And their voice wasn’t heard: gender, creativity and the small pressed hearts in 19th century culture

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Prologue

“But you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. To have a pattern cut out - this is [a] woman; this is what you must be; this is what you are wanted for; a woman's heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed receipt." (George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* 1867).

Introduction

For hundreds of years Western women’s manners and ideas, as well as their physical and spiritual life, were modified by the constant pressure of masculine standards; an organism, which has been “under the shadow of the rock” (Woolf 1945, p. 67) for years, as Virginia Woolf pictures it. In the nineteenth century the living entity started to crawl cautiously into the light (ibid. loc.), weighing itself out into Western culture.

This article stems from the need to introduce a feminine narrative, in which the story of the “organism” resounds. It is not a tale of women’s life, though, that will be presented here, but a survey of the socio-historical and psychological accounts that effected 19th century women’s education, and, consequently, their creative and professional life. It is part of what Suzanne Cusick calls the ongoing intellectual quest

to understand the ways gender has worked in the past as a means for self-awareness and comprehension of how it works now (Cusick 1999, p. 436).

Although it is believed, by some scholoars, that the attempt to read political significations into works of art, meaning feminize culture, is based on an aesthetic error, that confuses texts with life, I will reveal here the sources of thought that ruled in 19th century Europe and effected the perception of gender and as a result influenced the texts that were produced in the male hegemonic society.

Following this pattern I will suggest a brief model of subversive reading that consists of re-constructing a double identity between the reader as subject, and the read as object (Lubin 1993, p. 66; Zack 2001). This model is based on the theoretical premise that texts are not merely products of their writers; texts are written by tradition, by society, by the sublimated influence of mythology and of human consciousness and sub-consciousness. Within the constant dialogue between the context of writing and the context of reception and reading these texts turn into an intertextual web in which life is lived through semiotic codes, and consciousness is built out of cultural images.

The Angle and the Absolute

In urbanized Europe, which has been conceived in the image of the bourgeois family, sex roles were strictly defined (Alexander 1979, p. 59). Men were the Subjects, the Absolute that was entitled to be intelligent, imaginative, creative and initiating. Getting the right education, at the right time and in the right institutions, made it possible for middle-class men to become politicians, lawyers, doctors, scholars, judges and merchants as well as philosophers, historians, writers, critics, composers, painters and sculptures. Clearly, society and culture were formed by them.

Women, in comparison, were the Other (De Beauvoir 1953, p. 16). Being excluded from culture they were brought up to fulfill the social obligations that were considered typical feminine; get married, have children and be in charge of the well being of their families. Being the ‘Angel in the house’, then, became their task and their goal.

The ‘Angelic’ role came with the territory of the Industrial Revolution, and the process of urbanization that followed it. As families moved into towns and engaged with the urban industrial system, a cult of domesticity that effected the perception of women as Angle-Other, started to flourish (Davidoff, L’Esperance and Newby 1979, p. 157; Zack 1999, pp. 37-38). The productive household that enabled every member (married or unmarried) to play an economic role changed. Thus, the supernumerary members – the unmarried women – were redundant and the family became much smaller; “it consisted solely of a husband and wife and their children” (Evans 1977, p. 24).

The small bourgeois family moved into a small bourgeois house. In the chaotic industrial world, the house became a symbol of morality and proper family life, a stable domestic organic unit based on moral order. The master of the house was busy with establishing a professional life and with forming culture, and naturally domestic life became exclusively depended on the mistress of the house. Her task revolved around mothering and nurturing and also around making the house internally and externally beautiful. In addition she was supposed to be characterized by moral virtues (Evans 1977, pp. 24, 36; Davidoff, L’Esperance and Newby 1979, p. 155, 158) that granted her with the responsibility for the morality of her family. Amongst other things it meant that if the husband, brother or son stumbled and looked for adventures outside the house, the domestic atmosphere was blamed. Consequently, it was the role

of the women of the house (wife, daughter, mother, sister) to bring them back, by making the house more attractive (Davidoff, L'Esperance and Newby 1979, p. 155).

As a symbol of morality and proper family life, the house was elevated to almost sanctified levels. In fact it became difficult to visualize the woman as having a separate identity from the house; the woman was the house, and the better the house looked in the eyes of the beholders, the deeper people around believed that the mistress of this particular house was more dignified.

"Under the shadow of the rock" - or - Napoleon's small pressed heart

The merged identity, Woman-Home, created a paradox in the professional prospects of middle class women. Even though they were socially and economically better off than lower class women, bourgeois women discovered that they were deprived of professional and social opportunities not only because it seemed the province of men, but also because they were engaged in fulfilling their social obligations of gentility and domesticity. Hence, while lower class women in the industrial cities were expected to work, as work was the only solution for their poverty, middle-class women found it more difficult to think of a life outside the house.

In face of the opposition of society, jobs for middle-class women were scarce and quite exceptional, and the proportion of such women working as professionals was low. In America of the 1850s, for example, the number of middle-class women working in business and other professions was about 10.1 percent (Helsinger 1983, vol. 2, p. 134). Others, in Europe, found themselves partial solutions that were some sort of compromise between their personal wishes and society's expectations, such as

keeping small general shops of their own, or if they were married they could engage in profitable activities mainly through their husband's trades (Alexander 1979, p. 65).

Patriarchal dominance within the family was replicated on the state level (Charlton 1989, p. 26). Although it differed from country to country It was dominant in almost all-Western European countries, in America and in Australia. In many Eastern European countries, women's conditions were comparable to those in Western Europe. In the Balkan countries, in comparison, women were even more limited, mainly because of religious traditions, illiteracy and the influence of the extended family that was still significant in these countries (Wollchik 1989, p. 46).

Until the mid-1850s women all over Europe (as well as in America and Australia) were deprived of most social and economic rights. They were not allowed to hold property or run a business. Neither were they able to open a bank account or obtain credit in their own name. Politically, women did not have the right to vote or stand for election and were not allowed to hold public offices. In many parts of central and Eastern Europe they were not accepted into political organizations and were not permitted to attend political meetings (Evans 1977, p. 22).

One of the laws that were codified in official documents at the beginning of the 19th century, and became a guarantee of female inferiority, was the *Code Napoleon*. This Civil Code that

was introduced in 1804 became the enduring legacy of the French Revolution. Supported by the Catholic Church, and eventually promulgated by Napoleon 1 the Code Civil (as it was officially called) became a manifestation of the laws and morals of the French nation. It was also embraced by Western Germany, Northern Italy and the Netherlands where it remained in force until 1838.

While its basic ideas dealt with equality, liberalism, and civil rights the Code reflected Napoleon Bonaparte's authoritarianism and contempt for women (Evans 1977, p. 125). According to the Code, women, married or unmarried were meant to believe and obey the rules imposed on them by men. Men were thus in charge of women's moral values and their personal and physical freedom. A married woman was considered her husband's private property, just like his other material belongings. When a woman came from a rich family and had some property of her own, her wealth was transferred by law to her husband (ibid. pp. 124-125). As the famous Code dictated also how to dress and how to behave in order to come across decent, women were forbidden to wear trousers, as well as walk in the streets without a chaperone. Those who were caught walking by themselves were arrested by the Moral Police and charged with prostitution.

Do's and taboo's

Subjected to social taboo's women's cultural involvement was marginalized. In addition to being objects who inspired men's creativity they were connected to drawing rooms with their morning visitors, sewing, flower arranging and piano playing at social gatherings (Cooper 1988, p. 147).

The distinction between the sexes, and the superstitious attitude of patriarchal society in this regard, caused a vicious circle that was hard to break; women were not given an equal chance of getting professional training and therefore there was a tendency not to take them seriously. Further, they were not considered to have talents of their own, or any other intellectual skills that would enable them to commit themselves to their own creative and professional life, as did men. Those who tried to

exercise and present their talents, intellectual or creative, were accused of immorality or of being frustrated about their looks or their sex life.

"There was a tendency to believe", says Virginia Woolf, "that a woman's commitment to her own [life or] work destroyed her femininity, threatened her marriage, and disrupted her household" (Woolf 1945, *A Room of One's Own*, p. 6). In the Romantic era things were even more extreme; women who dared to resist this convention and enter the male sphere of creativity "often ended up mad, confined, or dead" (Citron 1993, pp. 44, 80). In a satirical story that is probably known to most of us Virginia Woolf conveys her opinion about this sort of absurdity. Though not a historical document, the story presents very sharply the distinctions between the sexes in Victorian society.

This is the story of Judith Shakespeare, an imaginary sister of the famous English playwright. Judith, like her brother, William, was extremely talented; she had a gift for the rhythm of words as well as a taste for the theatre. Yet while her brother studied Ovid, Virgil, Horace and the "elements of grammar and logic", Judith wasn't sent to school. She was forbidden to get the right education and get hold of the books she wanted to read because of being a woman (Woolf 1945, p. 44). As she was a curious creature, she picked up her brother's books whenever she got a chance; but then "her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers" (ibid. p. 49).

Judith's story ended up tragically; after she was forced to marry "the son of a neighboring wool-stapler" she ran away to London where she wanted to act; but "men laughed in her face." But one day she finally met a man who seemed willing to take care of her; in addition to his warmth and sympathy, he was also an actor manager, and this seemed promising. Yet the fantasy did not last long and the loving man

disappeared. The heart broken young woman discovered that she was pregnant and since she had no one to turn to, she committed suicide. Insignificant in her death just as she was in her life the fictional Judith lies buried, till this very day, “at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle” (ibid. p. 50).

The narrowness of mind concerning women’s intellectual and creative forces was displayed in an ironic article published in the *Leader* in 1850 by the English critic and novelist George Henry Lewes. Lewes, who was the personal and literary partner of the Victorian writer Marian Evans (known by her pseudonym George Eliot), laughed at the personal and professional insecurities of his male colleagues (Helsinger 1983, vol. 3, p. 4), who were starting to face women’s intellectual development.

“My mother assures me,” says Lewes cynically, “that in her days, women were content to boil dumplings.... and do needlework; if they made a dash at the Battle of Prague, that was the summit of their accomplishments. But now.... Now women study Greek and despise dumplings. If they only studied Greek, I should not care;... but, from reading books to writing books, the sublime to the ridiculous, you know the distance!” (G.H. Lewes, “A Gentle Hint to Writing Women”, *Leader* 1 (1850), 189, quoted in Helsinger 1983, vol. 3, p.4).

Between Babylon and modern Europe – or - Women’s education

The distance between the sublime and the preposterous, like the distance between civilization and obscurity, lies in the ignorance of the industrial, and post-industrial society. Progressive and enlightened as it claimed to be it totally scorned the fact that in the ancient civilization men and women participated in social and creative life in a mutual wholeness. Thus, while the first woman’s college mentioned in history was

established in the district of Cappadocia, in Babylon, at about 5000 B.C. (Drinker 1948, p. 80), Europe and America of the 1850s were just making their first steps towards higher education for women.

In its first stages, education for women in Western patriarchy was almost exclusively restricted to the middle and upper-middle classes. In Britain, as an example, middle class girls were often taught in their homes, by their parents and by private governesses and tutors (Marks 1979, p. 181). When private schools for girls opened they had a lady principal and one or two governess who helped her; yet very often these teachers were not trained professionally, as women were excluded from universities and colleges (ibid. p. 182).

Unqualified women teachers were part of the educational system not only in Britain, but also in other countries in Europe, and in America. Clearly, mothers, governesses, nuns, and other women who took upon themselves the role of educating young women could have fulfilled this noble task had *they* (the teachers) been more educated. Those who got to the position of teaching, were confined to the strict rules of institutions, some of them connected to charitable foundations, others to the Church.

When private secondary schools for young women (known as “seminars”) opened as a partial solution for women’s inability to be admitted to most institutions of higher education, and colleges for women followed, it seemed that things are getting straightened out. But the journey back into culture after so many years of silence was a slow and very painful process.

As an example, women who wished to practice the visual arts at a time when the human body was still the basis of drawing and painting, learnt to know that they were not allowed to participate in anatomy classes. Naturally this deprived them of

acquiring professional skills in painting and sculpturing. In music the situation was almost similar. Since the 1750s music demanded skills that could be purchased only by massive formal instruction and consistent learning. There were those who were brought up in musical homes and got professional training from their parents or from other teachers. But for the others who were not so lucky as to be born in the right family composition classes, theory, harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration were only part of the expertise not available. Women musicians, thus, who wanted to commit themselves to writing music, realized that male composers had so much more musical education and in addition experience in publishing their work.

Safety nets – or – canonizing patriarchy

As they were accessing civilization women realized that not only did they lack expertise and experience, but also they (women) had no cultural inheritance that would serve as their "safety net" (Heilbrun 1988, p. 39) in manners of form, style and content. In other words, when a woman wished to commit herself to her creative work, she discovered that her ideas were formed and shaped by male artists, male poets, and male composers. As she was looking for guides of styles, images of women and poetic models she found, once and again, men's works to indulge in.

Men, in comparison, had the privilege of a cultural inheritance that served as their safety net and kept them warm and reassured for hundreds of years. When writers, composers or artists in the visual arts felt like giving voice their creativity, there were innumerable works in every artistic sphere they could rely on, relate to and be inspired by. This brings to mind Peter Ackroyd's story of the way T.S. Eliot used to 'fuel' his inspiration. Eliot, according to his biographer, could not start writing without being reassured by his precursors. He had to indulge in the works of the

greatest classics before he felt ready to go on with his own. From them he drew the power, the style and the form of language (Ackroyd 1984, p. 147). This was precisely what was absent from 19th century women's lives.

Men were not only producing and publishing more than women, but they (men) were also the ones who were responsible for canonizing artistic works, meaning canonizing themselves, thus, canonizing a masculine culture. Even the music salon that became so fashionable in 19th century bourgeoisie, and was mostly held and managed by women consisted chiefly of male composers. Women like Madam de Saint-Marceaux in Paris of the 1890s, for example, who had a salon going felt that they were constituting a place for themselves in the history of music. Ironically, they took under their wings talented male composers (like Debussy or Saint-Saëns and others) who were perceived as the new rising stars of contemporary music.

Courage-fear duality – or – the profile of women composers

Caught in the traditional assumption that "the poetic voice is male" (Cooper 1988, p. 190) creative women tended to feel irresolute about their work. Seeking reassurance in the bosom of a brother, a father, a husband or a male friend who was considered 'serious' seemed a natural thing to do.

Therefore, when Fanny Hensel Mendelssohn (1805-47) looked for a safety net for her compositions, she did not draw her power from Francceca Caccini, who was deeply involved in the musical culture at the beginning of the Baroque era, and who in the 1620s was the highest paid musician in the Florentine court (Grove 1995, p. 94). Neither did she look for professional reassurances in the remarkable music of Hildegard of Bingen, or in the 8 published volumes of Barbara Strozzi's music.

Fanny, who fitted into the profile of Western women composers, needed her famous brother's reassurance. Like Clara Wieck-Schumann (1819-1896), and like

Francesca Caccini (1587-after 1640), Barbara Strozzi (1619-after 1664), Lili Boulanger (1893-1918), Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979), and many others before and after her time, Fanny Mendelssohn was a skilled performer as well as a composer. Like them she was brought up in an intellectual bourgeois home where she received a musical and literary education. Yet, unlike Barbara and Francesca who were assured by their fathers (the Venetian poet Giuilio Strozzi, and Giulio Caccini, one of the creators of the 'new music' that marked the beginning of the Baroque era) Fanny's family did not encourage her compositional drives. The Mendelssohn's believed in education for women in general and for Fanny in particular mainly as a means to establish a decent cultured home. Consequently, Fanny was encouraged to travel and play throughout Europe, but she did not get a very massive backing when her own publishing came into discussion.

Suffering lack of confidence and the "anxiety of authorship" (Citron 1993, p. 54) Fanny needed constant approval of the famous brother Felix. In fact, she depended on his opinion so desperately that it became almost like a demonic force that dominated her life. "As the strict taskmaster has ordered," she writes to Felix on the 30th of July 1836, "I've continued to compose piano pieces, and for the first time have succeeded in completing one that sounds brilliant. I don't know exactly what Goethe means by the demonic influence," writes Hensel, conveying her deep sensitivity to this subject, "but this much is clear: if it does exist, you exert it over me…….I believe that if you seriously suggested that I become a good mathematician, I wouldn't have any particular difficulty in doing so, and I could just as easily cease being a musician tomorrow if you thought I wasn't good at that any longer" (Citron 1987, *The Letters of Fanny Hensel to Felix Mendelssohn*, p. 209).

Felix's response was encouraging: "if you had the inclination, you certainly have sufficient genius to compose, and if you have no desire to do so, why grumble so much?" But, as he went on affectionately, Felix reminded Fanny of the difference between the sexes concerning composition. "If I had a baby to nurse", he said, "I certainly should not write any scores, and as I have to compose Non Nobis, I cannot unluckily carry my nephew about in my arms" (Wallace, *Letters from Italy ad Switzerland by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy*, p. 57).

The courage-fear dialectic – or – George and the clergyman

Marianne Evans, who was known by her literary name George Eliot, did not have babies to nurse. Nevertheless, she, like Fanny Mendelssohn, needed constant reassurance of her personal and literary partner, the English novelist and critic George Lewes, who was considered an intellectual and a professional authority.

"If he [Lewes] had not protected her," says her biographer Rosemary Ashton, "she might have given up writing altogether. As it was, every novel was wrestled into existence in spite of that despair against which Marian had always struggled, not always successfully, and against which she continued to fight, with Lewes and soon Blackwood [her publisher] enlisted on her side, all her life."

It seems that Eliot suffered of a 'courage-fear' dialectic that was, and still is, quite common among human beings. One part of her felt insecure while the other was brave and outgoing. Dependent as she seemed Eliot went on with her writing and published novels in which she preached people's responsibility for their own lives, whether men or women. Her personal life certainly represented freedom of choice, and the responsibility she took for this freedom, since for many years Eliot shared her

life with the critic and novelist George Henry Lewes who was unable to obtain a divorce from his wife.

As her literary partner Lewes encouraged Eliot (at the time still Marian Evans) to look for strategies to protect herself, and her writing, from the harsh judgement of the conservative Victorian society. For not only was she a woman, she was also a religious skeptic who lived with a married man. Being aware of the difficulties women writers had to face in publishing their work, Marian Evans decided to use a masculine pen name, George Eliot: George, for her partner Henry Lewes's Christian name, and Eliot as it seemed a "good mouth-filling easily-pronounced word" (Ashton 1997, p. 166).

The pseudonym proved itself to be the right thing to do when her first novel *Adam Bede* was published. Apparently a conventional story of country life at the turn of the century; a description of an idyllic rural life, with its cows and smells and beautiful scenery. Yet within this pastoral setting a doctrine of social realism was conveyed, unveiling painful scenes of "seductions, unwanted pregnancies, shame, running away [and other] things [which] happen in communities and always have done" (ibid. p, 201).

Under the cover of her masculine literary name Eliot was not merely revealing moral issues, but also preaching for tolerance for other people's faults and for forgiveness in the humanistic sense. Readers and critics believed that a rural minister wrote the novel, and this encouraged its acceptance. Yet, when a clergyman by the name of Liggins claimed authorship, Eliot had no other choice than to reveal her identity in order to protect her literary reputation (Helsinger 1983, vol. 3, p. 73). It was then that the tone of readers and critics suddenly changed; just as soon as they discovered that the author was a woman, and moreover a woman who lived with a

married man, Eliot was denounced for her treatment of love and morality. The *Dublin University Magazine* accused her of "giving too much leeway to passion", while the *London Quarterly Review* implied that she was using the novel "to defend her relationship with Lewes" (ibid. p. 74). The moral alternatives confronting readers in the novel were suddenly attacked; not for their substance, but for the way the author chose to live her private life.

A new style of writing – or – when sign and syntax meet the intuitive and the archaic

From the restrictions, the loss and the pain, a new style of writing was emerging. Indeed, the organism was crawling out very intensely from under the shadow of male hegemony, making its way towards new artistic standards, which conveyed personal and professional freedom. As a result women became subjects of their own stories rather than objects of male narratives. They were writing themselves, sharing with their audience thoughts, critique, feelings, wishes dreams and traumas that formed the source of their fictional work. The French feminist school in the 70s (Cixous, Iriagaray, Kristeva) coined it écriture féminine; a woman's writing that was based on feminist reinterpretation of psychoanalysis on the one hand and structural linguistics on the other (Buikema 1993, p. 9).

Écriture féminine in its vaster interpretation at the turn of the 20th century is in fact a critical writing that is challenged by intersubjectivity. As such it re-constructed gender identity through inner contradictions that wed masculine to feminine, idea to feeling, emotion to logic, the flow of events to the flow of consciousness (Marder 1968, pp. 123-126). These contradictions are embodied in two phases, two temporalities, and two times of signifying practices that are apparent within any 'production of meaning'; the semiotic and the symbolic (Kristeva 1986, p. 472; 1980;

pp. 6-7). The semiotic is identified with the maternal, while the symbolic reflects the paternal zone.

The semiotic phase is associated with the flow of consciousness and is thus identified with the maternal function. It is the mirror phase of mother/child bonding that consists of feminine drives and maternal tones and rhythms. The very first experiences in human life. In terms of temporality this phase manifests archaic (mythical) memory on the one hand, and repetitive cyclicity on the other. Reflected in the dynamic of signs it is recurrent and reversible as it interchanges past, present and future.

In music, according to Raymond Monelle's theory of temporality, cyclical time is manifested by a lyric form that conveys temporal statis. Although it contains syntactic features such as "succession, repetition, meter and rhythm, implication and resolution, closure, and in some cases modulation" it is non-progressive (Monelle 2000, p. 90). It feels like a single event, in which no real harmonic progression, no tonal resolution, no modulating sequences, no developments of previous themes are heard. Using Monelle's words: "It just *is*, like a single gesture of the hand" (ibid.loc.).

Dance and March are only two out of many examples used by this writer to exemplify lyric time. "Dancing and marching", says Monelle, "are, in spite of obvious appearances, non-progressive. Armies march in step because such a temporal state eliminates directionality, and so woos the soldier away from consciousness of his goal, which is the battlefield. And even progressive dance progresses nowhere; music for dance occupies a single moment that is intently extensible" (ibid. p. 91).

"Progressive time" ("structural time"), as opposed to lyric time, is linear. It is historical time, the time of advancement from one event to another within a certain order (ibid. p.85); time of departure, progression and arrival, that "induce[s] the entire range of symbolic manifestation" (Kristeva 1986, p. 472; 1992, p. 129). It contains the 'masculine' preoccupations with linearity and logic, and relates to the establishment of sign, syntax, grammatical and social constraints (Kristeva 1980, pp. 137-139). In musical terms it is the time of developing themes, modulating sequences, harmonic progression and tonal resolution.

The meeting point of the two phases, semiotic and symbolic, in literature and art is the moment of "jouissance" (ibid. pp. 151, 154). When the temporalities merge while penetrating history on one hand and refusing the restraints imposed by historical time on the other, bringing together logical identification with cyclicity and mythical thought. This is the moment of poetic pleasure, of wholeness, of bliss. When the "speaking subject is engendered as belonging to both the semiotic *cora* and the symbolic device" (ibid. p. 7). When boundaries between signifying structures and subjective identity blur and a new poetic voice that is manifested by multiple modalities of time resounds.

Between Aurora Leigh and Carmen

In the poetic voice Self and Other, portrait and person, the object who is gazed at and subject who speaks, are reconciled (Feldman 1999, p. 61). The reconcilement is possible due to a constant dialogue between the context of writing and the context of reception and reading that turns the work from production and utterance to manifestation. It becomes an intertextual web that is "located at the center of the networks of texts" (Monelle 2000, p. 153-154); thus it relates to sociological,

anthropological, historical and psychological accounts as well as to other artistic texts. Such a view of the text forms an analytical tool that can be used for any work.

Aurora Leigh, the protagonist of Elizabeth Barrett Brwoning's mature novel-poem (*Aurora Leigh* published in 1856), and Georges Bizet's gypsy Carmen in his opera *Carmen* (1875) represent different genres (novel-poem and opera), different arts (poetry and music), different social class and different cultures (Victorian bourgeoisie and gypsy life in Southern Spain). Yet, if we reconstruct the double identity, of the reader as subject, and the read as object it becomes surprisingly clear how much these two protagonists have in common.

Although Aurora was conceived by a woman and Carmen was invented by four men (Mérimée, Bizet and his two librettists Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy) the Andalusian gypsy and the Victorian poet share the same wish; free themselves from the restrains imposed on them by society. This is achieved through language.

As she is looking for new styles of writing and new images of women, Aurora realizes that for years she derived her ideas from poetic models that were established exclusively by men. "She [like many other women writers] [found] a beautiful pale face, she [found] La Belle Dame Sans Merci, she [found] Juliet…, but precisely what she [did] not find [was] that absorbed, drudging, puzzled, sometimes inspired creature, herself, who sits at a desk trying to put words together..." (Adrienne Rich 1979, pp. 39-47, quoted in Cooper, p. 191).

Carmen, in comparison, does not derive her ideas from Keats, Shakespeare, Milton or Homer. Far from it. But she also is confined by patriarchal rules as she is formed and shaped by four male creators who are the typical representations of French bourgeoisie. Further, in Mérimée's realistic novel, (the literary source of the opera), she is controlled by two male narrators, a French

scholar (Mérimée himself) and José, a Basque soldier. The frame of the novel appears as a documentary study about the low life of the Spanish gypsies as perceived by the French. Into this intellectual frame the inner story of Don José is placed. The French scholar meets José on the night of his execution—he has been convicted of Carmen's murder—and hears the passionate story of the Andalusian gypsy and the Basque man. The narrators are distinguished by a social and intellectual gap; a dispassionate scientist on one hand and Don José, a Spanish savage, a marginal person, smuggler and murderer on the other.

Empowered by patriarchal rules the two narrators deprive Carmen of autonomic existence, so that she cannot present herself in her own terms. Mérimée's Carmen, says Edwards Geoffrey, does not even seem to exist; "She is simply a male projection, perceived by the reader only through the dual lenses of José's self-exculpating confession and the narrator's dehumanizingly pseudo-scientific reporting of her dialogue, behavior and appearance" (Edwards 1993, p. 48).

Indeed, Carmen is a projection of her creators, yet there is a significant difference between her and Aurora. Aurora represents Browning's own difficulty as a woman-poet who lived in a society that viewed professional expertise and the artistic spheres as a male domain. Aurora is Browning; same sex, same class and the same profession. As a product of Victorian society she is confronted with the either/or problem. Either surrender to social conventions and marry her beloved, Romney, or, give up marriage and preserve personal and intellectual freedom in order to create.

Aurora *chooses* to set off on a personal journey where she will learn to attain sexual and intellectual freedom as woman-poet. By so doing she enables her partner, Romney, to take all the time he needs for his own development as a human being and as a future equal partner in a heterosexual relationship. What differentiates this special

woman character from previous heroines designed by male creators, is that when Aurora finally unites with Romney, it is done from a point of personal strength and not as a result of feminine weakness. When they reach the highest point of which they are separately capable, she is ready for the union as a sexual and intellectually equal partner. “On the symbolic level,” says Cooper, “she renders him (who in his blindness evokes the blind precursors, Homer, Aeschylus, Milton, and even Mr. Boyd) into her muse” (Cooper 1988, p. 153). It is here that the intuitive and personal meets with the cold reasoning intellect, bringing about what Marder characterizes as the androgynous mind (Marder 1968, pp. 123-125). In Kristeva’s terms, when Aurora and Romney finally meet they reach the moment of “jouissance” in language; where masculine and feminine, semiotic and symbolic come together. In a way their reunion sounds like “and they lived happily ever after [their mission was accomplished]”.

This of course is not the case with Carmen. She is a projection of the 19th century male artist’s psyche that was confronted with a significant change in the balance of the patriarchal structure, and with the new image of Woman; powerful, free-minded and independent. In order to deal with the new reality, which was threatening the bourgeois male, Carmen had to be designed in the image of a low class woman (hybrid-gypsy) who comes from what was perceived by the French as a lower culture (Southern Spain). A seductive, exotic, promiscuous entity which is characterized by unbounded sexuality (Zack 2001 (forthcoming)). A hybrid (not even a pure gypsy), from Andalusia, violent, dirty, a thief and a liar who is placed in a cigarette factory and portrayed as a smoker, in a time when one of the trademarks of 19-century Parisian prostitutes was smoking (Hutcheon 1996, pp. 179, 183). Clearly Carmen is the manifestation of the *rêve espagnol,* which turns into a symbol of transgression and feminine demonism.

But such a negative connotation was also part of a larger phenomenon involving the relation of the Occidental bourgeoisie towards anything that seemed Different, especially if it was located in Spain. In her article about the 'Black legend' Judith Etzion says that the attitude of the Western European towards the Spanish was a result of "personal and collective ignorance" as well as of "techniques of denial" (Etzion 1998, pp. 105-106).

In Jungian terms the techniques of refusal are explained as a repression of something that one is afraid to confront. Gypsies like Carmen who represented exotic Otherness and were, thus, associated with sexual freedom conveyed danger to the bourgeois male who was brought up with the traditional model of patriarchy; a virginal figure, submissive and loyal.

According to the psychological view of Jungian scholars such a bourgeois male was actually dealing with the repressed image of motherhood in the larger sense. Eric Neumann says that as women became stronger in society the image of the "Great Mother" within the male had to split into two, the good mother on the one hand and the evil mother on the other. These two are juxtaposed shadows of each other; the good mother is the more conscious image, her bad counterpart being relegated to the subconscious (Neumann 1963, p. 79). Dealing with the two images of motherhood became an integral part of the male's process of individuation. In order to achieve a complete and mature self, the 19th-century male had to confront the demonic image with her mythical pole, the ideal image of femininity.

In Bizet's opera the two poles of femininity are manifested by juxtaposing Carmen and Micaëla, a delicate figure characterized by chastity, modesty and

loyalty. Micaëla, who does not exist in Mérimée's novel, was added to the libretto as a role model, a standard by which to measure Carmen.

Yet the operatic Carmen transcends her various connotations and turns from a gypsy who performs cabaret numbers into the singing and dancing body of the opera. Like her contemporary, Aurora, she establishes a new construction of Difference in which a current vocabulary of Otherness is manifested. It consists, basically, of a masculine/ feminine, cyclical/linear, and progressive/monumental dialectic. Musically it is conveyed by repetitive dance rhythms joined to a chromatic melody (like in her "Habanera"), unexpected harmonic shifts bounded within a pattern of refrains (as in the "Seguidilla"), repetitive galloping horse topics and seductive lyricism (like when Carmen comes in at the end of José's "Flower Song", when she tells him that had he loved her he (José) would have taken her to the hills).

When the oppositional pairs are added to Carmen's declaration of her artistic intentions (like when she says gaily to José in the duet no. 16: "Je vais danser en votre honneur") the marginalized Otherness is transformed into a new language and a new knowledge (Zack 1999, pp. 102, 110, 125), that moves into the center and change the rules of operatic discourse.

In using direct speech and declaring their artistic intentions both Carmen and Aurora Leigh, turn from *femme inspiratrice* (Jung 1954, p.195), a lovely feminine plaything that was the source of inspiration for male creators, into *femme créatrice* (Zack 1999, p. 101). A positive valued Otherness that speaks and is heard; a source of creativity from whom poetry and music renders.

As artistic authorities, who are aware of their arts, as well as of the art that is created around them, the Andalusian gypsy and the Victorian woman-poet

create direct discourse not only with the other characters, but also with the audience who reads poetry and hears the opera, in a vital sense, as Carmen's and Aurora's own utterances.

Epilogue

"A silent presence, the whole city spread at her feet, and [she] looked at the lambswool light out over the mountains, over the houses drowning in radiance, as if once this city, long, long ago, soon after Creation, had burst from some great rock and its truth flown molten and shiny over the hills. She could feel the moment to the quick…….And always, forever, this fleecy pile of light, that rock tumbled halfway down the hill to a lonely stop, a terraced alley, a dripping cypress tree, a caper plant in a wall. A place to walk slowly. A place to touch the sky: now it is close. To breath in mountain and light. Now." (Shulamit Hareven, *City of Many Days*).

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