

Crossing Borders in Gender and Culture

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Edited by

Konrad Gunesch, Olena Lytovka
and Aleksandra Tryniecka

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INTRODUCTION

This book aims to discuss the issue of gender from a cultural angle, pointing to the multifaceted forms of its cultural representations. The three keywords highlighted in this volume are: “gender,” “culture”, and (the act of) “crossing” (the borders), which implies that we will address culturally based gender issues from a range of perspectives and within a broad context. This range of perspectives includes, among others, the study of gender in the contexts of society, language, music, folklore, and literature. In effect, the volume offers an engaging, multivariate analysis of gender, which might be of interest not only to those involved in gender studies but also to amateurs. What makes this study even more compelling is the diversity of contributors coming from different cultural locations. Hopefully, this work shall offer a “common link” between gender and culture, bringing these two together in a timeless discussion concerning global “femininities” and “masculinities.”

The first part, *Literary Representations of Gender*, brings into focus the issues of femininity and the fuzzy boundaries between “maleness” and “femaleness.”

Anastasia Logotheti, in her chapter “‘All in Her Head:’ Portrait of the Female Artist in Graham Swift’s *Mothering Sunday*”, discusses how the major contemporary English novelist presents his version of the development of artistic sensibility through a female protagonist in his most recent novel, *Mothering Sunday* (2016). The chapter explores the representation of the female artist in this contemporary *Künstlerroman* to demonstrate how an established, contemporary, male white author, who has been accused of patriarchal bias, rejects social constructs and celebrates femininity by exploring the power of the imagination.

The article “Scandinavian Models for Female Emancipation in Britain: Mobility in Ethel Brilliana Alec-Tweedie and Mary Wollstonecraft’s Northern Tours” by **Kathryne Dycus** examines the travels and consequent revelations of two independent women who participated in the literal breakdown of gender boundaries as they advocated for both the autonomy of travel writing and women’s lives. **Daive Nores Cefreda**’s *Gender Representation in “A Report to an Academy” and its Adaptations* draws on Franz Kafka’s short story (*A Report to an Academy*) offering an insight into a fictional life of an ape that gradually becomes integrated into a

human environment. Discussing theatrical adaptations of the story such as *Kafka's Monkey* (directed by Walter Meierjohann), Cefreda argues that “humanness” and gender are not inborn or given but, instead, acquired in a painful process of adaptation. The author makes an interesting point while observing that humanity, as offered to the protagonist, cannot be perceived as the “highest good,” since it entails the sacrifice of personal freedom and the inevitable loss of a “genderless” uncategorized world.

The second part, *Gender Equality and Violence Against Women*, brings together articles that address one of the most incisive aspects of gender difference and discrimination, namely when borders of physical inviolability and dignity are crossed by way of physical, psychological, or social forces/violence, often with painful and traumatic results, which makes those cases, issues, and persons all the more worthy of investigation.

In her chapter, “Tears No More? Gender Violence in Juárez City”, **Anna Hamling** explores the implementation of NAFTA on 1 January 1994, the sudden economic growth of the city of Juárez in Mexico and the role of maquiladoras (Mexican factories that produce goods for export) in the rise of violent crimes committed against young Mexican women murdered in the city. This chapter also examines the background of the victims, the reasons behind the violence in Juárez, and the measures that have been taken to diminish the frequency of these atrocities.

Lisa Hartwig's article “Securitization, Women's Reproductive Rights, and Gender Equality in Japan” analyzes the connection between population dynamics and security by investigating the securitization of low fertility and its implications for women's rights. Her research determines that securitizing speech on fertility and population decline is occurring in Japan, but an outright securitization through extreme measures has not yet occurred.

The third part, *Gender and Communication*, stresses the notion of an active and unrestrained “transmission” of certain cultural stereotypes in the forms of patterns, values, concepts, and phenomena which, in effect, often warp the perception of a discussed person, image, or idea. These culturally-based concepts may be globally appropriated and legitimized, as shown in **Małgorzata Waśniewska**'s and **Mykyta Kudin**'s article, “The Universality and Variety of the WOMEN ARE ANIMALS Conceptual Metaphor across European Languages”. Drawing on the “people are animals” metaphor, the article addresses the issue of portraying women in European languages as animals characterized by such diverse features as: helplessness, fragility, desirability, beauty, violence, incredibility, and ugliness. Waśniewska and Kudin concentrate on different aspects of femininity to explore three types of conceptual metaphors: women as pets,

livestock, and wild animals. On the whole, the article offers an insight into a language-based perception of the woman as the “odd one out” against a male-oriented social background. **Agata Ewa Wrochna**’s article sheds a different light on the issue of portraying women as “the other.” In her article, “‘I don’t like women:’ Language as the Key to Understanding Gender Power Relations in ‘Incomplete Life’”, Wrochna carries out an apt study concerning the Korean TV series, *Incomplete Life*. As she states, the women presented in her study are constantly torn between the domestic and professional duties, which makes them less flexible and reliable in the eyes of their career-oriented male colleagues. The gender relations depicted in *Incomplete Life*, as well as the derogatory language used by the male protagonists towards women highlight, according to Wrochna, neo-Confucian thought, which labels women as weaker, professionally inadequate, and necessarily homebound. In her article “*Matka Polka* and *d’evka-branka*: Eastern European Models of Femininity”, **Iza Desperak** draws on such concepts of womanhood as the Polish *Matka Polka* or the Ukrainian *d’evka-branka*. These images, as the author highlights, are implemented in numerous literary works, including Henryk Sienkiewicz’s *The Trilogy*. Importantly, as Desperak observes, they also paved the way for the representation of this type of femininity in popular culture as well. While analyzing these constructs of femininity, Desperak concentrates on the objectification of the female figure, which may appear either as the man’s “trophy” or a heroic sufferer. The third possibility, the author suggests, entails a miraculous rescue of the heroine by a male protagonist.

The fourth part of this volume, titled *Gender Roles in Work and Politics*, takes into account and pays tribute to the space, both private and public, that women’s movements have increasingly managed to make their own. However, this is a space in which, despite impressive advancements and successes, there is still more to be done before complete equality in both the workplace and the political arena can be claimed. It is then telling that from the four contributions in this section, the first two start out by illuminating two opposite ends of a continuum of gender empowerment, namely one looking at the higher strata of “top management”, and the other at the “readymade garment sector”. These studies center on countries where, arguably, women would benefit from copious and continuous support, from within grassroots politics to action-oriented gender research, to achieve the desired standards. The third article takes us into politics, and shares insights into the world of women elected to positions of political power and influence that range from municipal to national and then, finally, to European parliamentary representation. The last article in this section discusses women who have stepped into a zone that was

traditionally occupied by men and, in doing so, it investigates women's equality of opportunities in the military might especially strongly symbolize the advances, but also the obstacles continuously faced while actively and increasingly overcome.

Consequently, **Elena Prosvirkina's** and **Bert Wolfs's** article, "The Increasing Role of Female Top Managers in Banks on the Russian Market", is a timely contribution to the representation of women in leadership positions in the banking sector in Russia. This sector remains a traditional stronghold of social and financial influence in a country that has been the subject of recent intense socio-political and macroeconomic focus and debate. This combination has immediately visible implications for female leaders in other sectors of that country and across the world. The article demonstrates in detail where women still need to achieve parity: in career opportunities in general and in the breadth of international work experience in particular. It also concludes on an optimistic note, one that might (or at least hope to) be widely applicable across industry sectors and countries, that "gender research conducted in Russia shows an increase in the number of female top managers in all industries".

Complementing that focus from the other end of the continuum, **Narjis Khatoon's** "Determinants and patterns of Gender Wage Discrimination in Pakistan: A case study of Readymade Garment Sector of Pakistan", combines three most welcome research foci. This chapter illuminates the gender implications in financial matters, namely the often empirically underrepresented workers in such labor-intensive, hazardous, and exploitation-prone sectors as the garment industry; it also considers the fact that Pakistan still is a country that is challenging to research. Beyond its own findings, this piece of research suggests, and provides hope for, the potential to discover many more internationally generalizable insights based on quantitative research methods within gender studies, area studies, labor relations, and financial politics.

Andrea-Nicoleta Voina's article "Women's Political Representation in Post-Communist Romania", addresses the important and timely aspect of female representation throughout various levels of power and influence within the three levels (local, national and European) of parliamentary participation of Romanian politics. Their transitioning and distancing from the cultural legacy of state socialism parallels the previous article in its investigation of women's movements in civil society and its consequences for consistent feminine discourse, with obvious implications not only for that country and region but also for global gender relationships across borders. Interestingly, and inspiring hope for the aspirations of politically inclined women in Romania (as elsewhere), it seems that the higher the

level of political participation (from local to national to European parliamentary), the better and more promising women's representations seem to be realized, both in numbers as well as in positions taken. This in turn inspires hope for international and supranational collaboration between genders and nations exactly of the type that the European Union by tradition tries to foster, and which these days might need this kind of evidence and support more than ever.

The final article of this part, "Equality of Opportunities and Interest of Professional Male and Female Soldiers in Individual Types of Military Professions in the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic", by Martinská Mária and Nagyová Lenka, presents the results of research undertaken concerned with identifying the causes of unequal horizontal distribution of women among professional soldiers of the Slovak Republic. It particularly focuses on military occupational fields to determine the advantages and disadvantages of equal access to employment positions in the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic. Beyond that, it also maps out the possible obstacles in the career development of professional soldiers within particular military occupational fields.

The fifth and last part of this volume is dedicated to *Gender and Culture*. This last part thoroughly epitomizes the major concern of this volume, namely discussing the multilayered portraits of gender depicted through the prism of culturally based experience. The first article, written by **Konrad Gunesch**, brings into focus the "linguistically and culturally fluent film heroines." In his article "Forms of Cultural Representation and Power of Females in Adventure and Action Films: Language Learning, Cultural Competence, Worldly Wisdom and Spiritual Sensitivity Using a Comparative Gender Perspective", Gunesch offers a provocative yet compelling perspective on certain film heroines as characters who possess a significant level of cultural and linguistic sensitivity in comparison to male protagonists. Moreover, Gunesch combines his perspective with culturally based research in which he encourages students to define their sensitivity and openness towards the "world", as defined in linguistic and cultural terms. A line is drawn between the notions of "globalization" and "cosmopolitanism" and the main focus of the article is placed on the value of culturally triggered communication.

Megna Midda and **Gur Pyari Jandal** offer a timely contribution to gender relations not least because of its timelessness, given that historical reports and research on and artistic depictions of homosexuality have lost none of their distinctiveness (and, unfortunately, divisiveness) since Ancient Classical times. Their article "Homosexuality and Contemporary Social Stance: A Study in American and Indian Film with Reference to

Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* and Hansal Mehta's *Aligarh*" invites us to look behind the cinematographic and psychological scenes of these two recent Hollywood and Bollywood movies. Midda and Jandal's detailed analysis of what happens on screen and what can be read between the lines, vividly brings to the forefront the personal experiences and preferences of 20th and 21st century Far Western and Far Eastern personal experiences and preferences. These experiences are in conflict with societal expectations and pressures, and their article makes us all the more aware of our own respective society's gender roles and frameworks in which we all are, at least from time to time, caught up and to which we might thus (un)consciously contribute.

Complementing this cinematographic analysis on the literary and theatrical side, **Ziṣan Arkut**'s article "Failure of Masculinity: Submissive Men" turns the tables by using comparative literature methods to juxtapose Tennessee William's and Edward Albee's plays, *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Zoo Story*, to highlight men's inferior social position and the societal pressures and expectations placed upon them. The judicious choice and comparison of these two pieces, located in Post-Depression and Post-War America, make it all the more possible for readers, male or female, to apply their lessons to contemporary societies and their own life circumstances. By virtue of the reversal of gender repression and victimization, Arkut achieves an effect that, for many readers, will be stronger than any admonition for gender equality. Beyond that, her article also acts as an effort and inducement to redefine, or re-establish, age-old gender boundaries that find themselves both confronted with and crumbling under the impact of fast-paced technological, social, and professional assimilation processes and pressures.

Roya Sharfi, Ehsan Sjahghasemi, and Zahra Emamzadeh focus on "Cross-Cultural Schemata Iranian Women Have of American People". For readers and researchers outside the socio-cultural insider circles of a Middle Eastern country, this is a rare opportunity to gain insights into the hearts and minds of women in a place where one country has held center stage in much of their foreign media correspondence over the last few decades. It will also allow us to gain insights into parts of that society's individualistic and collectivistic political and psychological makeup. Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods and data, the opportunity is immediately evident to deliberately widen the circle of focus on "American people", so as to include many Western societies and individuals, in an act of generalization underpinned by, or even intended as, sensitive awareness of "reverse Eurocentrism".

An interesting perspective on the issue of “male exclusiveness” in their self-created, musically based world can be traced in **Bruno Madureira**’s article titled “Music and Gender: Women in Portuguese Wind Bands”. In his study of the female participation in the Portuguese wind bands of the 50s and 80s, Madureira posits that women were excluded from these units until 1974. The emancipation processes of the 1980s led to the acknowledgement of the female presence and contribution in this so-far male dominated circle. In his article, the author highlights the fact that the female presence in wind bands was undesirable because it supposedly diminished their male reputation and self-worth.

Bringing together, in one volume, the key words and research areas of “gender” and “culture” as well as the act of “crossing borders” is bound to be an experience in exemplary learning for all involved: the editors of this volume, the readers, and even the authors. The latter, who have brought the fruit of long and arduous research to shine between these pages, might, despite their individual expertise on their topics, gain new insights into their work when seeing it in the context of research seemingly separated by those cultures and borders, but united in their intent to advance gender studies in a worldwide cultural context. To prevent such a volume from fragmenting into an unconnected collection of anecdotal research evidence requires, besides some undeniable multidisciplinary backgrounds, textual engagement efforts and synthesizing skills on the editors’ part, above all a pervading spirit within and beyond those single authors’ contributions, which allows them to not only stand strongly for themselves but also in connection with their colleagues’ works. When this is the case, these works complement each other almost seamlessly and what otherwise would look like one or two patchwork case studies on isolated countries or regions suddenly becomes an organically-interconnected artistic tapestry, able to span entire world regions with theoretically transferable insights and potential practical applications. We hope that you, the readers, share this journey of exploring personal selves, politicized situations, and potential-rich societies with at least some of the privileged participation and humbling eye-opening revelations that we, the editors, have felt along the way. We hope that our authors’ articles encourage others to contribute with research of their own, or to ask questions about gender, culture and border crossings that still wait to be posed and receive a reply. But mostly, we hope to have promoted a heightened awareness for, and maybe even helped some of those involved in, issues of gender, culture, and border crossings.

PART 1:

LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER

“ALL IN HER HEAD”:
A PORTRAIT OF THE FEMALE ARTIST
IN GRAHAM SWIFT’S *MOTHERING SUNDAY*

ANASTASIA LOGOTHETI

A major contemporary English novelist known for his interest in exploring gender identity, Graham Swift presents in his novel, *Mothering Sunday: A Romance*,¹ his version of the development of artistic sensibility through his female protagonist, the housemaid Jane Fairchild, who lives to be ninety-eight and becomes a best-selling author later in life. This essay explores the representation of the female artist in this contemporary *Künstlerroman*² to demonstrate how an established contemporary white male author, who has been accused of patriarchal bias,³ rejects social constructs and celebrates femininity by exploring the power of the female imagination, which is “all in her head.”⁴

The only one of Swift’s works that focuses on the development of an author, *Mothering Sunday* allows Swift brief but significant moments of reflexivity. Swift’s alter ego in the novel celebrates the craft of authorship, the process of finding a voice, and the discovery of the mystery of creativity: “all writers are secret agents”, claims Jane.⁵ Swift’s acclaimed tenth novel⁶ is a self-conscious celebration of the transformative power of

¹ Graham Swift, *Mothering Sunday: A Romance* (London: Scribner, 2016). All subsequent references to this novel are to this edition.

² Like the *Bildungsroman*, this genre concerns the development of an artist (as noted in the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 4 ed., 2015).

³ As D. Kaczvinsky notes in his review of *Mothering Sunday*, “Swift has often been criticized for his portrayal of traditional female characters” (*World Literature Today*, Sep 2016).

⁴ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 61.

⁵ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 129.

⁶ *Mothering Sunday* won the £15,000 Hawthornden prize in 2017. One of the judges of the prize, noted biographer and literary scholar Hermione Lee, praised the “precision and intensity” of a work she considers “a jewel of a book”

storytelling; this is a thematic focus, which, to varying degrees, characterizes all of his work. This is Swift's second novel with a female central character⁷ and it constitutes, in its choice of protagonist, a departure from tormented male characters who confess past traumas, such as Tom Crick in *Waterland* and Ray Johnson in *Last Orders*.⁸

Narrated in the third person, *Mothering Sunday* uses free indirect discourse to convey in detail Jane's thoughts and emotional state. The novel pays homage to the evolution of the twentieth-century novel but also reminds us of the origins of the genre. By linking his work to the tradition of romance through the subtitle, Swift acknowledges the medieval roots of storytelling, suggesting that the making of the artist is a quest for discovery and for transformation. Enabled by his choice of an author as protagonist and the potential inherent in a changing social landscape due to the women's movement, Swift utilizes the improbability intrinsic to the plot of the romance genre to rewrite the damsel-in-distress trope as feminist fairy tale.

By choosing as protagonist a working-class woman born in 1901 who will become a published author in the post-colonial era, at the end of the Victorian period and at the threshold of a new century, Swift produces a story emblematic of the twentieth century: an era which represents for Swift the achievement of female authors, the potential for social mobility, and the unrestricted power of the imagination. At the same time Swift insists on the significance of the European roots of the novel when, in an interview, he reminds us that "in other languages a romance is a novel" thus clarifying that "this is a novel about 'novelness' and the nature of fiction."⁹ Thus, *Mothering Sunday* reveals itself by the end to be a romance in every sense of the term: a love letter to human ingenuity and inventiveness, to the significance of fabrication, to the "great truth of life, that fact and fiction were always merging, interchanging."¹⁰

Predominantly set in the interwar past of 1924, *Mothering Sunday* looks back at a still divided world of masters and servants in rural

(*Guardian*, 14 July 2017). The novel was also shortlisted for the 2017 Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction.

⁷ *Tomorrow* (London: Picador, 2007) was the first Swift novel with a female protagonist.

⁸ The ever-popular *Waterland* (1983. Rev. ed. London: Picador, 1992) and the Booker-prize winner *Last Orders* (London: Picador, 1996) are Swift's most acclaimed works.

⁹ Jackie McGlone, "Seizing the Day...and Not for the First Time," interview with Graham Swift, *Herald* (Scotland), 20 Feb 2016.

¹⁰ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 91.

Berkshire but with glimpses of a distant, late-twentieth-century future.¹¹ Detailing the education of an autodidact who develops into a writer through a love of reading and of life, the novel becomes a feminist *Bildungsroman*. *Mothering Sunday* is set predominantly on an unseasonably warm spring day, 30 March 1924, and the fourth Sunday of Lent when, according to “the custom of another age,”¹² domestic staff were given a half-day free from service to travel away to their local communities and visit their relatives. The life-altering events of that Mothering Sunday are presented through the consciousness of a twenty-two-year-old maid. Jane is employed by the Nivens but she has been conducting a long-term affair with twenty-three-year-old Paul Sheringham, the “one son left,” and “both families’ darling.”¹³ Early on in the book readers find out what no member of these families know, or will ever discover: that seven years earlier Paul had initiated “secret assignations” with the protagonist.¹⁴ Now he is moving to London and half-heartedly marrying an heiress.

After Paul departs, following a final sexual encounter with the protagonist in his bedroom, Jane explores the house alone. By inviting her into Upleigh House and allowing her to remain there after he departs, Paul has “empowered her,” enabling her to feel “untethered”, and to experience “the racing sense of possibility.”¹⁵ Wandering naked through the empty residence, Jane is a “ghost” but one that is “palpably and unadornedly there.”¹⁶ Jane acquires a new understanding because, like her discarded clothing, her maid’s uniform and lack of earthly possessions constitute an identity, which can be shed or changed. Jane is preparing herself for the end of this affair, but she is also preparing herself to move on to another life.

On that day young Jane is “flooded” with a sense of “sudden unexpected freedom” at the realization that the end of the affair is also a “beginning,” that “life could be so cruel yet so bounteous at the same time.”¹⁷ After seven years of leading a double life as a maid as well as the lover and

¹¹ Detailed discussion of literary elements and themes of this novel in my entry for *The Literary Encyclopedia*: Anastasia Logotheti, “Mothering Sunday,” *The Literary Encyclopaedia*, Sep 5, 2016. Accessed Sep 6, 2016.

¹² Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 27.

¹³ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 25.

¹⁴ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 17.

¹⁵ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 81-82.

¹⁶ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 70.

¹⁷ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 80.

“friend” of the neighbouring master’s son,¹⁸ “clever Jay,” as Paul calls her,¹⁹ is now mature enough to intuit that she can “leave everything”²⁰ and seek another existence. Neither the protagonist nor the reader, who follows her meandering course through Upleigh House and through her thoughts, is prepared for the matter-of-fact statement which, halfway through the narrative and the idyll of the hot spring afternoon, declares the loss of Jane’s lover: “The grandfather clock chimed two o’clock. She had not known he was already dead.”²¹

Thus, the first half of the narrative, which concludes with the announcement of Paul’s death in a car accident, focuses on the morning and early afternoon of 30 March 1924 with references to the Edwardian and Georgian eras, the Great War and its aftermath. The second half of the novel begins to incorporate glimpses into the distant future, revealing the significance of the day’s events for Jane’s development as an independent young woman: she becomes an avid reader, abandons service for a position as an assistant at an Oxford bookshop, marries a “bright young philosopher” who reminds her of Paul,²² and begins a long apprenticeship as a writer. Jane negotiates her loss by finding solace in stories: “People read books, didn’t they, to get away from themselves, to escape the troubles of their lives?”²³ This habit initially begins as a means to escape the tedium of service but then develops into an education and a self-defining, self-liberating activity.

In a subtle, unobtrusive way this book reveals itself to be a meditation not only on life choices but on novelistic choices as well, suggesting that the same rules apply both to life and to fiction: “All the scenes that never occur, but wait in the wings of possibility.”²⁴ Jane’s meandering thoughts throughout the text “conjure the non-existent”²⁵ just as vividly as the events she experiences. Yet, the novel insists upon the need for an author to keep the origins of both life-changing events and fiction secret. Jane never writes about the events of that momentous day: “There was a whole story there, a story she’d sworn to herself never to tell. Nor had she. Nor would she.”²⁶ When she is “a storyteller by trade,” she recognizes, with

¹⁸ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 20.

¹⁹ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 11.

²⁰ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 52.

²¹ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 65.

²² Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 102.

²³ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 127.

²⁴ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 54.

²⁵ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 55.

²⁶ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 88.

hindsight, that this particular Mothering Sunday in 1924 is the day she "had the seed of" her future as a writer "truly planted in her."²⁷ Jane's silence honors Paul's memory; her unspoken elegy points at the sacredness of the inner life: "She would not say such things in interviews. Only ... skirt teasingly round their intimate truth."²⁸ Since the end of Paul's life and their long affair are so closely linked with her birth as an author, the novel gives the impression of an artfully composed, albeit withheld, confession distanced from the protagonist through the third person point-of-view.

A foundling "raised in an orphanage" and "put into service at fourteen,"²⁹ Jane does not even know her family name or her date of birth and so, Jane Fairchild born 1 May 1901, is a fiction "accorded to her by rough approximation and perhaps because it was a nice date, just as Jane Fairchild was a nice name."³⁰ No stereotypical plain Jane, she half seriously claims, when interviewed in the future, that "she was very fortunate to have been born destitute"³¹ since being a "nobody" had allowed her to invent herself anew and "become a somebody."³² Self-consciously linking her to Jane Austen and Jane Eyre (87), Swift imbues his protagonist with the key traits of the artist-as-a-young-woman in the early part of the twentieth century. Jane has "an intimate concern for how words attach to things,"³³ she is "not lacking in spark or gumption,"³⁴ she displays "more than a usual eagerness for life,"³⁵ she is "constantly beset by the inconstancy of words,"³⁶ most significantly, she has the desire "to capture, though you never could, the very feel of being alive" and to "find a language" through which existence can be represented even if "many things in life can never be explained at all."³⁷ Eventually, Jane becomes an established writer who will publish "nineteen novels" in total.³⁸ By daring to opt for another path in life, Jane is transformed during the course of the novel into a modern author and a feminist icon.

²⁷ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 87-88.

²⁸ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 79.

²⁹ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 88.

³⁰ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 91.

³¹ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 93.

³² Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 86.

³³ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 87.

³⁴ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 89.

³⁵ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 93.

³⁶ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 96.

³⁷ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 132.

³⁸ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 130.

Mothering Sunday: A Romance opens with the phrase “once upon a time” while the novel’s epigraph is the most famous quotation from *Cinderella*: “You shall go to the ball!” By explicitly announcing that this is a fairy-tale and specifically a rags-to-riches story, Swift teases the reader into thinking that the “romance” in the subtitle refers to a happy-ending related to Jane’s secret affair with the scion of the Sheringham estate. As the action opens with Paul summoning Jane to Upleigh House to make love in his bedroom and on his bed in complete reversal of social rules and etiquette, readers may be tempted to consider that the fairy godmother’s promise in the epigraph may materialize in the form of marriage between these socially incompatible but perfectly matched sexual partners. In typical Swiftian fashion, cliché is evoked but not utilized: this Cinderella becomes a modern woman who is not in need of a prince to fulfill her potential. Like other female authors who followed in the footsteps of Virginia Woolf, Jane will struggle but she will create “a room of one’s own” and succeed in her vocation.

Jane does not become successful until the age of forty-eight but her long apprenticeship, in books and in life, is rewarded. Magic in Swift’s fiction happens within the enabling context of storytelling: clever Jane discovers the library; then her employer, Mr Niven, like a fairy-godmother, allows her to borrow books; finally, she becomes a reader of adventure tales until she develops a fascination with the “challenging” works of Joseph Conrad.³⁹ In similar fashion the owner of an Oxford bookshop, Mr Paxton, discovers she is “an asset” and makes her a gift of his old typewriter.⁴⁰ Thus Mr Paxton becomes another fairy godmother at a time when Jane has begun to try her hand at writing.

The final part of the novel records the process of self-discovery, which constitutes the birth of an author. Jane claims that for her Conrad “was truly the one”⁴¹ not only because she read his novella *Youth* (1902) during her lonely wake for Paul on that eventful Sunday. Reading *Youth* and finding out how Conrad became a successful author provides Jane with proof that one’s personal experience can inform one’s fiction even if Jane must first reinvent herself as a novelist. A wiser Cinderella after the experience of the ball, Jane intuits the power of allegory, understanding that there was more in Conrad’s narrative than just an adventure. Jane discovers the challenges of symbolism and the layers of meaning beyond

³⁹ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 128.

⁴⁰ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 100-101.

⁴¹ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 127.

the plot as the language of metaphor seduces her: “that feeling of entering unknown and possibly dangerous territory.”⁴²

Evoking the masters of Modernism is common in Swift’s fiction but it is the first time a Modernist author is incorporated thematically and symbolically into one of Swift’s works. While *Mothering Sunday* is undoubtedly, as one reviewer claims, a “Conradian homage,”⁴³ even written in a form favored by Conrad,⁴⁴ there are other reasons integral to this work which suggest why Swift so explicitly uses the life and works of this father of Modernism. Like Swift’s female protagonist, Conrad is another Cinderella, an actual rags-to-riches, self-invented artist: a complete outsider who had to create a life for himself and “learn how to write” in a “*whole new language*.”⁴⁵ Jane realizes that Conrad had to invent himself as an author, to find a voice and a language, before he could write any of his works: “And it was what she would have to do to become a writer.”⁴⁶ Thus Conrad becomes an inspiration, a kindred spirit, and a guide; she “falls in love with him.”⁴⁷ By allowing his female protagonist this bold identification with a canonical male author through his fictional creations, Swift suggests the measure of Jane’s ambition and insists that the creative impulse is not bound by gender limitations.

Exploring issues of identity, both social and sexual, *Mothering Sunday* highlights the emergence of a modern world in which ambition and intelligence allow the female protagonist to become an artist, bypassing obstacles related to lack of formal education, class, and, most significantly, gender. Offering Jane Fairchild success as an author in the narrative present, the novel fulfils its fairy-tale promise. Through *Mothering*

⁴² Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 128.

⁴³ James Runcie, “A Tale of Life and Lust,” review of *Mothering Sunday: A Romance*, *Independent* 11 Feb 2016.

⁴⁴ At 132 pages, *Mothering Sunday* is Swift’s shortest novel and can be termed a novella. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, a novella is a “fictional tale in prose, intermediate in length and complexity between a short story and a novel and usually concentrating on a single event or chain of events, with a surprising turning point.” *Mothering Sunday* follows this formula and evokes the masters of the genre, whose names Chris Baldick cites in the aforementioned definition: Henry James, D. H. Lawrence and, more significantly for Swift’s novel, Joseph Conrad. In the interview with McGlone, Swift claims that the length of *Mothering Sunday* is deliberate and appropriate: “I always knew it was not going to be long. Some of the last work I did it on it was to make it shorter. It is not a small book; it is complete, very complete.”

⁴⁵ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 129, emphasis in the original.

⁴⁶ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 129.

⁴⁷ Swift, *Mothering Sunday*, 130.

Sunday, Graham Swift adds to a critically acclaimed body of work a most hopeful, counter-nostalgic tale, which acknowledges loss as a staple of life while insisting on the sustaining potency of an ambition that can circumvent gender restrictions and alter social reality.

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SCANDINAVIAN MODELS FOR FEMALE
EMANCIPATION IN BRITAIN:
MOBILITY IN ETHEL BRILLIANA ALEC TWEEDIE
AND MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'S
NORTHERN TOURS

KATHRYNE DYCUS

Walt Whitman's poem, "A Woman Waits for Me" (1855), describes the attractive robustness of what he perceives to be the ideal woman: "They are not one jot less than I am / They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing winds / Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength / They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, strike, retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves / They are ultimate in their own right."¹ Whitman's description anticipates the New Woman, a figure invented in the 1890s to embody a modern ideal of female autonomy. By naming desired characteristics of a sex he was not personally attracted to, Whitman's vision advocates a removal of power dynamics as he urges women to cultivate athleticism as a way of empowering themselves rather than as a way to appear more attractive to men.

In England, this movement for what the Victorians called the emancipation or empowerment of women peaked in the 1890s with the emergence of the New Woman who demanded not just legal, political, educational, and employment rights, but also physical freedom from the stifling inactivity of Victorian ladyhood.² Women demanded the right to exercise their bodies, to wear more liberating dress, to play outdoors and, more controversially, to compete in sports.

Whitman's provocative collection of poems was published in 1855, marking the halfway point on the temporal trajectory of Mary Wollstonecraft

¹ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2004), 87.

² Monica Anderson, *Women and the Politics of Travel 1870-1914* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 113.

and Ethel Brilliana Alec Tweedie's writing careers. Tweedie, a journalist and travel writer, defined the European northern periphery for British readers towards the end of the nineteenth century, whereas Wollstonecraft explored the same region a century before. Both writers expose the harshness of Scandinavia's natural environment as a powerful catalyst for female mobility. In *A Winter Jaunt to Norway* (1894), Tweedie writes, "the Norwegian snow and ice of mid-winter is surprising to any one accustomed to the English climate. This very snow and ice is what makes Norway and its customs so particularly interesting to a stranger".³ She characterizes all of Scandinavia in similar terms, as defined by the winter season.

As Anka Ryall suggests, the challenges of coping with a rude northern climate—necessitating horseback-riding in Iceland and skiing in Norway, as well as travel in carts through Finland—make Tweedie a more adventurous and athletic New Woman than a mere tourist.⁴ Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), on the other hand, depicts struggling yet undefeated organisms within a sterile Nordic landscape, which take on a metaphorical resonance of female struggles for emancipation. Her Scandinavia is less an opportunity to display female athleticism and more an occasion to showcase modes of survival amidst oppressive environmental, political, and social conditions.

Wollstonecraft's engagements with the work of French naturalist Comte de Buffon's 36-volume *Histoire Naturelle* (1749-1789) and with the work of Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus, wields a double purpose: it deems her discussions of natural history as credible while providing an opportunity to speak on the circumstances of women. Buffon argued that temperate climates created better organisms, while they degenerated under exposure to more extreme climates, whether hot or cold. Wollstonecraft seems to object, holding the view that the struggle for adaptation can produce strength and vitality, therefore creating more resilient organisms. Wollstonecraft makes a connection between "some sapling struggling for

³ Mrs. Alec Tweedie, *A Winter's Jaunt to Norway* (London: Bliss Sands and Foster, 1894), 58.

⁴ Anka Ryall, "Europe's Northern Periphery and the Future of Women in the Travel Narratives of Ethel Tweedie," *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 17, no. 4 (2009): 277.

existence”⁵ in a barren landscape to her own history and the “struggles occasioned by the oppressed state of my sex.”⁶ Wollstonecraft reenvisions undefeated Northern organisms through the lens of social and individual fortitude.

Likewise, Tweedie explains the primitivism of Scandinavian inhabitants in terms of their adaptation to a harsh natural environment, where “for four or five months of the year the ground is entirely covered with snow.”⁷ When Tweedie encounters Finnish peasants ploughing the rocky soil by hand, she considers their “hard struggle for existence.”⁸ Women, in particular, seem to age prematurely given the harshness of their surroundings; however, the environment also precipitates growth and independence. Tweedie absorbs the vigor she attributes to Scandinavian women and applies a muscular willingness to participate in their sports, if not for necessity, then as a way of self-representation. She finds that all of Norway is an open book for those wanting new experiences and healthy exercise. In this way, she presents herself as a model New Woman to her fellow countrymen, women, and Scandinavian audiences.

In *Through Finland in Carts* (1897), Tweedie includes episodes of her participation in saunas, which for Finns were a customary escape from the chill climate but one that also violated a set of Victorian social and moral norms (one example being mixed nude bathing). Tweedie and her sister, although testing the limits of female sexuality, remain faithful to standards of Victorian decorum; for example, they bathe in suit and cap, which attracts the attention of a row of nude Finnish spectators “thoroughly enjoying the joke. They laughed and they chatted, they pointed, they waved their arms, and they evidently considered our performances most extraordinary.”⁹ Here, Tweedie’s travel text acknowledges the reciprocity of exchange: others empower her to perform the role of a New Woman traveller who recognizes the value in the returned gaze. Traveling in what Mary Louise Pratt calls “the contact zone” permits acts of transgression that push against boundaries of female modesty, but it also credits the culture within which native customs are seen as completely valid.

⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin: A Short Residence in Sweden and Memoires of the Author of ‘The Rights of Woman,’* ed. Richard Holmes (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 152.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁷ Mrs. Alec Tweedie, *A Winter’s Jaunt to Norway* (London: Bliss Sands and Foster, 1894), 58.

⁸ Mrs. Alec Tweedie, *Through Finland in Carts* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1897), 262.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) more than stretched the boundaries governing female behavior at the time it was published. It makes the connection between the structures of oppression in a hierarchical society and the argument for sexual difference pushed by men. The directive argument in *Vindication* is continued in *Letters* but takes on a more introspective melancholy turn toward nature and the nature of women. For instance, Sylvia Bowerbank sees Wollstonecraft's natural philosophy as a distinct contribution to the genealogy of ecological feminism, not least because of the explicit connection made in *Letters* between the social construction of nature and the oppression of women, a connection that is at the heart of ecofeminist thought.¹⁰

Essentially, Wollstonecraft endows her northern landscapes and organisms with an emancipatory potential analogous to her feminist vision for social improvement and personal empowerment. In *Letters*, exercise qualifies as an opportunity for meaningful self-exploration and, by extension, female exploration against the formative backdrop of a Scandinavian landscape:

I wished to avail myself of my vicinity to the sea, and bathe; but it was not possible near the town; there was no convenience. The young woman whom I mentioned to you, proposed rowing me across the water, amongst the rocks; but as she was pregnant, I insisted on taking one of the oars, and learning to row. It was not difficult; and I do not know a pleasanter exercise. I soon became expert, and my train of thinking kept time, as it were, with the oars, or I suffered the boat to be carried along by the current, indulging a pleasing forgetfulness, or fallacious hopes.¹¹

Just as Jean-Jacques Rousseau admitted, in *Confessions* (1782-1789), that his mind stopped working when his legs ceased to move, Wollstonecraft locates a rhythmic imperative for mindful thinking through exercise. Movement provides deep mental conditioning, which supports the fact that physical culture swept the British Isles in the mid- to late-nineteenth century primarily because of its intersection with educational development.

Physical culture originated in the public schools for boys but, towards the end of the century, there was a proliferation of new girls' schools, both

¹⁰ Sylvia Bowerbank, "The Bastille of Nature: Mary Wollstonecraft and Ecological Feminism," in *Mary Wollstonecraft's Journey to Scandinavia: Essays*, eds. Catherine Sandbach-Dahlstrom and Anka Ryall (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003), 174.

¹¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin: A Short Residence in Sweden and Memoires of the Author of 'The Rights of Woman,'* ed. Richard Holmes (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 112.

day and boarding. The curricula aimed at preparing girls intellectually and physically for full productive lives, in their expected roles as wives and mothers, but also with the ability to support oneself independently. Girls soon demanded the right to higher education, and women's colleges were established at Cambridge University—Girton College (1869) and Newnham College (1871), with physical education an important component of learning. Wollstonecraft wrote in *Letters*: “I term every person idle, the exercise of whose mind does not bear some proportion to that of the body.”¹² There, in fact, existed a widespread belief in Victorian culture that “problems of the mind had their origin in defects of the body.”¹³

The Victorians became increasingly concerned with matters of health, and not surprisingly, the medical profession grew at an astonishing pace in the nineteenth century. Student doctors were often avid sportsmen and the honor of founding the first rugby club goes to Guy's Hospital (of which Keats was a pupil) in 1843.¹⁴ Women's rights advocates, such as Amelia Bloomer (after whom “bloomers” were named), supported Victorian men in their concern for women's health. *The Lily*, edited by Bloomer, urged women to greater physical activity, as Bloomer tried to popularize a new form of dress designed to make such activity easier.¹⁵ Donald Walker's popular *Exercise for Ladies* (1836) advised movement but warned emphatically against overexertion, which some physicians argued could harm a women's reproductive system.

While health awareness prompted changes in physical education, physical culture also prompted imperialist attitudes, as most English sportsmen extolled their own sporting traditions and attributed to the healthfulness of their sports the very power of the British Empire.¹⁶ Tweedie remarks on the idea that sports can function as determinants of national identity, and therefore, national difference: “The first accomplishment of an English child is to learn to walk; the first performance of the South Sea Islanders is to learn to swim; and, verily, the first development of the Norwegian babe is to go on ski, or to stride a

¹² *Ibid.*, 83.

¹³ Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 88.

¹⁴ Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 87.

¹⁵ Allen Guttman, *Women's Sports: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 90.

¹⁶ Nancy Fix Anderson, *The Sporting Life: Victorian Sports and Games* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 72.

kjoelke.”¹⁷ In another sporting article, “Skilobning in Norway,” Tweedie writes, “*Skilobning* and *Aking* are as important to them [Norwegians] as football and cricket to the Britisher.”¹⁸ She represents Scandinavian sports in terms of their British equivalents, which appears to be an imperialist move. However, she later diminishes this imperialist frame when she admits,

Skilobning can never become popular or even possible in this country [England]. First, because England is not sufficiently hilly, and, secondly, because the snow is never deep enough to render this fascinating sport even tolerably safe. But Norwegians have several times been sent to Austria, the Russian mountain districts, and the more hilly parts of Canada, to teach the natives to go on ski, so that they may be able to convey letters, &c., during the months of deepest snow. On ski anything and everything seem possible!¹⁹

Nancy Anderson argues that not only has England been known as the mother of parliaments, giving to other countries its model of parliamentary democracy, but it is also the mother of modern sports, since most of the sports played today in international contests are of English origin.²⁰ With its global economy and imperial projects, England spread its sports throughout the world. However, by attributing Scandinavian excellence in winter sport to a particular climate, Tweedie essentially excludes British participation and, by extension, negates Britain’s seemingly ubiquitous, imperial presence. In the above passage, Tweedie mentions that Norwegian ski instructors travel to distant lands to spread knowledge of their national sports, implying that Norwegians have something valuable to offer.

As the Empire expanded in the late nineteenth century, the increasing cultural importance of athleticism promoted the cause of the sportsman, and to a lesser degree, the sportswoman. By the 1890s, British society no longer considered the notion of a sporty lady as paradoxical. In her writings on Scandinavia, Tweedie presents herself as such, an example of combined female respectability and audacious athleticism. Her ethnographic study of the North allows her to comment on her home culture through an

¹⁷ A. Tweedie, “Aking in Norway,” *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes* 2, no. 8 (1896): 412.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 666.

¹⁹ A., Tweedie, “Skilobning in Norway,” *The Badminton Magazine of Sports and Pastimes* 1, no. 5 (1895): 675.

²⁰ Nancy Fix Anderson, *The Sporting Life: Victorian Sports and Games* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 155.

athletic exploration of Scandinavian culture. She models herself after active Scandinavian women, and asks her female readers to follow her lead.

Although contact zones normally involve asymmetrical relations of domination, Tweedie demonstrates that power relations are constantly in flux. *Through Finland in Carts* presents an orientalizing view of the North, in that Tweedie primitivizes Scandinavia by highlighting the cold barren climate and the area's geographical and cultural distance from metropolitan centers like London, but, at the same time, she praises the degree of liberty the native women achieve on a daily basis. Fissures in Tweedie's simple binary surface most obviously in her chapter entitled "Women and Education," where she depicts an exemplary North associated with modernity in the form of its emancipated women, who show women in "civilized" nations the way forward.

Tweedie admires "the wonderful way in which women have pushed themselves to the front and ceased to look upon matrimony as the only profession open to the sex,"²¹ assuming occupations in teaching, home construction, medicine, and agriculture. "As no country is more democratic than Finland, where there is no court and little aristocracy," she observes, "there is no law to prevent women working at anything they choose."²² Tweedie then references the "struggle going on now around us,"²³ which Wollstonecraft also mentions in *Letters*, and finds it "remarkable that so remote a country, one so little known and so unappreciated, should have thus suddenly burst forth and hold the most advanced ideas for both men and women. That endless sex question is never discussed. There is no sex question in Finland, *men and women are practically equals*, and on that basis society is formed."²⁴

Tweedie's later work, *Women and Soldiers* (1918), similarly foregrounds the importance of women performing the tasks of men during the Great War. It seems her observations of turn-of-the-century Finnish women work as an informal rehearsal for the more radical views she will adopt during war years, in which she argues that women should be allowed to fight alongside men in the trenches of the Western front, despite the fact that both her sons die fighting in this very war.

Gillian Rose argues that the "seemingly banal and trivial events of the everyday are bound into the power structures which limit and confine

²¹ Mrs. Alec Tweedie, *Through Finland in Carts* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1897), 219.

²² *Ibid.*, 221.

²³ *Ibid.*, 222.

²⁴ *Ibid.*