestic work and enable their children or grandchildren to accompany them. They have to carry goods on their shoulders, backs or heads like the merchants in the pre-Columbian era. They are the modern-day successors of the professional prehispanic merchants and travellers of Aztec Empire called *pochtecas*. *Pochtecas* represented a separate group of the long-distance traders that supplied Tenochitlan with luxury and exotic goods from distant regions.

In the process of the reorganisation of the local and regional economies, women have played a major part. The number of women that took up paid work or intensified the work that they had previously, increased substantially. Huazalingo, Doña Caritina Lara of San Juan, my hostess and friend, is the best example of a flexible and multitasking modern Indian woman. She works as *curandera* (traditional healer), itinerant vendor selling second-hand clothes, fruits, food products, she helps her husband in the farm work and she fulfils all the duties of an average Indian woman as a mother, grandmother and wife. When her husband got ill, she had to assume more tasks, because

even the busiest of women are able to intensify their work when needed. Indian women are the specialists of a polychronic system of time and experts of the optional time usage.

Until the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indian women were almost invisible as scholars, state authorities, and politicians. Their participation in the political life was very limited. As the elderly inhabitants of San Juan remember it today, during the period of the so called *lucha por la tierra* (struggle over land), i.e. violent and bloody Indian peasants movement that started in 1970s, women generally did not participate actively in the events. They were assigned secondary duties of preparing and serving meals for the combatants and performing other household chores. However, with time, the political participation of younger generation of women has increased. They take an active part in the local electoral campaign before the elections of a president of municipality. Therefore, political leaders and candidates seek their help and assistance. Notwithstanding, as many women complain, after the elections they play a secondary role only because the key positions are still reserved for men.

Considering the above, the local and state authorities and non-governmental organisations started to offer more and more programs designed especially for women, enabling them to become vocationally active. However the majority of these programs are short-lived and they fail quickly upon completing the initial phase. The instructors of the organisations promote and discuss with women some psychological and family related issues, for example, intra-familial violence, trying to develop their self-esteem. The younger generation of women is capable to defend themselves and they demonstrate their independence and self-respect. This assumption may be confirmed by one incident that occurred during the meeting of *comuneros* (members of agrarian community) in San Juan when a group of young women participating in the assembly filling in for their absent husbands, commented with laughter "We are worth as much as men." Other organisations and agencies offer special trainings to promote the changes in eating habits, for example, trying to persuade women to utilise new sources of proteins (soya) or to consume more vegetables. The DIF (Sistema **Nacional** para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia) instructor visited San Juan many times to teach women how to prepare new meals, for example, orange jams, soya meals, etc. Women patiently participated in the training, sometimes even with enthusiasm, however, I have never seen any family that so far have utilised new recipes in their homes afterwards.

Although the division of labour by gender seems very strict, in the practice, it may be flexible. Because of the high rate of the labour migration among young men, the division of labour by gender is modified. There is a

rule applicable to the Mexican rural areas and to other developing countries that the poorer a family is, the more important women's participation in the agricultural work is (Rogers 165). Unfortunately, it means that women have to take on more tasks now than in the past, because men almost never take over women's work in the kitchen or other domestic chores.

A strict gender division of labour implies also the existence of many prohibitions, orders and taboos. The example of the taboo that has survived the waves of modernity is a prohibition for women to ring the bells. In the villages of the Huazalingo Municipality, women are not allowed to ring a bell, and it is believed that otherwise a bell could break. At the same time, women have to fight discriminatory prejudice, superstitions and criticism from the neighbours that support more traditional family models. For example, *curanderas* and itinerant vendors who have to travel outside their home village, are gossiped to have lovers in other villages.

Traditionally young men are more inclined to migrate than women. Men are more mobile whereas women cannot leave and liberate themselves from the oppressive situation as readily as men do (it is harder for them to find a paid employment, they exhibit much closer ties to their families and children). Migrant women from the Indian villages can obtain worse paid jobs than men, hence, they usually find employment in the cities as domestic workers (the demand for domestic workers in the cities is very high although the salaries are low), or as small shop assistants (*Informe sobre Desarrollo Humano* 59). They start to migrate from the age of twelve-thirteen and the maximum rate of migration is registered between 15 and 29 years of age. After getting married, women less frequently leave their home village. The owners of modern farms that employ seasonal workers take hold of the opportunity to employ female workers and whole families. Some of them hire babysitters to take care of children when their mother works in the field. Due to the increasing feminisation rate of migrations to modern farms and more contacts between young people of different sexes, the growing number of young women move to other villages as wives of men whom they have come to know during work (the families generally have patrilocal character).

The older generation expresses their general concern and uncertainty about the behaviour and attitudes of younger men and women. The analysis of their attitudes seems to be important because the effects of globalisation tend to have a generational character. The younger generation is responsible for the majority of migrations in the second part of 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century on the local, regional and country level, even on the international level, hence, they form the so called migratory culture. However it should be stressed that a new and very dangerous phenomenon has emerged in la Huasteca Hidalguense: a substantial reduction in the number of

young men aged 15 to 29. Around 82% of people emigrating to the United States are men and 18% are women, with half of all emigrants in the 15 to 29 years group (Serrano-Avilés 65). The intensification of migration of young generation entails a significant risk of the loss of the human capital, because it is on them that the Indian communities place hopes to fight underdevelopment and find new, creative solutions to emerging economic and social problems.

The ongoing changes in women's status and in living conditions in the Mexican Indian villages have weighed increasingly on the local economy. Current economic and political changes within the framework of the phenomenon called globalisation have brought Indian women new opportunities and new challenges. However, the changes in women's status do not necessary mean the improvement of their living conditions. Frequently, it means that women have to take even more tasks and responsibilities while they are not freed from the old ones. It implies an increase in terms of the burden of extra workload.

Nonetheless, the wind of change has eradicated some taboos related to women. For example, in the past women did not participate in the Day of the Dead ceremonies (*xantolo*) as dancers. Nowadays schools and kindergartens promote participation of women, i.e. mothers of pupils and schoolgirls, in the ritual dances, although elder people criticise such „innovations.” Irrespective of the direction and the rate of changes, traditional healers (*curanderas*), constitute a group of women that are always on the forefront of modernity and development. They are not only doctors who cure human body, shamans or magicians, but also philosophers, thinkers who constantly seek to understand the rules, norms and principles that govern the world. It is the most active and open-minded group of Indian women and their curiosity about the world, flexibility and the support for the idea of the life-long learning give some hope for the future of the traditional Indian societies and the future status of women. *Curanderas* are the best example of how to combine respect for old traditions, maintaining collective memory and identity with an attitude open to change, readiness to learn new skills and absorb new ideas. It is worth conducting a detailed research in the future in order to determine precisely the role of this specific group of Indian women in the context of the increasingly globalised world.

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# SPACE, SHAPE AND MOVEMENT IN SIGNING AND THE GENDERING OF VISUAL LANGUAGES

**KATARZYNA WOJTANIK**

Institute of English Studies, University of Lodz

According to statistics, in Poland about 900,000 people suffer from severe hearing impairments. In Europe, the statistics reach the number of 80 million. Globally, about 10-15% of the whole population, that is about 500 million people, experience hearing problems (*Zatrudnij Głuchych*). Deaf and head-of-hearing people use sign language to communicate. Many researchers have proved that sign languages are real, fully-fledged languages with complex grammatical rules which allow their users to communicate with precision. Despite being convinced that they deal with real languages, researchers argue whether and how signing differs from or is similar to spoken languages (Barberà 24). Comparing the two systems – spoken languages and signed languages<sup>1</sup> Hickmann states that they subdivide into different subsystems. While spoken languages comprise four subsystems, i.e. lexical subsystem, grammatical subsystem, subsystem of “vocal dynamics,” and somatic subsystem, sign languages consist of a few more, i.e. a subsystem of lexical forms, an “inflectional” subsystem, a subsystem of size-and-shape specifiers (or SASS’s); a subsystem of “classifier expressions,” a gestural subsystem, a subsystem of face, head, and torso representations, a subsystem of “bodily dynamics,” and a somatic subsystem.

As argued by Barberà, modality should be understood as a way “the language is perceived and produced” (32). While spoken languages base mostly on audio-vocal modality, sometimes supported by visual-gestural modality, sign languages are integrated with visual-gestural, or visual-spatial modality, which constitutes the core of these languages. It means that such elements as space, movement and shape are crucial elements in these languages, i.e. these languages cannot exist beyond these components. All

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<sup>1</sup> The author uses the term *signed languages* although it seems that the term *sign languages* would be better in this place. Signed languages are generally understood as artificial systems of communication based on the grammar of a spoken language and lexical signs of a sign language. In Poland teachers often use System Językowo-Migowy (Polish Signed Language, or manually-coded Polish).

grammatical aspects of sign languages, i.e. phonology, morphology, syntax and lexis are expressed in space through shape and movement. It means that all the three elements are not spontaneous and accidental but their properties are particularly meaningful in communication. Referring to Klima and Bellugi, Barberà claims that space in signing does not constitute only a “field” in which communication process takes place, but it bears a significant linguistic meaning (25). The place of articulation (Barberà 26), which means that the location in which a particular sign appears, or is used, constitutes an important phonological category, as it is one of the minimal parameters which influence the meaning of the sign (Barberà 26). To illustrate this phenomenon let us analyse three signs from the Polish Sign Language (PJM): 1) SŁYSZĄCY (HEARING PERSON), 2) CUKIEREK (CANDY), and 3) KOŚĆ (BONE). All three signs are produced with a curved index finger, on the right ear, on the right cheek, on the chin, respectively. The three signs constitute minimal pairs which are differentiated from one another by the place of the articulation alone (Tomaszewski, Rosik 113). Analysing sign language structure on the phonological level, Perniss in *Space and Iconicity in German Sign Language (DGS)* indicates four phonological parameters which allow one to create minimal pairs, i.e. handshape, place of articulation, movement, and hand orientation. All these categories are strongly related to space, which means that spatiality is a dominant criterion constituting the specificity of sign languages.

The aim of this paper is to present and discuss the three aspects mentioned above, i.e. space, movement and shape, and to show how they operate within sign languages. Space, shape, and movement are key elements of any sign language. Sign languages, as fully-fledged systems of communication, also contain linguistic variables which are typical for particular groups of signers, either regionally or socially. Signs, as words, may differ from a region to a region, or from the generation to the generation. In the final part of this paper, I will focus on sociolinguistic variation in sign languages, particularly in the context of gender differences in signing. Referring to the selected research, I will try to examine whether the three crucial building blocks of a sign language – space, shape, and movement are used differently by Deaf women and Deaf men.

Being a meaningful constituent of sign languages, a sign space is shaped in a very specific way. A sign space is not any space around the signer but it is limited to the frontal and the horizontal plane in front of the signer’s torso (Barberà 25). The signs can be also located on the signer’s body, which, thus, becomes a meaningful element of communication, called by researchers a non-manual articulator (Perniss, *Space and Iconicity* 219). Analysing the use of space, Perniss in *Space and Iconicity in German Sign Language (DGS)*

mentions two ways in which the space can be used, i.e. the syntactic use of the sign space and the topographic use of the sign space. The syntactic use of the sign space means that the sign space *loci* are chosen arbitrarily and they do not carry any semantic meaning. Their importance is constrained to the syntactic aspect. In this sense, they become points of reference for other signs which, accordingly, can be meaningfully used, e.g. they allow to identify the agent and the object of a verb. Various morphosyntactic changes of signs can be performed within the sign space used syntactically, due to which a signer is able to introduce desirable changes of meaning and they can convey a specific message. For example, a signer can choose the direction of movement from *locus* 1 to *locus* 2 to communicate who is asking and who is being asked. To illustrate this aspect of the spatiality of a sign language, I will refer to Tomaszewski and Rosik's example of three Polish Sign Language utterances:

- |                        |        |                                |
|------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|
| [A] BOY-R <sup>2</sup> | GIRL-L | boy-LOOK AT-girl               |
| [B] GIRL-L             | BOY-R  | girl-LOOK AT-boy               |
| [C] BOY-R              | GIRL-L | they-LOOK AT-each other. (116) |

If one associates *locus* 1 with the sign "boy" and *locus* 2 with the sign "girl," depending on the order and the direction of signing (from *locus* 1 to *locus* 2, or from *locus* 2 to *locus* 1), they can obtain two different meanings:

- [A] The boy is looking at the girl.  
 [B] The girl is looking at the boy. (Tomaszewski and Rosik 116)

If the signer uses two hands simultaneously, and s/he signs LOOK AT, moving both hands from the lateral positions towards the middle of the sign space, they can produce yet another utterance:

- [C] A boy and a girl are looking at each other. (Tomaszewski and Rosik 116)

In the examples provided above, the locations in the sign space are used syntactically, which means that the locations have purely referential meaning.<sup>3</sup> To illustrate the syntactic use of the sign space, Perniss in "Use of Sign Space" mentions Liddell's comparison of the sign space locations to terms used in a legal contract:

Liddell (1990, 304) likens the relationship of referential equality to the terminology of a legal contract. If Mr. Jones is identified as "the borrower" in

<sup>2</sup> R stands for right hand, L stands for left hand.

<sup>3</sup> The term *referential equality* was used by Liddell (1990).

a contract, then all subsequent mentions of “the borrower” within that contract refer to Mr. Jones, since the use of the phrase “the borrower” is referentially equivalent to the man called Mr. Jones. (414)

Trying to answer the question whether Polish Sign Language is a real language, Tomaszewski and Rosik call attention to a very interesting specificity of the spatiality of sign languages, i.e. spatial syntax<sup>4</sup> of these languages. To illustrate their idea, they provide an example of a simple phrase: *Mama poszła do sklepu* (Mum went to the shop). The sentence can be signed in two ways:

- [1] MOTHER-R                    GO TO-LSHOP-L  
 [2] MOTHER-R                    SHOP-L GO TO-L. (Tomaszewski and Rosik 118)

After assigning the sign MOTHER to location 1, a signer can, then, follow with the sign GO TO, and then sign SHOP in location 2 of the sign space. In the second option, a signer can start with the sign MOTHER in location 1, then, move on to the sign SHOP in location 2, and finally connect the two *loci* by an agreement verb (Barberà 27) GO TO. Regardless of the sequence of signs in the utterance, its meaning does not change. Thus, it can be further concluded that the spatial syntax likens sign languages to inflectional spoken languages, in which, due to inflectional endings, the sequence of words can be freely, or almost freely, chosen, and such an operation does not change the meaning of the utterance. Positioned in a specific location, the signs function as inflected words, the location being the spatial equivalent of spoken inflectional endings. In this sense, the location of a sign in the sign space corresponds to the inflection of a word, i.e. signs in particular locations in the sign space resemble inflected words with their inflectional endings. In this sense, Tomaszewski and Rosik are right talking about spatial inflection (*fleksja przestrzenna*) (118).

Contrary to the syntactic use of space, where the sign space *loci* are arbitrary, the sign space used topographically means that locations of the signs convey very specific meanings. The organisation of the sign space, i.e. location of signs in the sign space reflects spatial relations between real objects which the signs refer to (Perniss, “Use of Sign Space” 414). To discuss the sign space used topographically, Liddell uses the term *location fixing*, in which the location of a sign in the sign space corresponds to

<sup>4</sup> In their article Tomaszewski and Rosik (2003) use the term *fleksja przestrzenna* (spatial inflection), but, since the phenomenon described in the article deals with the order, or the sequence, of signs in a signed utterance and their relation with, or influence on the meaning of the whole utterance, it seems that we should rather talk about *składnia przestrzenna* (spatial syntax) in Polish Sign Language.

location of the object it refers to in the real world. The correspondence between the organisation of the sign space and the organisation of space in the real world brings to mind the issue of *iconicity* of languages. Due to the visual-spatial modality, iconicity constitutes an inherent element of sign languages. As argued by Perniss in *Space and Iconicity in German Sign Language (DGS)*, “the visual-spatial modality” carries “the potential for iconic representations” (3). She claims that three-dimensional space in which sign languages operate, naturally leads to iconic representations of a message, particularly, if the message concerns shape, location, motion, and action (Perniss, *Space and Iconicity* 3). The topographic use of the sign space shows to what extent iconicity is present in sign languages, i.e. that it can be equally traced on the discourse level. The topographic use of the sign space is often related to the use of classifier predicates, which will be discussed in the second section of the paper.

A particular *locus* in the sign space can be used both syntactically and topographically at the same time, and these two dimensions do not necessarily stand in opposition to one another. Let us look at the example that Perniss provides in “Use of Sign Space:”

A signer could use a classifier predicate to establish a referent, e.g. a colleague, at a certain (topographic) location in sign space, e.g. seated at her desk. Subsequently, the signer could direct a verb sign, e.g. ask, to the same location, specifying the colleague as the grammatical object of the predicate (see Liddell (1990, 318) for a similar example). In this example, the location associated with the colleague is functioning syntactically (or referentially) and topographically at the same time. (416)

Other researchers like Liddell and van Hoek go even further in their conclusions and claim that the two ways in which the sign space is used, i.e. syntactic and topographic one, are so closely integrated that one cannot really distinguish between them. The use of a particular *locus* is never purely syntactic or purely topographic. Referring to Fauconnier's theory of *mental spaces*, Van Hoek introduces the term of *conceptual location*, which means that every location is related to a certain context which deprives the location its abstractness, or arbitrariness (Perniss, “Use of Sign Space” 416).

The sign space, which is a precisely defined area in front of the signer's body where signed utterances are produced, can be structured in many ways, depending on the signer's needs and aims. Referring to Engberg-Pedersen's research, Perniss in “Use of Sign Space” provides three factors which make the signer decide upon the organisation, or the shape, of the sign space, i.e. semantic, pragmatic, and discourse cohesion (417). She then concludes that arbitrariness in choosing a *locus*, or *loci*, in the sign space happens extremely

rarely. After Engberg-Pedersen's, Perniss discusses various conventions of structuring the sign space. When a signer organises the sign space to reflect the real world, or the real event, s/he is said to act within the *iconic convention*. The *convention of semantic affinity* is used when a signer produces an utterance in which referents stay in semantic relation to each other. In such a situation, the two signs are produced at one *locus* in the sign space. The *convention of semantic affinity* shares some features with the *convention of canonical location*, in which a referent is assigned to a location which is naturally associated with it. Perniss provides an example of a person who lives in a certain city ("Use of Sign Space" 417). A sign referring to the person will be produced at the same place as the sign signifying the city, even if the person is out of the city when the utterance is taking place.

A convention applied by a signer can also depict their attitude towards the topic of the conversation, or people spoken about. For example, signers can choose locations closer to their body to sign about something they like, or, if they want to express their dislike, they can locate referents further from their body. Perniss provides an example of two films discussed by a signer ("Use of Sign Space" 418). Producing an utterance about a film that the person liked, they sign closer to their body, while they choose a location further from their body to express their dislike. The *convention of comparison* allows signers to compare two phenomena by locating them on the right and on the left in the sign space, thus giving them equal but juxtaposing position. Finally, Perniss discusses the *authority convention* which allows signers to present superiority-inferiority relations by assigning the more important referent a higher location in the sign space ("Use of Sign Space" 418).

Furthermore, referring to Winston and Mather and Winston research findings, Perniss discusses how discourse cohesion is obtained through the use of *spatial mapping* ("Use of Sign Space" 418). This way of structuring the sign space allows signers to introduce different topics of conversation by assigning them different locations in the sign space. The visual representation of the discourse structure which is, thus, achieved can refer to both physical, existing entities, and to abstract concepts. To illustrate this structuring tool, Perniss in "Use of Sign Space" provides Mather and Winston's example of spatial mapping in American Sign Language (ASL) narrative:

[T]he narrator creates two main discourse spaces in sign space, one for inside a house and one for outside it. These main spaces are further subdivided to elaborate subtopics related to either of the main spaces, e.g. to describe events that take place inside or outside the house, respectively. (418)

The way signers structure the sign space depends on many factors. Some of them have been earlier discussed in this paper and have been classified into

different structuring conventions, e.g. iconic convention, convention of semantic affinity, convention of canonical location, convention of comparison, authority convention. Yet, the space shape in a signed utterance is related not only to the convention applied,<sup>5</sup> but also to the perspective the signer takes. We can talk about two perspectives a signer can have while signing. They can either be a part of the utterance, which means that their body becomes a referent located in *locus* 1 (while other referents are located in loci 2, 3 etc.), or they can present the event from outside it. The two perspectives are referred to as the *observer perspective* and the *character perspective*, respectively. Depending on the perspective, the sign space changes its character. When the signer's body becomes a referent in the sign space, i.e. when the character perspective is applied, the sign space changes its shape, i.e. it is expanded from the area in front of the signer's body to the area around them. Such a space is called *surrogate space*. When the signer takes the observer perspective, the sign space in front of them is called *token space* (Perniss, "Use of Sign Space" 419).

A characteristic feature of the sign space is its capability of incorporating multiple meaningful units, i.e. referents, at the same time. Such a phenomenon is possible due to the fact that sign languages are based on visual-spatial modality which allows signers to use two or more independent articulators where each articulator provides to the utterance a separate meaningful unit. Articulators involved in the construction of simultaneous representations are not necessarily hands. They can also include eyes, torso, face (Perniss 424). Simultaneous constructions fall into different categories depending on their structure or function. From the structural, or formal, point of view, simultaneous constructions can be divided into two categories:

- a) truly simultaneous constructions in which "two one-handed signs are produced at the same time"
- b) sequential "but in overlap (i.e. one sign is produced first and holds during the production of one or more other signs)." (Perniss, *Space and Iconicity* 40)

Functionally, simultaneous constructions can be classified into two categories:

- a) depicting spatial/temporal organization
- b) depicting discourse organization. (Perniss, *Space and Iconicity* 40)

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<sup>5</sup> The choice of a structuring convention is an unconscious act, and is secondary to the act of communication itself, i.e. repetitiveness of certain structuring patterns in particular circumstances allows to call the pattern a convention, not the other way round.

The author enumerates six functions of simultaneous constructions. Let us quote Perniss' categories:

- 1) referent representation on both hands to express spatial information (in the depiction of the spatial relationship between two referents)
- 2) referent representation on both hands to express the temporal and spatial simultaneity of events (in the depiction of action or interaction between referents)
- 3) the expression of temporal simultaneity of events or states (aspectual information)
- 4) the hold of a topic on one hand while the other hand signs related information (topic – comment structure)
- 5) the hold of an enumeration morpheme on one hand while the other hand signs one or more related signs
- 6) the hold of an index sign on one hand while the other hand signs one or more related signs. (*Space and Iconicity* 40)

To facilitate the reception of a message conveyed through a simultaneous construction, a signer chooses one articulator to be the dominant one. The signs produced on the non-dominant hand are called by Liddell *buoys*. They are kept unchanged throughout the whole action of the dominant hand. Liddell categorises the *buoys* signs into four classes: 1) list *buoys* 2) pointer *buoys*, 3) theme *buoys*, 4) fragment *buoys* (Perniss, *Space and Iconicity* 42). A detailed analysis of these signs is not the subject of this paper but it seems worthwhile focusing on the third category and compare it to the issue of thematisation discussed by Tomaszewski and Rosik (120-121). As argued by Perniss (Perniss, *Space and Iconicity* 42), Liddell's characterizes a theme buoy "a raised, vertical index finger on the non-dominant hand." Such a sign introduces an important theme to the discussion. In Tomaszewski and Rosik's analysis, in Polish Sign Language (PJM), the introduction of a new topic takes place through the application of non-manual components, such as raising eyebrows, narrowing eyes, or raising one's head. These components inform the addressee of the message that a new theme has been introduced.

Undoubtedly, in the analysis of sign languages which operate within visual-spatial modality, the issue of shape can be approached from very different perspectives. As discussed above, we can talk about the shape of space, depending on the purpose it is used for. For example, it can take the shape of a real space in which an action takes place, thus, becoming a meaningful component of a discourse. Such a space is present in the topographic use of space. On the other hand, space can constitute only a frame in which signs are produced. Such space can take any shape, so it can be further concluded (if the conclusion is not far-fetched) that, paradoxically, such a space is shapeless. It appears when the sign space is used syntactically.

The analysis of shape, or shapes, in a discussion concerning sign languages concentrates mostly on the analysis of handshapes used by signers to produce their utterances. It seems that the two elements – space and shape – are inseparable and interdependent, i.e. it would be impossible to describe, or even notice, space (the sign space) if it were not for shapes, i.e. signs which appear within it. Such a space would be absolutely useless, or meaningless, like grammatical rules without lexical items. Likewise, shapes cannot exist outside space, similarly to words which cannot exist out of time.

Despite using different modalities, sign languages and spoken languages share a common feature which lies at a very deep level of their linguistic construction, i.e. both sign and spoken languages use abstract components to build meaningful signs and words, respectively. Every sign language uses a different set of handshapes to produce signs, but, as Perniss in *Space and Iconicity in German Sign Language (DGS)* claims there is a group of handshapes which reappear in different sign languages. It seems that comfort as well as linguistic economy would influence the frequency of usage of certain handshapes in signs. Basic handshapes used in signs can be traced in the alphabets of different sign languages. The alphabets differ from sign language to sign language, some being one-handed, like Polish Sign Language alphabet, or American Sign Language alphabet other – two-handed, like British Sign Language alphabet. The names of handshapes are often related to letters they signify. The knowledge of the handshape names of a particular language is very useful, especially when someone wants to describe such a language, e.g. in sign language course books.

Although linguists are generally convinced that the lexicons of languages contain mostly arbitrary signs, sign languages seem to break this rule. Due to their visual-spatial modality, the iconicity in these languages seems to appear in a natural way, both on the lexical and morphosyntactic levels (Perniss, *Space and Iconicity* 22). In her analysis, Perniss presents a very interesting concept of iconicity being constrained by some prototypical images that are preserved in languages (*Space and Iconicity* 6). Perniss seems to claim that within languages there operate some prototypical, culture-specific conventions which make the users of the language choose certain features of an object, while omitting other characteristics, to create an iconic representation of the object. Users of different languages choose a different set of features to make their linguistic signs, i.e. they apply different conventions in the process of language creation. In this way, iconic signs become conventionalised within a language and they cannot be easily recognised by a user of a different sign language or by non-signers. Once the convention is revealed to a foreign user of a particular sign language, they can easily indicate the similarity between the sign and the real object it

signifies. Perniss (*Space and Iconicity* 6) uses an example of a sign EAGLE in German Sign Language (DGS) and in Ugandan Sign Language (USL). In both languages, the signs are iconic, though different characteristics of the object, in this case an eagle, have been chosen to create the sign. In German Sign Language (DGS), the sign is based on a hooked nose of the bird, while in Ugandan Sign Language (USL) the sign refers to the bird's claws. If we take the same example of the sign EAGLE in Polish Sign Language (PJM) and in American Sign Language (ASL), it will turn out that in this case the concept of conventionalization of iconic signs is also applicable. The conventionalised iconic signs are shown in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1. Conventionalized iconic signs in American Sign Language (ASL) and Polish Sign Language (PJM)<sup>6</sup>

The second factor which influences the shape of a sign in a particular sign language refers to, what Perniss calls, “the phonological means” (*Space and Iconicity* 6) which are applied to transfer the features from the object to the sign, i.e. to map the object form on the sign form. In this case, Perniss uses the sign TREE in German Sign Language (DGS), Chinese Sign Language (CSL) and Danish Sign Language (DSL). The three signs are conventionalised iconic signs, in which not only different characteristic features are chosen to create the sign, but also a different handshape, hand orientation, or other minimal parameters are applied to make the sign. Let us look at the sign HOUSE in American Sign Language (ASL) and DOM (HOUSE) in Polish Sign Language (PJM), which are shown in Figure 2.

<sup>6</sup> All the pictures used in this paper have been taken by the author.

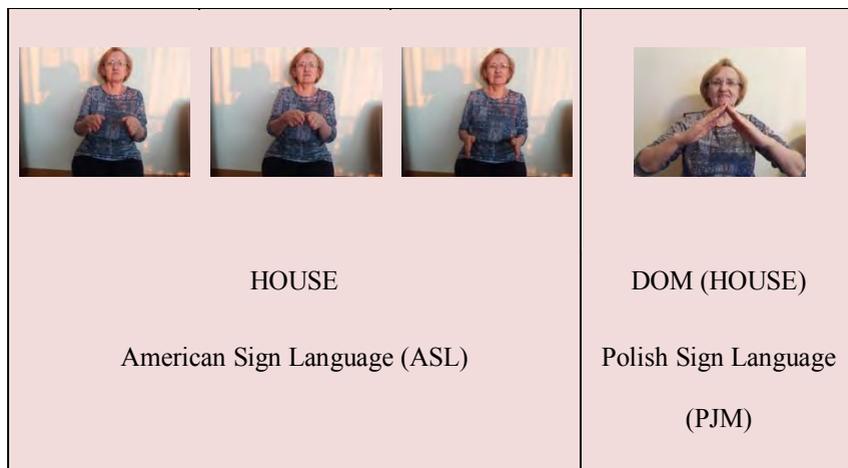


Figure 2. Phonological differences within conventionalized iconic signs in American Sign Language and Polish Sign Language

In the example presented in Figure 2, the sign HOUSE in American Sign Language (ASL) and in Polish Sign Language (PJM) is conventionalised in a similar way, i.e. similar characteristics of the object are chosen to create the sign. In both cases, the element of the roof constitutes the constructing element of the sign, though the sign in American Sign Language is more complex, as it also contains a second component which refers to the walls of the house. But, the feature which additionally differentiates the two signs is the phonological parameter, i.e. the hand orientation. In both languages, the B-handshape is applied – in the American sign, fingers are facing forward, while in the Polish sign, they are directed upward.

Let us now refer to some typical classifier predicates that function within Polish Sign Language (PJM). Figure 3 shows four typical classifier predicates used in Polish Sign Language (PJM).



Figure 3. Examples of classifier predicates in PJM

The classifier predicates presented in Figure 3 are only a few examples of this class of signs used in Polish Sign Language (PJM). The 1-KLAS classifier predicate, which is the index finger directed upward, other fingers and the thumb making a fist, is used to signify persons, e.g. mother, father, teacher, friend. The V-zg-KLAS handshape, which is letter V bent and kept palm downward, is used to refer to certain animals, e.g. cat, dog, hare, wolf. The B↓-KLAS classifier predicate is a letter B kept flat, palm downward and it is used to signify vehicles, such as, for example, a car. The last example in Figure 3 is the C-KLAS classifier predicate, which is a C letter handshape, and it is used to refer to such objects as trees, but also glasses, bottles, monuments, or buildings (Tomaszewski, Rosik 123-129). The moment classifier predicates are used in an utterance is strictly specified, i.e. signs in an utterance appear in a certain order which is governed by the rule saying that classifier predicates have to refer to objects which have been specified earlier. It means that the use of a classifier predicate is always preceded by the use of a lexical sign (Tomaszewski, Rosik 124).

Another feature which is typical of sign languages, and which derives from the visual-spatial modality of these languages, is movement. It constitutes an inherent element of the language, which is clearly visible in the fact that it constitutes one of the four minimal parameters which take part in the construction of the meaning of signs. As mentioned in the previous section, one or both hands can be involved in movement when a sign is

produced. It thus can be stated that in signs where one or two hands are active, movement constitutes an inherent element of the sign, i.e. it is a constructive element of the sign. In this sense, being an element of the sign structure, movement gains physicality. Tomaszewski and Rosik notice a different feature of movement, i.e. the fact that classifier predicates are never constructed by the use of a handshape alone, but that movement is always involved in the production of such signs (124). It reflects the action performed by the agent, which is presented through a classifier predicate. In this sense, movement contextualises the sign, forcing it to exist in a certain way, not just to exist. Movement used in relation to a classifier predicates reveals its vivifying nature.

Movement can also play a qualitative role in an utterance. In this sense, movement acquires the properties of an adjective or an adverb. This feature of movement is very often used in simultaneous constructions. A signer does not have to use a separate sign to depict a certain quality of movement, such as, for example in a sentence: "Mother dashed to catch the bus." The way mother moved is expressed by the tempo of the movement. Apart from the movement, the quality of mother's action is also visible in the signer's body and face, the non-manual articulators which also take part in meaning production.

Before we move on to the final section and examine the issue of sociolinguistic variations in the context of gender differences in sign languages, let us first investigate whether sign language users are aware of gender issues and, if so, how this awareness is expressed in the language. To answer these questions let us refer to Kelly's research of five Deaf ASL teachers. All of women had hearing or hard-of-hearing parents who did not sign. The women struggled to communicate orally at home and, as it might be expected, the quality of the communication was rather poor, to say the least. They learned ASL as their primary language in residential schools for deaf children. Their school time coincided with important changes in social and cultural life in the United States, which led to the recognition of equal rights for women as well as for racial and cultural minorities. The socio-cultural background of the participants constituted a significant element of the research as Kelly tried to examine whether gender issues were present in ASL and, if so, how they were expressed. In the first part of her research Kelly wanted to know how her informants signed *gender* and whether such a sign existed in their language. All of the women signed the compounded form MAN<sup>^</sup>WOMAN. They offered finger spelled G-E-N-D-E-R as an alternative, but none of them proposed the compounded form of WOMAN<sup>^</sup>MAN. Here is how the Kelly concludes this part of her study:

I noticed that each woman offered MAN  $\widehat{\text{WOMAN}}$  to define gender, but they never transposed the order to WOMAN  $\widehat{\text{MAN}}$ . Thus [...] I inquired whether the sign order was influenced by an internalized stereotyped social notion that men are superior to women, or if the ASL production was a physical linguistic constraint. Upon being asked the question, [...] some reported that societal views about gender may have influenced how they sign. I then finger spelled P-A-R-E-N-T and asked how they signed that concept. *Parent* is often signed as MOTHER  $\widehat{\text{FATHER}}$ , with the female noun at the head of the compound, and it is rarely signed in reverse. This changed the informants' minds, and they cited location or comfort level as factors in signing MAN  $\widehat{\text{WOMAN}}$  rather than WOMAN  $\widehat{\text{MAN}}$ . [...] [A]fter discussing and experimenting with the form, [they] finally decided that location and physical comfort, not sociolinguistic influence, is the overriding factor in the sign sequence. (230-233)

As showed in Kelly's study, the internal construction of signs is often motivated by the comfort of using the language rather than any sociolinguistic factors; even signs for such terms as *gender* or *parent*, so important for the gender discourse, lack the sociolinguistic motivation in their internal construction. Here is how the researcher summarises the whole study:

[I]nformants in this study identified themselves as Deaf more than as women and not even as Deaf women. Their lives revolved around experiences of being Deaf, such as facing communication barriers in various social contexts. As teachers of ASL and Deaf culture, their Deaf identity/ies are much more salient than their gender identity.[...] Toward the end of this study, each participant confessed that she rarely considered gender issues and roles within her own life and the Deaf community. (Kelly 238-239)

Analysing the issue of sociolinguistic variation in American Sign Language Lucas, Bayley, and Valli conclude that:

[B]ecause natural sign languages are full-fledged autonomous linguistic systems shared by communities of users, the sociolinguistics of sign languages can be described in ways that parallel the description of spoken languages. It follows that sign languages must exhibit sociolinguistic variation similar to that seen in spoken languages. (*Sociolinguistic Variation* 4-5)

On the whole, numerous researchers have investigated the issue of sociolinguistic variation in ASL, but the study has been too limited to provide a definite answer to the question of how sociolinguistic variation operates within the sign language:

ASL users are also aware of sociolinguistic variation in ASL. However, many aspects of that variation have yet to be explored. In terms of linguistic

structure, most of the studies to date focus on lexical variation, with some studies of phonological variation, and very few of morphological or syntactic variation. In terms of social factors, the major focus has been on regional variation, with some attention paid to ethnicity, age, gender, and factors that may play a particular role in the deaf community, such as audiological status of parents, age at which ASL was acquired, and educational background (e.g., residential schooling as opposed to mainstreaming). (Lucas, Barley, and Valli, *Sociolinguistic Variation* 5-6)

Referring to the concept of *gender* as a factor contributing to the creation of sociolinguistic variation in ASL, Lucas, Bayley, and Valli ask important questions (*What's Your Sign For PIZZA*):

Is there a solidarity in language use between men and women in a language minority group because of oppression from the outside and shared experiences rooted in being deaf? Or are usage differences as pronounced as in other communities? (160)

Many researchers investigating the issue of sign languages structure unanimously state that the sign languages function similarly to spoken languages, and, as fully-developed systems of communication, contain sociolinguistic variation. Similarly to spoken languages, gender is one of the key social factors which motivate the existence of sociolinguistic variation in sign languages. It is presumed that Deaf men and Deaf women use signing space, shape, and movement differently, which can be compared to the way hearing men and women use spoken languages. Lucas, Barley, and Valli (*Sociolinguistic Variation* 4) provide an example of different pronunciation of -ing ending by men and women, where men tend to pronounce it /n/, whereas women pronounce it /ŋ/. It should be assumed that similar examples could be found in the phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis of sign languages. However, gender-motivated sociolinguistic variation in sign languages has not been investigated yet. It seems that Deaf users of sign languages are more concerned with their Deaf identity and the struggle to exist as a social minority within the hearing world, rather than with the issue of gender differences. The example of the five Deaf ASL teachers shows that sign languages, and consequently Deaf culture, are probably not as gender sensitive as spoken languages and the culture of hearing people. A thorough study in this field is needed to deepen our understanding of how the gender factor (or the gender variable) influences the construction of sign utterances, as well as how sign languages operate within Deaf communities.

Due to their visual-spatial modality, sign languages constitute a unique class of languages. The three basic elements of all sign languages, i.e. space, shape, and movement make it possible to create utterances in a way which is

inaccessible to spoken languages. A simultaneous construction is a perfect example here. The aim of this paper was to characterise the three crucial constituents of every sign language, and to show how sign languages' users utilise them to produce meaningful messages.

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## SECTION THREE

### THE GENDERING OF SPACE AND CULTURE



## TRANSGRESSING THE SPACES IN FILM ADAPTATION OF W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM'S *THE PAINTED VEIL*

*AGNIESZKA KURZAWA*

The question whether an uncrossable gulf between female and male spaces exists or not, arises not only in terms of literal spaces but in terms of metaphorical ones as well. In other words, the metaphorical space consists of one's understanding of the world, their response to it, and correspondingly, it encompasses what influence the world exerts upon them. Interestingly, it may seem that the space which is limited by one's personality or the social position they occupy is more difficult to transgress than the one determined by the literal enclosure of four walls surrounding a particular area. An individual who has a definite feeling of attachment towards their own physical and emotional space can be presumably less eager to share it, and, unconsciously he or she aims at partial or even complete exclusion from others, thus, remaining their own space to be inviolate. There are, however, at least two instances in which transgression seems unavoidable. Namely, having some degree of uncertainty or a need for expansion, one can abandon their own space and claim the other, or one can simply embrace the other space and derive some benefits from it, consequently inhabiting their own anew.

All these transgressions between both literal and metaphorical spheres can be abundantly observed in the figures of Kitty Fane (Naomi Watts) and Walter Fane (Edward Norton), the protagonists of the latest film adaptation of the novel written by W. Somerset Maugham *The Painted Veil*. Released in 2006, the film tells the story of an unhappily married couple who in 1920s moves from London to Shanghai where Walter works as a bacteriologist in a government lab. It is he who loves his wife deeply, although being aware of the flaws in her character, namely selfishness and frivolity. In one scene, he openly admits to her:

I knew when I married you that you were selfish and spoiled. But I loved you. I knew you only married me to get as far away from your mother as possible... And I hoped that one day there'd be something more.

In fact, their misfortune stems from Kitty's being unable to truly appreciate her husband, for her assessment of his personality is also rather far from optimistic. She considers him as being a relentless bore whose life revolves primarily around books and intellectual pursuits which she neither understands nor values. Therefore, she contributes substantially to the animosity between them by committing adultery, the result of which is Walter's decision of their moving to southern China fraught with revolutionary unrest and an epidemic of cholera. It is only in Mei-tan-fu where they embark on uneasy coexistence and, paradoxically, such unfavourable conditions lead to their reunion. Unlike in the novel where Kitty never fully accepts Walter, the film provides an ample opportunity for their relationship to develop. Therefore, being in a substantial contrast with the book, the film needs to be examined in detail, especially giving the reasons for which this development as well as Kitty's transformation may take place.

In this paper, I am going to explore the extent to which both female and male spaces influence each other and what can be inferred from their being juxtaposed. Firstly, it is Walter who nearly enters the room where his wife has a clandestine meeting with her lover though he decides not to eventually. This does not mean, however, that he was unaware of the betrayal, rather that he already at that stage consciously isolates himself from the space of his unfaithful wife. Secondly, for Kitty, the male space, which is her husband's work and he himself, seems to be impenetrable, thus, resulting in her total exclusion from him. Furthermore, when residing in Mei-tan-fu, she encounters her confinement on many levels, not only with regard to her husband but also to the world surrounding her. On a larger scale, the female protagonist is separated from the outside world by the physical distance from civilisation, the cholera which infects the place, a guard who follows her wherever she goes and, most importantly, she is separated from her true self, for she has to reconcile with the unrequited love and acknowledge a current situation imposed upon her by her vengeful husband. Finally, the female protagonist allows herself to enter another women's space and, at the same time, she embraces it to her own advantage. Thus, becoming acquainted with nuns and, then, undertaking work at the convent greatly contribute to Kitty's gradual transformation.

When taking into consideration the first instance of transgressing space in the film, one meets the character of Walter Fane who simultaneously exemplifies both literal and metaphorical confinement. Since the male protagonist appears as rather taciturn and dominant, he involuntarily excludes others from himself. Consequently, he acts as an introvert husband whose need for the utter seclusion due to his professional work invites his wife to

enter into an illicit love affair. Therefore, it is tempting to assume that if it was not for Walter's disposition and the barrier he creates, his wife would not fall into the arms of the debonair charmer. Undoubtedly, Walter's gloominess can be partly justified by the kind of profession he practises, however, it is also partly the result of his discouragement as Kitty, from the very beginning, considers his work abstract and altogether tedious. Their mutual incompatibility is the reason which impels his wife to commit such an ignominious act. What is even more dramatic, Walter becomes the eyewitness of it, to the horror of the two lovers who are oblivious to the world around them. Most importantly, however, it is vital to note that when Walter discovers the scene of betrayal, he does not open the door, quite the contrary, at the moment when he acknowledges what happens behind these doors, he silently walks away. Surely, it may suggest that Walter is rather of a weak character, however, he does not act hastily but takes revenge on his wife when the time is right. Ultimately, his confinement is twofold: he resolves not to intrude into the room, being literally separated from his wife and, consequently, he does not allow her to infringe his own space as he initially confines himself in it during their stay in Mei-tan-fu.

The abundant instances of various transgressions between both female and male spaces are embodied in the female protagonist of *The Painted Veil*. In Shanghai, she is excluded from her husband, whom she neither loves nor understands, and then in Mei-tan-fu, she also is condemned to the confinement not only by her inapproachable husband but also by the Chinese guard who, instead of protecting her, limits her already cramped freedom by following wherever she goes. Despite both metaphorical and literal spaces which restrict her to a great extent, Kitty is able to find a way out, nevertheless. It is at the convent where she embarks on voluntary work under the guidance of the nuns that she most importantly embraces their space in order to redefine her own. Therefore, it may prove that only when Kitty resolves on letting the spiritual enter her sphere, does she acknowledge her personality and a calling to be a mother.

When Walter meets Kitty for the first time, he is captivated exclusively by her beauty and charm, for her character does not weigh in her favour: she is rather shallow, frivolous, and indulgent. Despite such obvious blemishes, he is determined to marry her all the same. Kitty, on her part, is desperate to leave her insufferable mother, thus, she consents to Walter's marriage proposal, knowing that a scientist whose work has no great importance to her is but an escape from spinsterhood. From the very beginning, she is entirely separated from her husband's passions and interests as she herself possesses none. Indubitably, there exists an unbridgeable gap between the two since both Walter and Kitty inhabit two separate spaces which neither of them wish

to share or abandon. He indulges himself in science, she indulges herself in her every whim. Such a combination of these two opposite poles combined together may appear as a contradiction in terms, but as it also later proves, they could not be more dependent upon each other. Indeed, it mistakenly seems that this state of affairs will permanently prevail during their journey to the heart of the plaque where supposedly only death should await them. On the contrary, it is in fact in Mei-tan-fu where they gradually exit their comfortable spaces and open up for each other.

In the region seething with revolutionary tensions, Kitty surprisingly finds the place which brings not only refreshment to her soul but reconciliation with her husband as well. The nuns who take care of underprivileged orphans inspire the female protagonist to undertake a task of helping them. It surely provides her flagging spirit with a completely new experience, since for the first time in her life Kitty sacrifices herself for others. After seeing how dedicated and remarkably calm the nuns are in the face of a deadly epidemic, Kitty begins to acknowledge the flaws in her own demeanour. This is especially significant in terms of transgressing another space because as in Walter's case, she again is faintly familiar with their work and spiritual insights. Nonetheless, owing to their austere way of life, hard work, and faith, Kitty gains a great appreciation for them and willingness to embrace their confined space. Interestingly, it is especially highlighted in the novel in the following words,

It was as though the corner of a curtain were lifted for a moment, and she caught a glimpse of a world rich with a colour and significance she had not dreamt of. (Maugham 31)

When she commits herself to helping destitute orphans and enters other women's space, she can gradually flourish, and unveil both this "rich world" and, thanks to it, her true inner self, potential of the existence of which she was unaware. This, therefore, utterly transforms both her perspective of the world and her assessment of herself: she becomes less self-centred so as to acknowledge her guilt and injustice she caused for her devoted husband. Notably, as Rohan Maitzen rightly puts it in his article, "she doesn't really experience one single epiphanic moment; her change is gradual and only tentatively religious." Indeed, it is the spirituality of the nuns which exerts a profound influence on Kitty and makes her gradually reassess the shallow world she hitherto inhabited. Only by abandoning her limited space, does she apologise to Walter and proves to be morally superior to him, for it is he who does not cease to cling to a grudge against her. Ultimately, Kitty's resolution to escape her previous life and to open herself to the nuns' influence makes her insightful transformation feasible. It is, however, essential to note that it

is work which becomes a mutual occupation for both a female and male protagonist, hence it constitutes an available space for any inquirer, regardless of their gender. As a matter of fact, there may exist no other sphere which would obviate the dichotomy between Kitty and Walter, the representatives of two opposite gender. It may also strongly suggest that the only way for their achieving harmony is through regarding their own spaces as permeable.

To conclude, the film adaptation of Maugham's *The Painted Veil* abounds in various transgressions between both female and male spaces. Two genders can exercise their spheres in their own individual way. In the literal sense of space, it seems that isolation may have a detrimental impact on the person enclosed within, as it not only limits their freedom but it greatly hinders their potential growth as well. Indeed, being able to benefit from others with regard to the metaphorical space proves to be inevitable for those whose personalities are flawed. One can either reject and merely abandon their own or simply claim and embrace the other in order to use it to their own advantage. Ultimately, if any transgression implies some beneficial changes between or within spaces, then its realisation follows regardless of gender of its inhabitant.

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# WITCHES NOW AND THEN: THE IMAGE OF A WITCH AND DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTION OF FEMALE WITCHES DURING SIXTEENTH, SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES AND NOWADAYS

*ANTONINA KURAS*

The popular contemporary culture tends to depict a witch as an “unpleasant and ugly woman,” usually with a long nose and wrinkled face (*Cambridge Dictionary*). Jane P. Davidson argues that “Our stereotype of the witch today is an elderly woman with facial warts and a big nose. She has scraggly hair and a pointed hat and goes around on a broom” (57). This image is probably derived from former depictions of witches as isolated from the society old women and uncanny behaving women. Nevertheless, in the course of time, such negative images of witches, very prominent in the culture, started to change and witches have begun to be perceived as strong and confident women, aware of their powers and position in the society. Along with this process, witches also came to be divided into “good” and the “bad:” the ones who used their magical powers to help others or bring misfortune on them. Such mixed portrayals are visible in films, comic books and books.<sup>1</sup> In the pop culture of the twenty and twenty first century, the image of a witch tends to be exaggerated and humorous, treating magic as a powerful but not serious faculty.

The similar account cannot be associated with the image of a witch from the sixteenth and seventeenth century when supernatural powers preoccupied people strongly, “. . . witch hunts of the 16th and 17th centuries, flourished. Beliefs in evil or demonic supernatural entities and events were a large component of European art and literature. Many books were written on the dark side subjects of devils, witches, ghosts, possession, exorcism, and black magic” (Davidson 1). At that time people attributed misfortunes to evil powers and anyone suspected of having connections with witchcraft was

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the examples can be found in films: *The Witches* from 1990 presenting both good and bad characters, *Season of the Witch* from 2011 presenting devilish image of a witch or *Bewitched* from 2005 and *Maleficent* from 2014 introducing witch as a good character; comic books: *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* 1971, *Wendy the Little Good Witch* 1954; books: *Harry Potter* (1997-2007), *Wyrld Sisters* (1988).

blamed and severely punished (Mackay 97). Warnings against witches would appear in various studies and dissertations. It entailed detailed instructions of how to detect a witch, and what their powers, customs and practices were. As Davidson points in her work *The Dark Side of European Culture, 1400–1700* “[t]he interest in such topics persisted as is indicated by a very large number of books on the supernatural . . .” (2). Moreover, the black magic was considered to be a serious problem in the sixteenth and seventeenth century and even if “. . . a witch could be an amusing figure . . . she was nonetheless perceived as a real person to be avoided and feared” (Davidson 67). The existence of witches was supposed to be treated as a serious threat even if this topic occurred in the cultural discourse and among areas associated with entertainment.

The meaning of the word “witch” has changed significantly throughout the years. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries “[w]itches were thought to be a virulent menace not only to the Christian faith but also to the orderly progress of society and humanity itself . . . By definition, a witch [was] a Christian who had eschewed God and become a worshipper of the Devil . . .” (Davidson 58-59). Accordingly, women accused of witchcraft were treated as a threat to the society, menace to people and enemy with regard to religion. Even though even today it is possible to encounter similar opinions, modern societies treat this phenomenon in a less solemn way. Davidson further states that “[p]eople still believed in witches as late as the 18th century in some parts of Europe, and . . . these beliefs eventually evolved into romantic lore and fiction as well as art and folkloric studies” (11). Nowadays, the literary and cultural presentations of female witches may vary, including the “traditional” descriptions and modern visualizations of “good witches.” Following the theme of describing a witch, a question may arise how people could identify a witch and why only women were accused of worshipping devil? In the translation of *The Hammer of Witches* – the so called “witch-hunter’s manual” (*Malleus Maleficarum*) from 1487, various accusations of women being easy to delude can be found:

There are others who give different reasons for why women are found to be superstitious in larger numbers than men, and they say that there are three reasons. The first is that they are prone to believing and because the demon basically seeks to corrupt the Faith, he assails them in particular. (. . .) The second reason is that on account of the tendency of their temperament towards flux they are by nature more easily impressed upon to receive revelations through the impression of the disembodied spirits (. . .) The third reason is that they have loose tongues and can hardly conceal from their female companions the things that they know through evil art, and since they lack physical strength, they readily seek to avenge themselves secretly through acts of sorcery. (*The Hammer of Witches* 164)

In *The Hammer of Witches*, three main reasons are provided for which these were mainly women who were blamed for practising witchcraft. First of them is the fact that women were supposed to be easily persuaded and naive, thus, it could have been easier for the devil to delude them. Secondly, women's temper was supposed to serve as useful to evil powers. The third reason designated women as physically frail and vindictive, and even prone to "offer children to the demons." It seems that women's behaviour was meticulously observed, analysed and interpreted against them. Even though men who could have been also accused of witchcraft, these were mainly women to whom, the causes for all the wrongdoings and misfortunes were assigned. Another of many justifications to why women were mainly held responsible for contacts with the black magic, was that they were considered to be more deceivable and easily-led than men. Everything fell on, as many claimed, "weak" and "easy to persuade" women (*Daemonologie* n.p.). These theories, as can be seen above, found support in many studies, where it was thoroughly described how to recognise a witch, how to defend against one, and why it is particularly women who are customarily involved in alleged sinister deeds. What is more, in *Daemonologie*, written in 1597 by King James VI of Scotland, the image of a witch was thoroughly described along with the reasons for which these were mostly women predisposed to become one:

What can be the cause that there are twentie women given to that craft, where ther is one man?

EPI. The reason is easie, for as that sexe is frailer then man is, so is it easier to be intrapped in these grosse snares of the Devill, as was over well proved to be true, by the Serpents deceiving of Eva at the beginning, which makes him the homelier with that sexe sinsine. (n.p)

This dissertation, published in a form of conversation between two characters – Epistemon and Philomathes, endorses the fact that women were perceived as "sinful sex," as "frailer" than men and, as it was believed, it was easier for the devil to delude them. Furthermore, the study draws upon an example of Eve being deceived by the devil in the Garden of Eden. This was supposed to underline the gullibility and shortcomings of women, their inferiority to men and the moment of becoming the sinful sex. As mentioned before, it was claimed that women were the "weak sex," they were assumed to be more susceptible to devil's tricks. Thus, in the light of the above, women were viewed as the threat to the society, to people's lives and their safety. As it was stated in *Compendium Maleficarum* from 1608 – another discourse on how to detect a witch – ". . . since women have less power of reasoning and less wisdom, it is easier for the devil to delude them . . ." (qtd. in Davidson 48). Due to this publication, the position of women in the society was even more

diminished than before. In the referred to book, women were described as weak and unwise, and they had to live in the uncertainty whether they would be accused of witchcraft or not. What is more, claiming that a woman was undoubtedly inferior by her gender was confining to her social position. During the witch-hunt period women were perceived as corrupted and weak, but it was not only their alleged weakness that made them considered to be prone of becoming an evil witch. Moreover, women who lived in inferior and disadvantaged conditions, whose physical appearance could cast doubts, who were underprivileged and deprived or lived alone – could all be put under suspicion. Accordingly, following this line of thinking, the similar literary representation of a witch's image can be found in "The Witch od Edmonton." In this play, written by John Ford William Rowley and Thomas Dekker, Mother Sawyer, accused of witchcraft, describes herself as follows:

And why on me? why should the envious world  
 Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?  
 'Cause I am poor, deformed, and ignorant,  
 And like a bow buckled and bent together  
 By some more strong in mischiefs than myself,  
 Must I for that be made a common sink  
 For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues  
 To fall and run into? (n.p)

In the cited passage, it is reflected how Mother Sawyer expresses her disbelief at the fact that everybody could "throw malice upon" her. She claims that because she may behave oddly and look meagre, all wrongdoings are assigned to her. She is an example of an alienated and peculiar-looking woman who is accused by the society on the basis of her appearance or behaviour. She also describes how all the "rubbish of men's tongues" would fall upon her. Mother Sawyer is constantly ridiculed and her every move is analysed. Her physical appearance is considered to be a clear, visible and sufficient indication of being a witch. Her case related in the play is another aspect of female's alleged inferiority and confinement in the stereotypes during that time.

What should also be stressed is the fact that the above mentioned play was written in 1621, and it renders the behaviour of an alleged witch, her appearance and misdeeds. One can find there how the woman eager to find revenge, enters a pact with the devil. It is no surprising that the concept of a female who maintains contacts with the devil was widely spread. As can be seen, people supported such beliefs not only in theoretical manuals but also in plays that were supposed to entertain. However, these were not only old, underprivileged or disfigured (i.e. toothless) women who may have felt

excluded from the society during the medieval times. In Europe, these were also the cases of young and good-looking women who could be accused of witchcraft (Davidson 194). A typical witch was believed to enter into a pact with the devil, take part in nocturnal meetings, recant Christianity and so identified a witch was rejected, interrogated and subjected to punishment (Davidson 57). Women considered as being witches were accused of many wrong-doings: causing natural disasters, bringing misfortune to other people, stealing (even male members), and causing diseases. The critic argues that

Witches provided explanations for the occurrence and excuses for many common human conditions and problems. If your crops failed, or your cows threw stillborn calves, if your house burnt down or your spouse was sexually unresponsive, if you were very sick, sterile, or worse yet, if you gave birth to a deformed baby, these events could be explained by pointing to the activities of witches. Witches could be responsible for illnesses and calamities of many sorts. They could kill as well. Some demonologists postulated that witches could command devils to possess individuals, although some theologians did not agree with this. (Davidson 63)

People wanted to defend themselves against evil powers and their ignorance led to the death of thousands of innocent victims. In England between 1644 and 1647, only under the command of a famous witch-finder, Matthew Hopkins, about 230 alleged female witches were investigated and subsequently killed (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). Any kind of deviation and assumed connection with magic was stigmatised. Women in suspicion were tortured, forced to confess and to point out other purported witches. What is more, there were different ways of detecting insalubrious women. As argued earlier, witches were identified by their different physical appearance, by being unpleasant, acting odd and even by their living in isolation. There were also other manners of distinguishing them. They ranged from tossing bounded women into water and checking whether they would sink or float, burning their houses or searching for devil's marks on their bodies (*Daemonologie* n.p.). Women accused of witchcraft were also questioned about their relationship with evil powers. While women did not want to plead guilty to having anything in common with the devil, they were forced to confess and after tortures and after obtaining the coveted testimony, they were sentenced to death.

If the judge's aim is to investigate whether she is enveloped in the sorcery of silence, he should note whether she can cry when standing in his presence or being exposed to torture . . . The third precaution to be taken in the present Step Eleven is that the hair should be shaved from every part of the body. The reasoning is the same as in the stripping off of the clothing above. For the

sorcery of silence they sometimes keep superstitious amulets consisting of certain objects in their clothing or in the hair of the body or sometimes in the most secret places, which cannot be named. (*The Hammer of Witches* 549-552)

Some of these stereotypes moved far to the twenty and twenty first century. As indicated previously, even nowadays various films, books and even theatre plays about witches are produced and still, it is rare to encounter male representations of sorcerers. Nevertheless, contemporarily, witches started being represented more often as independent and self-sufficient women. What is more, the images of good witches appeared in the media and they have altered the “old” notion of females who have connections with black magic. It can be definitely stated that Sabrina, the main character from the comic book series (and later on – TV series) *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1971), is not presented as a maleficent woman but as a friendly witch who uses magic powers in order to do good. The same applies to *Wendy the Little Good Witch* (1954) – a young witch who wishes people well, and she has nothing in common with the black magic or evil powers. The “deep-rooted” visualization of a witch, with a wrinkled face and a warted nose, started to be ridiculed. Moreover, it seems that these kinds of witches are nowadays presented as clumsy, unfortunate and are less often associated with frightening events (i.e. in *The Witches* movie from 1990 where “bad witches” have no luck and are defeated by good powers). Furthermore, bad witches are almost always juxtaposed with their good equivalents and these are the good witches who celebrate the victory over their dreadful opponents.

In today’s world, apart from the physical appearance, it is very often the identification as a feminist which is described as related to “witches.” Feminists are very often thought to look like “old-time witches,” they are believed to despise men and their actions are frequently criticised by the society. People tend to associate their objectives with rebellion and with standing out from the rest of the society, just as in the case of medieval witches. Such a similarity was raised in 1960’s in the United States when several manifesting groups united under the name W.I.T.C.H., that is *Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell*. Their manifesto was referring directly to the ideology of witches:

. . . It’s an awareness that witches and gypsies were the original guerrillas and resistance fighters against oppression – particularly the oppression of women – down through the ages. Witches have always been women who dared to be: groovy, courageous, aggressive, intelligent, nonconformist, explorative, curious, independent, sexually liberated, revolutionary. (This possibly explains why nine million of them have been burned.). (qtd. in Wessinger 177)

Women belonging to this society compared themselves to medieval witches – oppressed and suppressed by the society, confined within the expected norms. They believed that beginning from the sixteenth century, women were punished because of being “intelligent, curious and independent.” They suggested that for women being revolutionary meant being criticised. They underlined the oppression of women and the need for equality of both genders, which could result in “truly cooperative society” (177).

Even though the idea of a “good witch” exists in the modern consciousness, the image of a “bad witch” is still prevalent. As mentioned previously, witches are portrayed in movies, plays or books. They are usually described as women who are dressed in black and who wield the evil powers. However, it should be stressed that the word “witch” has a completely different meaning than one may think. While searching for its definition in the dictionary, one can find various denotations such as: “a woman who is supposed to have evil or wicked magical powers” or “a person who uses a divining rod” (*Dictionary.com*). Nevertheless, the true meaning of this word is a “wise woman,” a woman who has the knowledge and intelligence. Maybe a woman who knows more than she should? Who behaves in accordance with her own decisions but against the requirements of the society? During the witch-hunt women were confined to the idea of an evil witch, often without the possibility to defend themselves. They were thought to be unwise and weak. Here, the true meaning of the word witch may occur: a woman too wise to be accepted by the society.

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JACKIE, MARILYN OR SOMEONE DIFFERENT  
– MALE CONSTRUCTED MYTHS OF 1960'S  
WOMEN IN TV SERIES *MAD MEN*

*JOANNA TROJAK*

Simone de Beauvoir in her ground-breaking book *The Second Sex* famously states that the ideal woman is the male construction. Although the book itself is not referred as the direct source of inspiration for Matthew Weiner's TV series *Mad Men*, there are certain elements which could allude to Beauvoir's book. Betty Draper is inspired by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and the famous problem without a name described therein, the unexplainable unhappiness of American housewives in the 1960s. But she is more than that. She is often compared to Jackie Kennedy, the woman who was not only the First Lady at that time but also the role model many women could aspire to become. Applying Beauvoir methodology Jackie Kennedy is the myth of a sophisticated woman. Joan Holloway, on the other hand, is inspired by Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl*. The author claims that women should accept the women's objectification and make the most of it. Joan not only embraces that mantra but she also quite logically becomes another role model of the 1960's woman – Marilyn Monroe who stands at the different end of Beauvoir's myth of woman – the flesh. Both Marilyn and Joan have hourglass figures and they are both equally artificial in their act of being the Siren. They are both kind of paradox. Beauvoir claims that woman is the metaphor for nature but not the wild and untamed one but civilised and artificial. Adorning her body in the most sexually appealing clothes, Joan thinks she turns it in the kind of weapon. Unfortunately that is not the case. She is not the one that defines her, but men are. She is the object to behold and they define her in their own terms. The third character which is the subject of this paper is Peggy Olson, secretary turned copywriter. Peggy is not like any of the above-mentioned characters. She is aware that being what men want her to be is not the power she is after. Like her boss and mentor Don Draper, she is the outsider who knows how to define herself and that is the probable reason why she advances her position in the agency. All women in the series want to have control over their identity, body and space they occupy but not all of them succeed. Betty suffers at home. Joan strolls around

the office knowing it like the back of her hand, but at the floor of that very office she is raped by her fiancé. Peggy is the only one who eventually achieves some kind of control. Her secret is not being the ideal woman.

The analysed scene of the creative meeting at the Sterling and Cooper concerns the Playtex bra. Paul Kinsey has an idea about the women's fantasy: – "Jackie Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe. Every single woman is one of them." To prove his point, he shows Don the secretarial pool, and he specifically points out which secretary is Jackie and which is Marylyn. But Peggy – the only woman in the room – questions his opinion. She says that perhaps the problem is not about how women want to see themselves but how men want to see them. Paul is not willing to give up his point. He justifies his opinion by saying: "Bras are for men. Women want to see themselves the way men see them." This short scene from episode "Maidenform" alludes to Simone de Beauvoir's myth of a woman introduced in her book *The Second Sex*. Men project certain sexual fantasies onto women. She represents to them for instance, flesh or mother, generic types which help to create the Other.

The objective of this paper is to discuss the role of women in the series *Mad Men* with a special focus on the ideologies represented there and the fact that the personas they assume are male constructs. I will focus on three major heroines from the series: Joan Holloway, Betty Draper and Peggy Olson. First, I will examine the character of Joan to demonstrate that she corresponds to "Marilyn Monroe" classification signifying the carnality. Next, I will focus my on Betty and prove that she falls within "Jackie" archetype – the mother and the mad housewife which is related in Friedan's Second Wave manifesto *The Feminine Mystique*. At the end, I will investigate Peggy and show her idiosyncratic position in the series, as she eludes the classification into the specific category, and she seems to be more connected with the Third Wave rather than the Second.

After years of fighting for their political rights and the place in the male dominated space, women returned home and they were successfully convinced that "truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights – the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for" (Friedan 11). Shows and films from this period depict women focused on their family, scrubbing floors, waiting for their husbands to return home and getting the "mysterious orgasmic fulfilment" out of it (Friedan 1). Friedan observes that "it was unquestioned gospel that women could identify with nothing beyond the home" (4). Again they were safely back to the confinement of home where they were told what to do. Adverts at that time showed the interior design of kitchens with mosaic murals and original paintings. Designers searched for every possible way to make the home and the kitchen particularly appealing to women. The image

of a woman fighting for her rights or a working woman was not in vogue. In the 1950s, women returned to the role of the protector of the Hearth and Home.

Betty Draper is the prime example of the 1960's American housewife. The proud mother of two beautiful children and a happy wife of the creative director Don Draper. She is a slender and elegant blonde in the type of Grace Kelly. The comedian Jimmy Barrett upon meeting Betty in the episode "Benefactor," says "When you imagine someone saying that to you, you always hope it's her." When he shakes Don's hand, he adds "Are you two sold separately? It's J.F.K. And you're not Jackie but you're his type. I've met him." Nonetheless Drapers' marriage is reduced to commodity. They are like the Kennedys or Barbie and Ken. They could easily sell the glamorous American suburban lifestyle, and, in fact, Don often uses their image to sell the advertised by him products.

Although Jimmy says that Betty is not Jackie, she does have many characteristics of the famous First Lady. First of all, she is educated. She has a degree in anthropology, and she speaks fluent Italian. Both Jackie and Betty conform to the myth of a sophisticated woman. According to Beauvoir, a sophisticated woman "has always been the ideal erotic object" (177). According to the 1960s canon, she can be considered to be an ideal woman. A significant intertextual cue of that is hinted in the song played at the end of the pilot episode, immediately after the character of Betty is introduced. Don Draper returns from a tryst with his mistress Midge. He is welcomed by half-woken Betty. He goes to his children's room and kisses them goodnight. They signify a perfect family vignette. We hear *On the Street Where You Live*, a song from the popular musical *My Fair Lady*. Taylor believes that the song is a momentous part of the Betty's introduction because the musical is about two men attempting to create an ideal woman. The author points out that this allusion "reminds us that to some extent the feminine ideal is a masculine construction" (Taylor 10). In Beauvoir's opinion, a woman in man's eye is the "intermediary between nature, the stranger to man and the fellow being who is too closely identical" (160). She observes that contrary to the nature, a woman "opposes him [man] with neither the hostile silence of nature nor the hard requirement of a reciprocal relation; through a unique privilege she is a conscious being and yet it seems possible to possess her in the flesh" (Beauvoir 160). Betty's appearance at the end of the episode is noteworthy. She is one of the major female characters in the series and yet she is pushed to the margins of passivity. Her place is reduced to the object whose place is at home. She is not allowed to speak for herself because the song "speaks" for her.

If Betty were a typical female character from the 1960s film, her role would be confined to being a passive and ideal housewife. But in the examined series her being marginalised by Don is a source of Betty's frustration. *Mad Men* writers are known for their extensive use of "the cultural ephemera" which could "play such a large part in creating the feeling of authenticity in *Mad Men*" (McDonald 117) so there is more to Betty's character than it might seem at the first glance. Even her name is significant, as it is a reference to Betty Friedan, the author of *The Feminine Mystique*. Betty Friedan describes the famous "problem without a name" faced by many American housewives – "this strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States" (11). Experts marvelled why women were so unhappy when they had everything they needed – beautiful houses, designer kitchens and magazines filled with recipes, clothes and cosmetics. What could be the reason for their unhappiness? Typically, experts blamed women's urge for the education. More and more women attended colleges those days, which, according to some critics "naturally made them unhappy in their role as housewives" (Friedan 18). An allegedly "more reasonable" approach to the education of women was proposed, meaning more subjects connected with home and domestic lives. Other, more radical consultants proposed that women should not be allowed to attend college at all. Some other conservative people from the establishment, including humourist from *Harper's Bazaar*, claimed that it is not the education but rather women's right to vote which naturally should be taken away to make women more content with their lives (Friedan 18).

All in all, it could be assumed that the real solution to "women's problem" is not the home-oriented education or the right to vote but being seen as something more than a mother or housewife. Women at that time would like to associate themselves with ideas and actions beyond the domestic and feel something more than sheer boredom and fatigue with household chores. Like other women with her affliction, Betty goes to a psychiatrist. She suffers from periodical and involuntarily numb hands, which sometimes prevents her from doing certain activities, like using a lipstick or driving a car. Her reaction might be the psychosomatic response to her distress. In "Ladies Room," Betty and Don attend a dinner with Roger and Mona Sterling. During the evening, Betty is very eager to share her thoughts and opinions on a number of subjects. When Mona and Betty go to the restroom, Roger says to Don that he seems to know more about Don's wife than his own. Don replies "Maybe your wife is just a better drinker," dismissing Betty's eagerness to talk as the alcohol intoxication. While in the bathroom, Betty has problems with holding the lipstick in her hand. Mona

helps her to refresh her makeup, complimenting her good looks and believing that with those lips she has no problems with holding on to Don. Betty sadly replies "It's hard to hold on to anything right now with the children and running the house. And I don't know if I told you. My mother died three months ago." The exchange demonstrated here shows that Betty is desperate to share her feelings. She wants others, especially Don, to acknowledge that she is a human being and not merely "her husband's prey, his possession" (Beauvoir 170). On the other hand, however, she is afraid of being independent. This becomes visible when, a divorcee Helen comes to the neighbourhood. Later in the "Ladies Room," she drives past her home and she sees Helen carrying her possessions, and no man telling her what to do. Betty hands' numbness returns, this time she loses control over her car. Perhaps she is afraid of the perspective of being on her own and possibly this could be a reason why she ostracises Helen from the suburban community as she sees her as a threat, the Other.

One could speculate that Betty Friedan's suggestion for Betty's condition is getting "a new life plan, fitting in the love and children and home that have defined femininity in the past with the work toward a greater purpose that shapes the future" (359). This means getting a job and creating a life independent from the family, at least to some extent. But Giles points out that Friedan's plan assumes that the new woman's "image of the 'full human identity' ... is a masculine one" (qtd. in Taylor). Beauvoir also advocates rejecting femininity myth and becoming more like a man. But in the case of Betty, it would mean becoming more like Don, "literally a self-made man" (Taylor). In episode "Shoot," Betty gets a chance to leave the space of her home. She is offered a job as a model for the Coca Cola campaign to convince Don into the new account. When he declines, Betty loses her job. She puts the brave face and says to her husband that she did not want a job anyway, because she could not take care of her family. However at the end of the episode, Betty vents her frustration on the neighbour's pigeons. Her action might be seen as a "rebellion against 'the feminine mystique'" because she blends the feminine and masculine in her behaviour and outfit. She wears a pink peignoir, which is associated with her overall femininity and she uses bb gun which is typically the male attribute (Taylor). She reacts to her neighbour's threats. She is the mother and the woman, protecting her home and offspring. But having the voice of her own is not the only thing that Betty desires. Her problem also includes a sexual component. When she describes her household duties to Don, she says "I never let my hands idle," which McDonald sees as allusion to masturbation. Taylor also points out that

it is not Don per se that Betty desires so much as his recognition that she has strong sexual feelings demanding fulfilment. Betty is not telling him she is

aroused and ready for sex how so much as insisting he see her as a sexual being with equal needs and frustrations. (119)

When it is becoming more and more clear that Don will never recognise her as a human being with the equal needs, she buys a Victorian fainting couch. It is another symbol of her distress. Friedan compares the 1960s women's need for a career fulfilment to Victorian women's problem with sex. Allegedly for Victorian women sex was non-existent. They were supposed to deny their sexual needs and if they refused to do so, they were considered mentally unstable. With the 1960s women it was similar, they were not allowed to talk about their dreams or aspirations, different from getting a husband, beautiful home and couple of children. The act of buying that Victorian fainting couch, Betty symbolises two problems – Victorian one and the 1960s one. In a way, she is stuck between the First and the Second Wave of Feminism. Betty is defined by her household duties. At the same time, she is not sure what she wants and she cannot really voice her needs. She is the perfect woman but frustrated by the expectations imposed upon her by the world.

On the other hand, the character of Joan Holloway seems to be quite different from Betty, as she tries to take an active part in the creation of her social role. She works as the office manager at the Sterling and Cooper. She is the red hair sex bomb with the large bosom and an hourglass figure, much like Marilyn Monroe. The first scene when Joan is introduced as the character happens to be Peggy's first day in the office. Joan is the head of the secretarial pool so she acts as a kind of guide to Peggy. She is extremely good at her job but even from this first scene, we can surmise that the career development is not in her agenda. It becomes clear that her goal is to obtain what Betty has achieved, getting a well-to-do husband. Her career in the agency is just the means to achieve it. Joan is conscious of the male gaze and she does everything in her power to transform it into kind of empowerment. She is often compared by other characters to Marilyn Monroe, because of her body, breasts and buttocks in particular, which according to Beauvoir are so appealing to the men due to "their unnecessary, gratuitous blooming" (176). The other reason why she is compared to Monroe is that she is equally artificial in her behaviour. In fact she has to be, "for man wishes simultaneously that woman be animal and plant and that she be hidden behind an artificial form" (Beauvoir 179).

Female beauty is the paradox. A woman is supposed to be natural but, at the same time, her outfit is designed as a kind of contraption for her body. She undergoes beauty procedures in order to be viewed as attractive, and, at the same time, as artificial to a man as possible. When Don and Roger arrive, Joan performs a small performance for them, she exchanges knowing look with Peggy and touches her hair. Haskell sees that as "the masturbatory

fantasy that gave satisfaction and demanded nothing in return” (qtd. in Akass and McCabe 183). Her whole character could be the commentary on Laura Mulvey *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, meaning the way Joan is conscious of her play-acting and how she transforms it into a kind of power, at least, in her own opinion.

Apart from alluding to Mulvey’s *Visual Pleasures*, Joan was created in order to make a commentary on Helen Gurley Brown’s book *Sex and the Single Girl*. It is a handbook on how to experience sex without marriage. Apparently, Matthew Weiner, the creator of *Mad Men*, upon getting a copy of *The Feminine Mystique* and *Sex and the Single Girl* said “Oh this is my show” (qtd. in Harlovich 161). Brown’s book not only inspired the character of Joan but also it was “influential in establishing the atmosphere of the office and the relations between secretaries and the bosses” (Marcovitch 4). Joan is quintessential *Sex and the Single Girl* Girl.

It is hard to call Brown a feminist. If so, she might have placed herself between the First and the Second Wave. Many scholars criticise her for the “crotch-level take on feminism” and the fact that

she wrote about womanhood in a way that confirmed entrenched stereotypes that defined a gender by housework and the fulfilment of men’s desires, but perhaps she started the dialogue about these issues so that a more profound conversation might follow (McLean 42).

Nevertheless Marcovitch is of the opinion that Brown has made an attempt of “shattering this virginal mystique that Friedan claims occurs through the grooming of adolescent girls to accept the feminine mystique” (5). What is more, she believes that Brown did not discourage women from working and not missing the opportunity “which is to get paid for producing things in her head,” while “at the same time she should display herself as ‘sexually interesting and ‘interested’ (qtd. in Marcovitch 5).

Despite her efforts, Joan marries unfortunately. In the season two, she becomes engaged to a young, dashing and successful doctor Greg Harris. When Peggy sees him while he is visiting Joan in episode “The Mountain King,” she describes him as a keeper. McDonald points out that a word “keeper” has two meanings, one positive, referring to someone worth holding to and the second, more sinister, possessive and controlling person. Greg turns out to be less ideal than Joan has thought. While she shows him around Don’s office, he forces himself on her on the floor, because he is convinced that she is sleeping with other men from the office. Although she tells him to stop.

Greg violates and humiliates her by this act: he treats her as a piece of meat, as a physical being endowed with a mere vegetative or animated soul, and not as one possessing a rational soul or one with the same dignity as men. (Barkman 214)

Greg's abusive behaviour might be also seen as marking his own territory. He thinks that he has control over Joan's body and he can punish her for not fulfilling his expectations. After that, she gets up and pretends that nothing has happened. For the contemporary viewers this might look abnormal but Akass and McCabe give the explanation of her silence. She simply does not have the language to describe her situation, and she does not know how to cope with this situation and "silent discretion translates into quiet confusion" (Akass and McCabe 187). To viewers' amazement, she continues her wedding plans. Joan has no power to seek justice, in her times the problem like Betty's problem simply did not exist and the language to describe was yet to be invented.

There are other instances when Joan suffers injustice. Although she is the invaluable part of the agency, she is rarely perceived as such by her colleagues. What is more, at first, she does not seem to understand Peggy's determination to be successful. But in the second season, she is offered a temporary position as the script reader in Harry Crane's newly opened television department. Akass and McCabe notice that Joan is "uniquely qualified" for the position, as she lives that feminine desire created by ad men who "absorb[ed] it into the serious business of consumer capitalism" (186). She learns how the television narrative works and how to spot the best places for the commercials, but when she starts to enjoy her new work she is quickly replaced by an inexperienced man. Like in the previous situation, she neither complains nor acts against her discrimination.

In the season five, Joan becomes the partner in SC&P (Sterling Cooper & Partners). But the position in the board has its price. She is offered the place in exchange for sleeping with the client in order to secure the Jaguar account. Convinced that the partners voted unanimously for her prostitution, she agrees. Later Don appears in her apartment and says that she should not have done it because she is more than her body. That is very noble of him to say but Joan's ideology, being the so called beacon to male erotic fantasies prevents her from being something more than the mere flesh (McLean 47). Other members of the board look down upon her when she tries to bring her own accounts, like for instance Avon, and there are men, like for instance Harry Crane, who are not afraid to fight for their place in the board, saying that they have more merit than the office manager who slept with the client. Joan is different from Betty, but, at the same time, quite similar to her. She is also defined by men but not as a mother but as the flesh. Contrary to Betty

who seems to be frustrated by her role, she tries to control the way she is perceived by men. Her effort usually is futile, as she has no control over her image. But as opposed to Betty, she can identify herself with something more than just the home.

Peggy Olson, the secretary turned a copywriter, is someone with whom contemporary female viewers of the show can identify. She represents none of the 1960s myths of a woman. She dresses like a little girl and she does not want to participate in the gaze. Marcovitch explains that period genre, like *Mad Men*, is a comparison between then and now. "Racism, sexism and anti-Semitism both casual and vitriolic are part of acceptable conversations and attitudes" and when they are transported to the past they summon up the nostalgia (Marcovitch x). While Betty and Joan are the characters stuck in their own ideologies, Peggy is a personality "bridging the early sixties with the feminist movement of the later sixties and early seventies and finally with the working women of the early twenty-first century" (Marcovitch xiii). We may scoff the scenes with pregnant women smoking or children running with plastic bags on their heads as the thing from the past, but thanks to Peggy, the show speaks about problems that contemporary women can identify with. In a way, Peggy is an anachronism in the show – she is the present-day woman in the 1960's world.

"Not just another colour in the box," that is Peggy's mantra and a line which launches her career as a copywriter. In the episode "Babylon," secretaries are given samples of the new Belle Jolie lipstick. A group of women closed in the room with one-way mirror have a good time, trying new colours on but not Peggy. She sits in the corner, not participating in all that gender play. When asked by Freddy Rumsen what the matter is, she replies that she does not find the colour she could like. When she helps after this whole market research, she says "Here is your basket of kisses," while giving Freddy the bin with the used tissues. It catches Freddy's attention and he asks Don to let Peggy do the copy. Her work is so successful that she is eventually offered a position of a copywriter. Akass and McCabe call it "being given permission to speak" (188). Peggy's identity struggle offers a new perspective to the advertising discourse and the challenge to the whole advertising feminine mystique. She knows that what women want should be treated as unique and individual.

Like Betty and Joan, Peggy is also defined by the female stereotypical roles in the society. Like Joan, she is conscious of the male gaze and her role as a sexual object, but she decides not to take part in it. In the pilot episode, she has sex with the office most obnoxious guy, Peter Campbell, knowing that it is the night of his bachelor party. Her pregnancy, of which she seems to be completely unaware of, collides with her career advancement. Taylor

observes that by her seemingly more masculine behaviour, Peggy fulfils “modern, but masculine ideal articulated by Betty Friedan” to recreate herself and reject femininity. Nevertheless Taylor also adds that Peggy’s weight gain was not due to the opposition of beauty conventions but the effect of her pregnancy, which means that “Peggy becomes a guy by being a woman.” What also seems interesting is the fact that she suffers from the “temporary trauma” after her labour (Marcovitch). She refuses to hold her newly born child, thus, rejecting her role as a mother. She spends several weeks in the psychiatric ward and when she comes back to work, slim again, she does not talk about what has happened to her.

While she recovers at the hospital, she is visited by Don, her boss. He gives her advice, one of many she has received from him. He tells her to forget about this experience and he tells her that she would be surprised how much of this had not happened. Peggy is one of very few women with whom Don did not have sexual relationship. Taylor points out that their relation is far more intimate and probably he sees Peggy as the second Anna, the real Don Draper’s wife with whom he also establishes a very close bond. Moreover, he acknowledges her as self-made woman, someone very similar to him. On one occasion, in the episode “Shut the Door. Have a Seat,” he says to her “I’ve taken you for granted and I’ve been hard on you, but only because I think I see you as an extension of myself.” The reason he sometimes treats her worse than other colleagues is that Don knows that she can do better than them because she is the outsider like him.

Peggy is very much aware that in order to succeed, she has to be better than men with whom she works. When her career progresses, she learns the rules of being a successful woman in the men’s world. One of the most basic rules that she learns is that “women are different ... code for ‘other’ to keep women positioned as outsiders” (qtd. in Harlovich, 165). It means that different rules apply to her than to her colleagues. She knows that she will not be a part of the group and that she will not take part in the meetings in strip clubs or bars. On one occasion, she goes to such a meeting, dressed in a glamorous outfit. Marcovitch points out that “from Brown’s perspective, Peggy is on the road to career success, but a modern viewer might see her as having naturalized her own threat” (6). Thus, Peggy learns another rule: “Looks matter. Bare those arms and legs at your own risk. Flesh conjures up images of the beach and the boudoir, not the boardroom” (qtd. in Harlovich 165). Another lesson she gets is the importance of having mentors Don tells Peggy that the quality of her work performance matters and she should be her best self at all times. She also shows her how to be assertive to the point of being pushy. Thanks to her new attitude she gets her own office, not shared with Xerox machine. She is the only person brave enough to approach Roger

and ask for it and he admires her for that. Peggy's another mentor is Joan. From her, she learns how the office works and that she should accept objectification and make the most of it. Apart from learning how the office works, Peggy does not take much of her advice to heart. She knows that the best she can do is to ignore sexism and avoid the gaze as much as possible. Her last mentor is Bobbie, one of many Don's lovers. When she stays in Peggy's flat in the episode "The New Girl," she tells her to respect and regard herself in esteem and she should live the life of a person she wants to be.

That last advice can be the overview of all things Peggy and all the other women in the show do. Peggy does not want to be only mother and housewife. For her job is "more than an economic convenience", it is "an emotional necessity" (Jaffe 7). She stays true to herself and she is not an embodiment of male myths like Betty and Joan. That is probably the reason why she becomes the series most successful female protagonist.

In fact, all women in the show want to be in control of their own lives and bodies, and they seem to be more psychologically complex than male characters and according to Marcovitch only them "experience what we might call growth or development" (ix). Perhaps much of the series success, in McDonald's opinion, is due to the fact that it does not assume that women want the same thing "a house, husband and children perpetuated throughout traditional fifties media" (120-21). They all have different goals and different opinions. They are not generic types created by men.

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