ABSTRACT
IMAGES OF FOOD AND EATING IN MARGARET ATWOOD’S NOVELS

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Presented at Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference
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Images of food and eating, symbolic and concrete, are important in Margaret Atwood’s — the distinguished Canadian author, Booker prize-winner — production. My work in progress, dissertation, examines these images. In my presentation, I would like to discuss some examples of the gendered meanings of images of food and eating in her ten novels (published 1969-2000).

Food is something we all share: we all have a relationship with food and an attitude (or attitudes) towards food. As Deborah Lupton crystallizes: “Food and eating are central to our subjectivity (...) the meanings, discourses and practices around food and eating are worthy of detailed cultural analysis and interpretation” (Lupton, Deborah, 1996, Food, The Body and the Self. London etc.: Sage, page 1).

In my work in progress — my doctoral dissertation — I examine the images of food, eating, symbolic hunting and symbolic cannibalism in Margaret Atwood’s ten novels from The Edible Woman (1969) to The Blind Assassin (2000).

In my dissertation, I study what food and eating represent in the novels. What do the images of food and eating tell of the characters? What is their importance to the narrative? These images are gendered. What do they tell of the narrator’s views of gender: what is female characters relationship to food? What is typical for male characters in terms of food and eating? What part power plays in these images? Who has the power and what do they do with it? Who suffers, who wins, who eats whom?

In my dissertation, I argue that in Atwood’s novels food is a way to portray things that might otherwise be difficult or impossible to put to words. For instance feelings like fear, depression, and experience of power, powerlessness or pleasure. It is also a tool of depicting the often-violent sexual difference.
ABSTRACT

TRANSCENDING GENDER: ON THE FEMALE ARTIST NOVEL

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By definition, artists used to be exclusively of the the male gender. The literary genre which since the end of the 18th century went by the name of "artist novel", or Künstlerroman, thus only depicted male protagonists. During the 19th century, a few female protagonists appeared in novels written by female authors. But a delicate similarity between the female characters in male artist novels and the female protagonists in female artist novels is apparent: the women die like flies.

Why is this? Well, in the first case of the male artist novel, it had to do with the artist needing a female muse. The best one was a dead one according to for instance Edgar Allan Poe, who claimed that a dead beauty led to the most sublime inspiration. In the second case of the female novel, the large quantity of deaths had to do with the fact that the artist calling could not be combined with love and marriage – for women. If the female artist still ventured to try out the equation, she broke down and died.

The female artist who wanted to remain alive had to forego having a family, which was the traditional ingredient in the contemporaneous construction of femininity. Thus she had to transcend her gender, both in relation to society and in her own self-perception. The theory and practice of this is often discussed in the female artist novel, which I aim to analyse in my paper.
ABSTRACT

GENDER UNDER PRESSURE IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *SHAME* AND GITHA HARIHARAN'S *THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT*

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Salman Rushdie’s novel *Shame* (1982) reflects the history of Pakistan, while Githa Hariharan in *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) links her story to the mythological material of the Sanskrit tradition. Both novels consist of two intervening "tracks"; one containing the plot and the other the explanatory notes on the plot as well as on the historical and mythological undercurrent. These notes, often put in asides (especially in *Shame*), seldom help to unravel the text but rather complicate the understanding of it. They create a dislocation in time and space and blur the conceptualisation of myth and history.

My paper analyses the shift or displacement in the conceptualisation of history and myth and their implications for the concept of gender. I also argue that these implications entail some dramatic consequences for the concept of agency. With the help of a theoretical framework consisting of Franz Fanon and Lacanian psychoanalytical theory (e.g. Julia Kristeva) I finally aim at positioning the concept of agency in relation to gender.

I claim that these novels deal with the same problems of dislocation in time and space and their influence on the conceptualisation of gender and agency. In both novels the conceptualisation of gender and agency can be located in the juxtaposition between two elements, permeated with the tension created between the plot on the one hand, and the historical and mythological material on the other.
The paper will be addressing the subject of gender, ethics and power as depicted by two late 20th century female authors: British Amanda Cross, the author of several detective stories within the genre of so called ‘university fiction’ and Swedish Åsa Nilsonne, psychiatrist and the author of novels about medicine and crime. The genre of university novels is usually defined as stories about university milieu and academics, written by former students or academics. Detective stories about the university are a sub-genre, and as all crime fiction they are rather regarded as popular literature than high-brow writing. Women novelists have always been in minority within the genre of university fiction, and so have the detective stories by women authors. Still there are a couple of important British women novelists writing detective stories about Cambridge and Oxford. Amanda Cross is very interesting example, especially because the main character in her novels is a female academic, who gets involved in disclosing what I call the ‘intellectual evil’ in the purely intellectual milieu of Oxford colleges. In Sweden, the physician Åsa Nilsonne, is the only contemporary female author dealing with detective stories in the world of medicine. She does it a thrilling way, as she includes parapsychology and fantasy in her stories about human loneliness, pain and death. Also her main characters are women.

In the paper, I will be trying to show that both Cross’ and Nilsonne’s detective stories address the universal questions of life, professional ethics and power, as they appear in a gendered postmodern world. Also the narration itself I will analyze from a gender perspective, as both authors represent female contributions to the genre of crime fiction.
Swedish textile art is often described as highly successful and as part of an appreciated tradition. But there are some interesting points to be made from looking at the subject as an Art Historian with a gender- and genre-perspective. First of all the textile material is closely linked to notions of femininity. The textile material is also persistently placed within the craft sphere. Secondly, the textile art scene also consists mainly of women artists. The connection with traditional craft seems to exclude them from the innovative – mainly male – modernist art scene.

In my PhD thesis I study these subjects in relation to the arts- and crafts organisation “Svensk Hemslöjd” during the 20th Century. The local handicraft societies in Sweden may be seen as being part of modern movement in the Swedish society as a whole but is hardly a part of any modernist art movement.

Is there a difference between the framing of the modernist artist compared to his or her postmodernist counterpart? In this presentation I focus on the image and representation of the textile artist during the last part of the 20th century. The study is based an analyses of the magazine *Hemslöjden* and related artists. I will address questions as: What has the postmodern implosion of genre hierarchies meant to the possibilities of artistic expression? Are textile materials and techniques used as part of a feminist practice?
ABSTRACT

FROM ARTEFACT TO MUSEOLOGICAL FACT

Wera Grahn, Tema Genus, Linköping University

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A photo shows a tasteful arrangement of two suitcases neatly piled. A book is lying on the top next to two candlesticks. In the middle some small things are elegantly spread out. The photo seems to be surrounded by an air of cleanness, freshness and aesthetics. But at a closer view some things are troubling the picture. In front of the suitcases there are two empty coca-cola-cans and some things that most of all look like junk.

What is this? The photography shows a collection of objects exhibited at Nordiska museet, the Swedish national museum of cultural history. The artefacts were once the belongings of a homeless woman. The museum as a context diverge severely from the one the artefacts were situated in before the museum took interest in them. A great deal has happened to the items on their way towards the display-case in the museum. A transformation from everyday Artefacts to museological facts has taken place. By museological fact I mean artefacts officially collected by a museum, registered as museum property, received a number of registration and a specific place in the museum storehouse.

What has happened to the artefacts on their way into exhibition at the museum? As an allegory to the laboratory in Bruno Latour’s sense, I attempt to show how a metamorphosis has taken place as the artefacts have gone through a purification and translation on their way into the museum. The networks of human as well as non-human actors have been made invisible in this process. A hybrid in the shape of a museological fact is created.

On the basis of the specific collection outlined at the beginning of this paper I will also discuss the implications the construction of museological facts can have from a feminist point of view.
ABSTRACT

LENA CRONQVIST AND THE PROBLEM OF NARRATIVE ART

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My PhD dissertation takes as it’s starting point a series of representations of girls by the Swedish artist Lena Cronqvist (b. 1938), carried out as paintings, drawings and sculptures between 1990-2000. The aim of my dissertation is to look at the complexities of images of girls in contemporary art and how these representations can subvert the objectification of women in visual culture. In this presentation I discuss the narrative aspects of Lena Cronqvist’s work. Her images of girls are figurative and narrative and may at first masquerade as ‘real’. By this I mean that the scenarios can, and have been, read as real accounts of actual events. I would like to suggest an alternative reading, namely to read Cronqvist’s narratives as fiction based on memories. Cronqvist’s figures are not cute, innocent, attractive or coherent with ruling ideals for girlish innocence, but that doesn’t make them any more ‘real’. At the same time as arguing that these images are fictional I relocate the narrative to take place between the painting and the viewer, instead of within the image. Thus, interpreting the images comes to mean addressing the viewer’s own bank of memories and experiences. I believe that this storage of memories exists on two levels: on an individual level and in our collective memory. The girl as an object of desire is deeply embedded in our cultural strata and informs both the viewing and the making of these images. One of my arguments is that Cronqvist’s representations break away from that inherent collective memory.
Abstract

GENDER THEORY IN TRANSLATION PRACTICE
ORLANDO BY VIRGINIA WOOLF: A CASE STUDY

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As a doctoral student (or PhD student) in Translation Studies, I present my in-progress research project developed out of my interest in feminist explorations of gender as a cultural construct and in translation as a cultural transfer. The aim of this paper is three fold. First of all, it attempts to provide a theoretical overview of gender awareness in translation practice which rises urgent questions about:

i. A politics of identity reflecting on the status of woman in writing and translating (essentialist and constructionist postures, the gender metaphors concerning the patriarchal paradigm of father-author(ity), the relegation of the female-translation to a variety of secondary roles and the subversion of these paradigms).

ii. The consequent interdependence between identity and textuality which makes translation a negotiable practice on which we can (re)conduct our own reading.

iii. The theory and practice of translating as/like a woman, that is an activity which involves making use not of speciously neutral, so-called objective strategies and immobilized subjectivity of patriarchal discourses, but rather dynamic procedures and tactics which negotiate and are negotiable, open and contingent, which never assume the absolute totality of a feminine subjectivity in translation.

Secondly, in the light of these premises, what I propose here is to examine the (en)gendering of translation (practice) by a comparative-contrastive analysis between Orlando by Virginia Woolf and two Italian translations, by a translator and a translatress, respectively. In particular, this case of study seeks to investigate those differences, semantic deviations and equivalences emerging from the translation of specific key-words (he-ma-male; she-female-woman; sex, change) which reveal the leitmotiv of Woolf’s literary work: metamorphosis.

Thirdly, my study also includes a pedagogical agenda as I wish that my research methodology poses questions for a scholarship that may be interested in learning and teaching (the intersections of) gender and translations.

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ABSTRACT

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN LEGAL TEXTS

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When reading legal texts in Dutch we are often struck by the absence of feminine word forms. In most cases masculine words are used in a generic, gender neutral way. Theoretically the use of these gender neutral / masculine words should be able to guarantee an equal approach of men and women, but since they are generally referred to using male pronouns, they create a clearly male image. Only in legal texts that specifically concern women, e.g. women’s labour, motherhood and trading in women, do women indeed appear to be explicitly mentioned. Should there be an alternative and what would its implications be?
The present paper focuses not on how language is used in texts to describe, constitute or change the world, but on how the world is reflected in the linguistic system itself. More specifically, it examines how the vocabulary of the Modern Greek language represents men and women, and reflects relations of power and sexism. Although the problem is not new (see Thorne & Henley 1975 and Thorne, Kramarae & Henley 1983 for annotated references), there has never been a thorough study of the vocabulary of a language with grammatical gender, like Greek. And despite the fact that electronic corpora are exploited in the examination of linguistic sexism (see, e.g., Graham 1975, Romaine 2001), to my knowledge, there are no studies on the lexical representation of social gender on the basis of electronic dictionaries.

The research reported here has been based on a recent dictionary of Modern Greek (Λεξικό της Κοινής Νεοελληνικής, 1998), and has concentrated on the nouns that this dictionary contains. Though the dictionary is not commercially available in electronic form, I had electronically access to the subset that was of interest for the project, i.e. the nouns. About 28,000 nouns were codified for grammatical gender and semantic content (what kind of reference the noun has; if it refers to a person, what is this person’s sex; is there evaluation involved, and so on). The codification and statistical processing of the data was carried out by two students, A. Alvanououdi and E. Karafoti. In the first stage, where all nouns — and not only the ones denoting humans — were codified, a third student, N. Kotitsa, also participated.

The results confirm, among others, one of the fundamental claims of feminist linguists, namely the invisibility of women in language: although the feminine nouns are almost twice as many as the masculine ones, when it comes to human reference, this proportion is reversed. In other words, the Greek vocabulary is male-dominated — as is Greek society itself. Other results, however, are not quite so impressive, as reported from other studies concerned with (parts of) the vocabulary of the English language. Some explanations for this discrepancy are offered and possible consequences for our understanding of the relationship between language and the world are discussed.

References


ABSTRACT

WHOSE GENDER IS IMPLANTED INTO A LITERARY WORK? TO THE QUESTION OF THE STRUCTURE OF “WOMEN’S NOVEL”.

George S. Prokhorov (Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow)

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If we describe a gender structure of text we think that any text written by women is women’s one and written by man is man’s one. But I think this way of classification disregards a narrative system.

We can compare the narrative structure of two novels by F.M. Dostojevsky, “Netochka Nezvanova” and “White Nights”. They were written at the same time. The narrator in “White Nights” is a man, but the narrator in “Netochka Nezvanova” is a woman.

So we can find a semantic difference there (not in the prevalence in woman’s narration the suggestive, unlogical and emotional elements). It is in the replacement of the mentality type. The narrator-man in “White Nights” thinks in types. The narrator-woman in “Netochka Nezvanova” thinks with the personal thought (which is strange and unexpected), though her thinking is chilled with traditional concepts.

The narrator-man sees himself inside the society, he occupies his place in it, he is just a type existing in real world. The narrator-woman sees herself outside the existing world, she is creating it around herself, interpreting it from her own individual point of view. As a result, her own myth about the society is getting reality, while the narrator “White Nights” obeys the outside perfectly. I think the principal difference in those views explains the difference between the two works. We can find the same thing in a number of modern works of Russian literature – “Kys” by T. Tolstaya, “Medea” by L. Ulitskaya, “Messiah is coming tomorrow” by D. Rubina.

Then we can say we don’t have a fatal structural difference between the two types of text. The writer is able to create a text both with the narrator-man and with the narrator-woman independent on the sex of the writer.

Both the reader’s reception and the basic idea of the author-creator, which makes the artistical unity and the wholeness of the work, are marked. The writer is free in his choice of means. Any text — the area of the writer — is genderly neutral, but the work — a result of cooperation of the author and the reader— is a man’s one or a woman’s one.
The stereotyped construction of social genders by mass media is deeply rooted in people's minds. The image that the media offers of society does not correspond to reality. In this paper the different treatment of news in the press, whether focused on women or men, will be analysed. Also, a different way of constructing information will be offered in order to propose a change in the interpretation of gender roles. Through deconstruction we will look at new possibilities in the transmission of other possible models for women.
EMPOWERING IMAGES OF/FOR WOMEN IN POP MUSIC: 
THE CASE OF SPAIN

Laura Viñuela-Suárez, University of Oviedo, Spain

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Popular music is a social discourse where gender stereotypes are constructed, transmitted 
and subverted. In Spain this constitutes a new field of research and the issue of women's 
participation in pop music has lately received wide attention in the media. In this paper the 
active role of women musicians will be analysed, focusing on the work of the solo artist 
Mónica Naranjo and the female band Nosotrás and their importance as transgressing 
models for women, for instance in offering a positive example of relationship between 
women or of women's control of their own professional career.
ABSTRACT

CYBORG IDENTITIES ON A FLEMISH TV TALK SHOW

Kathleen Dixon and Sonja Spee

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In this paper we try out the concept of Donna Haraway’s cyborg to interpret the identities of two “ordinary people,” panelists on Flanders’ television talk show, Jan Publiek. We are attempting to understand what works on popular television shows--what language, what construction of personas must be employed for success via the various technologies of television, also, what appeals to audiences via the mass medium of television. We analyze language as both speech genre (from speech act theory and Bakhtinian language philosophy) and discourse. The two panelists are Rudi, a middle class gay man who appears to have command of commercial and therapeutic discourses, and Simone, an elderly straight working class woman whose verbal ability as hostess seems noteable. Both seem to offer identities (gathered from their use of language) that feature odd, postmodern combinations; thus, our recourse to Haraway. In the end, we are hoping to make some suggestions regarding the uses of television for democratic discourse.
ABSTRACT

POWER, RESISTANCE, AND SUBVERSION
The boundaries of representing gender benders in popular visual culture

Sofie Van Bauwel, Ghent University, Belgium

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Both within contemporary academic and societal discourses gender benders are almost always situated at the margins. From this position they subvert and reaffirm the hegemonisation of dichotomous gender roles. In both discourses gender bending is read as set of subversive practices. Largely based on the theories of Judith Butler, some academic discourse perceives the bending of gender as an act of resistance with the aim of re-ordering and re-conceptualising gender as a fluid concept. Gender benders do the play full gender-act and create ambiguity. By using different style characteristics gender benders are described as the bodily hybridisation of masculine and feminine stereotypes. The transgression of gender boundaries has been evaluated in cultural studies academic readings as preferably resistance through pleasure and this resulted in a monolithic discourse. Meanwhile gender benders came out of the margins and are now commodified as mainstream and accepted within mainstream popular culture. Especially on the target group broadcasters MTV and TMF. Through commodification the resistance was absorbed and incorporated into consumer capitalism. In this movement the subversive potential of gender was muted. In this paper I will account for the genealogy of a muted resistance in search of some logics of incorporation. More specifically, I will use a reception study of popular culture texts (case MTV and TMF) amongst young consumers: do they read the bending of genders as resistance through pleasure?
ABSTRACT

THE IMAGE OF THE FEMINIST AS AN ENEMY: RUSSIAN MEDIA THROUGH GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Igor Shkolnokov, Department of History, Ivanovo State University, Russia

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Despite the long traditions of the Russian feminist movement the word "feminism" is still perceived in Russian society in the strong negative context. It is an obvious fact that Russia is a deeply gender stereotyped society with the strong patriarchial values which are widely promoted in Russian mass media especially if these values relate to the relationships between sexes. A woman, who declares herself a feminist, usually treated in our society as an "enemy", "lesbian", "neurotic person" and so on. Gender stereotypes are deeply rooted not only among so to speak uneducated people, but also among politicians (there is, for example, an interesting interview with the Minister of Culture, who, identified feminists with lesbians) academicians, etc.

Therefore the report will be focussed on the issue what is the common image of the feminist in Russian media, how this image is created and perceived by the people both male and female. Also it is supposed to compare mass media with the feminist literature and try to answer the question what are the ways of changing the situation and empowering first of all women themselves to change this strongly negative attitude towards feminism.
ABSTRACT

WHAT DOES A MAN WANT?

Ljiljana Filipovic, Academy of Dramatic Art

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What has psychoanalysis really brought to women, except for the questionable Electra's complex, followed by controversial and irritating slogans, Sigmund Freud's question: "What does a woman want?" and Jacques Lacan's statement: "A woman doesn't exist". Women's role in psychoanalytical theory and praxis is undeniable but yet, have women ever answered Freud's question about their want? In the era when the question about one's wish is the most difficult one, when "wishing" hardly helps? Is not that also the answer to the liberated question - but what is that that men really want? Is it true that mysteriousness means consent to invisibility, to silent presence?

As jokes are one of the ways to our unconscious, the author uses obscene jokes on Bosnian woman as one of the ways of recognizing female identity, considering her as an archetypal figure like Antigone or Electra, and thus also as revealing factor of our unconscious.
ABSTRACT

MARTHA GRAHAM AND WOMEN'S STUDIES

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Primarily Martha Graham (1894-1991) has been a dancer and has expressed herself through dance. Nevertheless to fulfill this need, she has become a 'goddess' of the field creating a dance universe of her own and producing a substantial amount of groundbreaking masterpieces, among them Lamentation, a short piece on pain and the oppression of the (woman's) body, Letter to the World on Emily Dickinson's poetry, Errand into the Maze on the legend of Ariadne and the Minotaur and so on.

The figure of Martha Graham has been highly undervalued by Women's Studies, this is possibly due to the medium through which she expressed herself, as dance is still today a marginal field of study which, for its transitory and bodily rooted nature, easily 'escapes' critical debates.

My research is in progress and is mainly based on the deep relationship there is between some of Martha Graham's works and literature, in particular between Graham and Dickinson. My aim is to show how Graham's work Letter to the World (1940-1941) has preceded of decades an interpretation of the New England poet as a self-willed woman conscious of her creative power that has been emphasised in the 1970s by feminists such as Adrienne Rich.

Graham's technique is also at the core of this approach as it is rooted on the awareness of a woman's pelvis and on the rhythm of breathing. Her technique, developed between the end of the 1920s and the 1950s, seems also to answer in advance to another feminist landmark essay, namely "The Laugh of the Medusa" by Hélène Cixous.

My intention is to underline the importance of Graham's world in relation to Dickinson and Cixous' essay. As I said the research is still in-progress as the territory where I move is barely existent at both academical and non academical level.
NEW REALITIES - NEW IDENTITIES?

Gender/ Feminist Perspective in the Research into Central and East European Cinema after 1989.

Malgorzata Radkiewicz, PhD, The Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland

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There have been a lot of changes both in political and social life in Poland and other Central and East European countries since 1989. In every country, however, the collapsing of communism can not be seen as a single historical event from the past, but must be examined in terms of psychological and cultural process of permanent evolution.

Hitherto, gender aspect of widely understood post communist identity have been always formed by strongly fixed conventions, mostly very stereotypical. In fact, social male and female roles have been inseparably associated with historical events, politics, religion and usually conservatism that all together led to establish the ideal image of both men and women. Stereotypical interpretations of male and female position within Central and East European society have been consistently popularised and consolidated by film plots, characters and cinematic conventions.

Judging by Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Ukrainian or German film’s production of 1990s it seems that contemporary cinema just confirms traditional model of gender identity that one is obliged to follow. Moreover, there are no attempts to offer any alternative notion in most of films. Fortunately, there are also examples of titles showing a dynamic struggle between old and new models of life, identity, and mentality that characterises Central and East European post - communistic realities. Confronting various cinematic propositions, one might clearly notice how national models of gender identity have evaluated in each country since 1989, and
how that process has been represented on the screen. Yet, such examination could not be successful without elaborating gender/feminist oriented methods of complex, comparative and interdisciplinary film analysis, that should be applied to existing methodologies of film studies.
ABSTRACT

TREATMENT OF JANE AUSTEN’S INDEPENDENT HEROINES IN THE FILMS OF 1940, 1979 AND 1995

Antra Leine, University of Latvia, Latvia

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Jane Austen wrote only six novels in the turn of 18th and 19th centuries, but they are transformed in more than 30 films in 20th century. Jane Austen is well known for creation of independent, smart and strong female characters and is believed to be one of the first feminist writers in English literature. The heroines of her most famous novel “Pride and Prejudice” were called impudent in her lifetime and were not appreciated very much. Research studies whether these characters can still be valued as females able to fight the mainstream in the screen versions created in 20th century. Research analyzes the transformations of the characterization of female heroines with aim to state 1) which changes were necessary to convey the rebellious spirit of the novel so that the message of the novel would be clear to the audience of 20th century; 2) which transformations cause the deviation from the plot changing the main message and considerably diminishing the free spirit of Jane Austen’s heroines, making them more tamed and less self-governing. The analysis proves that the impertinence of the heroines, which was valued in the novel, has been noticeably reduced in the latest screen versions. The analysis approaches some reasons that have caused these changes. Research is illustrated with short video fragments from the films.
ABSTRACT

“THAT WHICH WE ARE NOT”: EUROPE AND THE REPRESENTATION OF GENDER IN NOVELS BY AFRICAN WOMEN WRITERS

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The concept of the Other has always played an important role in the establishment of a culture’s values and identity, of which gender definitions and relations constitute an essential part. Today’s Europe is no exception to that process and even after colonialism has officially come to an end, the African continent still figures prominently as the European « Other » at the onset of the twenty-first century. The image of this « Otherness » is partially constructed in Europe itself, but also by African artists, and through publishing policies which are, for the most part, politically charged, literature becomes an important means of its creation and distribution. The novels of Buchi Emecheta from Nigeria, Calixthe Beyala from Cameroon and Amma Darko from Ghana are all published in Europe and are among the most widely read and most successful texts by African women writers in their countries of publication (Great Britain, France and Germany respectively). Through the analysis and comparison of the presentation of gender issues in works by Emecheta, Beyala and Darko, we shall investigate the images of African women and men that contemporary Europe fosters through its publication policies. These images participate in the construction of gender definitions and relations in Europe.
ABSTRACT

LANGUAGE, IMAGES AND REPRESENTATION: ARTS AND LITERATURE. CULTURAL CRITICS, MEDIA AND FICTION.

Biljana Dojčinović-Nešić Belgrade Women’s Studies Center

Representations of Body in Contemporary Women’s Writing in Serbia Presented at Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference
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The presentation will address the issues of human body representations in a number of texts written by women during the eighties, nineties and by the very beginning of the 21st century. The thesis is that the representation of body is a key point of a text at which it reveals the most about itself – its thematic scope, basic approach and narrative strategies. Thus, in the first novel by Ljubica Arsic a female body of the narrator is positioned so that it is simultaneously continuing and distancing from the newly established interest in women’s sexuality during seventies; in her second novel, for instance, a body represented as a dissembling artifact (Icon) is a sign of postmodern parody of history; whereas a similar function have “too-human” bodies of historical figures in one of her stories. Other issues will include body and desire (Jelena Lengold’s story), body as armour (M. Micic Dimovska) and body and metamorphosis (S. Velmar Jankovic). The theoretical base of the presentation are feminist writings about the body (Grosz, Butler, Braidotti), as well as writings by feminist critics in Serbia.

Key words: body, representation, women’s writing, difference, postmodernism.
It is commonly stated that reading (books) is among the best ways to increase one’s knowledge about oneself and about other people, places and cultures. At the same time the “common” Swedish reader tends to read books that are mainly from the same cultural sphere as his or her own: books written in Swedish by a “Swedish” author, or books written in English by an English or American author and translated into Swedish. A recent study shows that only five per cent of the fiction that was translated into Swedish during 1999 was written by authors with a background in Africa, Asia or Latinamerica (Ingela Engman 2001).

This situation raises a lot of questions. In this paper I will discuss a few of them, focusing on genderrelated issues and using the 29 books written by authors with a background in Africa, Asia or Latinamerica that were translated into Swedish and published in Sweden in 1999.

- How many of the writers are men/women?
- Does gender influence the ways that publishers introduce and promote the writers? Do critics treat writers differently depending on what sex they have?
- Are the writers from Africa, Asia or Latinamerica described and discussed as ”Third World writers” in a manner parallel to Said’s description of the relationship between the orientalist and the Orient, or Spivak’s and Mohanty’s description of the relationship between western feminists and women in Africa, Asia or Latinamerica?

In my thesis (To Give Voice. The Report-Book in Sweden 1960-1980, 2002) I discussed the problem of ”giving voice” using (mainly) Said’s Orientalism (1978) Pratt’s Imperial Eyes (1992) and Spivak’s ”Can the Subaltern speak?” (1988) as a theoretical frame. One of my main conclusions is that there is a big difference between giving the subaltern a position to speak from and giving voice to, or representing the subaltern. This paper is part of my new project dealing with books translated into Swedish written by authors with a background from Africa, Asia and Latinamerica and focusing on questions that have to do with race/ethnicity, gender and class.
ABSTRACT
POWERFUL OBJECTS FOR POWERFUL WOMEN?
FEMININE REPRESENTATION IN ITALIAN HIGH-TECH PRODUCTS ADVERTISING

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Context
Over the last few years there has been an increasing number of advertising campaigns that, while focusing on goods traditionally belonging to a man’s world (such as mobile telephones, cars, and computers), showed female subjects and were explicitly directed at a female audience.

Objectives
By analysing a wide range of commercials of technological products aired in the period of time from December 2002 to April 2003, the present research (still partly underway) aims to understand the way in which women are talked about and constructed visually on Italian television.

Novelty
This paper is part of a larger PhD research project on gender representation and sex stereotyping in Italian television advertising. As opposed to the great attention this subject has received within the anglo-saxon sociological and cultural studies debate, no comprehensive study on gender representation in Italian popular culture has been attempted so far.

Research questions
The assumption of this study is that technological products advertising is an extremely interesting case study to analyse changes in feminine representation. In so far their target is a full time working, outdoor living women market, these ads can no longer exploit traditional myths of femininity and are rather forced to pursue new paths in constructing gender difference. Besides, technological objects seem to evoke an asexual/unisex imagery in which power dynamics between sexes seem to vanish under the astonishing and powerful possibilities offered by the machines.

The paper will address questions such as: To what extent women representation in these advertisements can be described as new and unconventional? How is the relationship between women and technology portrayed?

Methodology
The work will be based on a sociosemiotic approach: a qualitative content analysis will be used to identify main themes and dominant models of femininity, while semiotic instruments will attempt to explore advertising codes and reinterpret their implied and latent meanings.
ABSTRACT

I AM WHO I AM. WATCH ME!

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Analysis of the public discussion concerning the media campaign 'ideal beauties' realised in 2002 by the Flemish minister of Equal Opportunities, M. Mieke Vogels

In 2002 the Flemish minister of Equal Opportunities, M. Mieke Vogels, launched a sensitising media campaign against the beauty myth in media and advertising. The campaign was published as an advertisement in several magazines and on leaflets. In the ad are displayed several 'ordinary' men and women. On one picture they are dressed, on the other they are naked. None of them corresponds to the 'ideal beauty' standard. But their body weight seems normal. Not too thin, not too fat. The Dutch slogan sounds: “I am who I am, watch me!”’. The text covering the dressed people on the leaflets runs: “Four times differently built. Four times feeling good. Four ideal beauties”. The text covering the naked people runs: “Four times beautiful, four times being yourself. Because beauty comes from the inside. Not from the outside.”

Before analysing the content of the public responses, I will situate the campaign in the Flemish media landscape and dispute the need for such a campaign. The public responses to the campaign were debated in several newspapers, magazines and on Internet discussion forums. Very soon it became clear that the Flemish public opinion was divided. To the issue of ideal beauties in the media there were fervent supporters and ardent opponents. I will analyse the content of the responses of both sides and question their arguments for or against a change in the representation of women and men concerning beauty standards in media and advertising

Illustration of the campaign:
This paper is an attempt to analyze the importance and consequences of self-naming and self-labeling for one’s personal and political identity. I particularly dwell on the label “feminist” and its use-misuse-refuse in the context of identity building and formation for women and men who are engaged in or deal with women’s issues, either in feminist activism or in academia.

In order to understand and analyze the importance of labeling and naming, I first tackle the relationship between language, knowledge and power, as well as their influence on the process of defining one’s identity. To this end, I try to give some reasons for the non-arbitrariness of some words, as well as of the grammatical gender in Romance languages, namely Romanian and French. I focus on a few linguistic structures and use of particular words in these two languages. I particularly deal with the construction of a third grammatical gender, the neuter, in Romanian, in comparison to the two grammatical genders existent in French, trying to see how the application of Irigaray’s theory on the genders of nouns functions for Romanian. I also discuss various definitions and understandings of feminism(s) and feminist(s) as such, and their shifting meaning over time and in particular cultural contexts. In this respect, I inquire into the reasons why the label “feminist” has been and still is rejected by some women and men who are involved in gender issues, as well as the meaning of this rejection for the formation of their private and public identities.
In my paper I would like to present the transition in gender discourse using as an indicator the types of jokes about both sexes created before and after the socio-political changes (1989-present). There will be presented the interpretations and examples of jokes now and then presenting the image of men and women in the society through jokes contents analyses. The other factors influencing changes will also be described such as new social culture, e-learning, globalisation and others.

Political and socio-economic changes in Poland since 1989 have also influenced the relationship between both sexes. In the new free market economy men started to compete for jobs and salaries with highly educated, smart and experienced women. At the same time the ideas of feminism were widely spread in the society. Many feminine organizations were created and empowered women. Similarly western societies experienced a crisis of masculinity. The gender discourse become sharper globally.

Jokes analysis now reveals a female as lower category of a human being even with the elements of humiliation. Formerly jokes about both sexes were more like funny stories based on gender stereotypes, which didn’t insult anybody. Now the image of women presented in jokes are as beings with no brains but only sex organs and sex traits (i.e. example are jokes about blond girls adopted in Poland that came from the USA through Internet). In revenge women started to spread impertinent jokes about men. Similarly in jokes created by women about men the vulgar vocabulary started to be used. Women jokes about men couldn’t be seen only as a response for insulting them from the men side. Those rude jokes have shown that women do not allow themselves for discrimination in any field even in language. Before 1989 there was no social approval for women talking openly about sex. In the case of Poland women have adopted some elements of masculine style of speech and redefined and developed it to create non feminine ways of expression projecting an image of toughness. This phenomenon shows women abandoning socialization criteria of womanhood Lakoff, 1975.

Finally the new jokes existing in Poland present women in a subjective role by choosing a depart from the expected female norms of behaviour.
“In the blood of your bridegroom”. Women writers, religious language and rhetorical tactics in the Swedish eighteenth-century Moravian movement

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During mid-eighteenth century a religious revival had reached Sweden from Germany: The Moravian movement. One significant characteristic of this movement was that it gave the individual the right to express a personal confession of faith in his or her own words. As a consequence of this women in Moravian circles had unique opportunities to act and speak in public. They did so in writing or even by preaching, something that was denied them in most other religious contexts. This was the case in orthodox Lutheranism, which was the dominating doctrine at the time in Sweden and imposed by the authorities. In this paper, which is based on my ongoing research project in comparative literature (“Gender, power and religious rhetoric in the Swedish eighteenth-century Moravian movement”), I discuss how gender was constructed in texts written by some of these Moravian women writers. I do this by analysing their use of rhetoric, i.e. rhetorical devices, such as metaphorical language and ways of argumentation. Additionally the term “rhetorical tactic” is introduced in the discussion. As Michel de Certeau has pointed out: "The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it an organized by the law of a foreign power.” This means that some factors become especially important, such as flexibility or vigilance, and the use of linguistic contradictions and cracks. These women were both constrained and had possibilities. By using the term rhetorical tactic the dynamics of different rhetorical situations are emphasized. Religion limited women’s participation in public, but at the same time religious language and ideas could be used to exceed gender bound limits.
ABSTRACT

WOMEN’S MIGRATION IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN LITERATURE

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The 1990ies witnessed an unforeseen wave of emigration in Russian history: for the first time, people have been leaving the country in large quantities not for political, but economical reasons. Marital migration and trafficking has led to a feminization of the migration in the public imagination, which has made the already potent symbol of the prostitute even more viable for expressing masculine national anxiety.

In Irina Sandomirskaya’s book The Book about Rodina. An Analysis of Discursive Practices (2001), she investigates the archaeology of the concept Rodina (native land). She enumerates narratives that together form a more or less coherent discourse, that in Western terms would be called nationalistic, but does not completely fit into this category. The plot in these narratives centres around the trope of the journey. This is probably the reason why their heroes are almost exclusively male: in patriarchal ideology, “woman” associates with the home, and a travelling woman breaks this norm. In Russian, as in English, words for movement are used to denote the quality that separates a prostitute from a virtuous woman, cf. the Russian shliukha, from shliat’ sia (to loaf about), guliashchaia zhenshchina (woman who passes from hand to hand) and the English streetwalker. Due to the stigmatized combination of the qualities “woman” and “(untargeted) movement” the female immigrant is disqualified from keeping up a subject position in the formulaic plots of Rodina. Instead, the feminine part is played by the abstract Rodina herself, as the object of the male subject’s love and/or deception. A woman’s claim on the subject position in this plot is fraught with danger: instead of performing a role in the elevated patriotic drama, she risks being dismissed as a prostitute.

But the prostitute figures not only as the deplorable result of excessive pretensions – she has a plot of her own. Eliot Bernstein shows in his recent article “Selling Russia: Prostitution, Masculinity, and Metaphors of Nationalism after Perestroika” how the prostitute also can become a symbol of the raped and humiliated Russia. When imagined by contemporary Russian popular culture she becomes a redeemer, spiritually superior her invaders. Narratives of the whore with the golden heart soothe wounded patriotic feelings in times when economical, political and cultural influences of foreign extraction invade Russia’s public arena.

In Russian women’s prose about women immigrants, these discourses could be resisted or reinforced, but due to their great influence, they have to be responded to. This paper investigates a corpus of women authored texts that deals with women’s migration, with the aim of extracting these responses.
ABSTRACT

CONSTRUCTING GENDER AND RELATIONSHIPS IN MARRIAGES BETWEEN NORWEGIAN MEN AND RUSSIAN WOMEN

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The abstract will be added later
This paper is part of a feminist doctoral project in the sociology of work. As based on gender and competence in the advertising industry as an empirical case, the project focuses on how gender influences work and work influences gender in late capitalism. The concept of creativity constitutes one central focus in the project. Although creativity often work as a loose umbrella term in the industry itself, it seems to work as a more essential reference in relation to recruitment, promotion and prestige, or symbolic power. In the paper I discuss parts of my own interview material from the industry. Some of the analytical questions are: What kinds of working processes and positions are named as creative? And what kinds are not? What are the more subtle or unspoken convergence points of these processes of differentiation on the one hand and normative categories of gender on the other? To what extent can reflections upon these findings shed new light on the gendered division of labour that the advertising industry as well the wider cultural industry (film, music) is marked by? The project draws on symbolic oriented feminism and critical theory of masculinity, as well as new economic sociology.
ABSTRACT

FEMINISM, FILM AND THE AESTHETICS OF PORNOGRAPHY

WITH THE ROAD MOVIE BAISE-MOI AS CASE

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How and why are the aesthetics of pornography – as a dense narrative about sexuality in western history – of interest for feminist perspectives? The French road movie Baise-moi (2000) directed by Virginie Despentes and the pornfilmdirector Coralie Trinh Thi will serve as a filmatic case for this discussion. This film seems to claim for 77 minutes that gender, sexuality and power are connected – which some ‘hardcore’ feminists have claimed for quite some time. This paper raises the question which kind of aesthetic and political meanings this film generates – a film where aesthetics of violence and pornography are set in filmatic circulation by female directors and pornfilmactresses.

The aesthetics of pornography in some kind of feministic and post feministic setting seem to win acceptance. Female film directors in France have produced films containing explicit pornographic scenes such as Laetitia Massons A Vendre (1998), Patrice Cheraeu with Intimacy (2000), Virginie Wagon with Le Secret (2000), Claire Denis with Trouble Everyday (2001), and Catherine Breillats with (for example) Romance (1999) og A ma Soeur (2001). Through this trend we experience a break with earlier feministic antagonism with pornography as a form of expression.

Is Baise –moi a speculative, nihilistic film, as some critics have claimed, or are these aesthetic means used as crass ways of questioning heteronormativ sexual power relations and conventional representations of women and sex in film? I also compare the central rape scene of Baise-moi with the rape scene in the French art film Irreversible (2002) by Caspar Noé. Questions of realism related to representations of sexuality and violence are central in the receptions of both these films and will be discussed in this paper.
ABSTRACT

MODES OF WORKING IN RESEARCH AND ARTS – A FEMINIST TOPOGRAPHY?

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In both research and arts authority seems to be built from particular combinations of aesthetic and creative approaches on the one hand, and methodical or systematic approaches on the other. However, while authority may rely on such complex modes of working, it may still achieve its powerful and enticing effects on accord of a strategic silencing of some of the approaches that go into its production. In such tellings and silencings dualisms such as rational / irrational or masculine / feminine are often operative. In the paper I will explore this problematic on the basis of materials from processes of knowing in arts and research. The paper form part of a doctoral project concerned with process of knowing in social and cultural research. My theoretical basis is in feminist and post colonial science studies and allied approaches. The project draws its materials from a study of a small number of research locations primarily in Norway, particularly locations where gender and sexuality are at stake and where processes of knowing are explicitly questioned.
A presentation of the artproject women2003.dk in which I was one of the participants. women2003.dk consists of the contributions of 98 female artist from the Nordic countries. We were all invited to make art for the public, using the format of commercial billboards already placed around the two cities of Copenhagen and Malmo. The different artists present a wide range of different expressions. My aim is to discuss some of these expressions, with focus on gender, sexuality and identity.