

WOMAN'S HONOUR IN THE TRAGEDIES OF WIELAND AND SCHILLER AND THE SEXUAL MANNERS IN XIXth CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

In this article first sexual and marriage manners of the traditional society are reviewed when rich people used have a wife and some concubine. Later the tragedies of G. E. Lessing Emilia Galotti and F. Schiller Kabale und Liebe are analysed. These authors criticise the feudal marriage with concubines and suggest a modern monogamic marriage and that is exactly the Marriage Act of the subsequent Napoleonic and Austrian civil legislation. In this Marriage Act children born out of wedlock are victims of discrimination, the seduction and defloration of a girl could not be remedied with a dowry paid to her but waitwashed with blood only or the seducer had to marry the seduced girl. Seduced girls, especially if they were abandoned with child suffered a life long disqualification and therefore girls were never addressed for sex but prostitutes or married women only.

Key words: ethical values, honour, women, legislation

Moses has laid down that adultery is to be punished by stoning but not premarital intercourse. Should such a case occur the offender is liable to marry the girl, but in some cases marriage could be replaced by the payment of an indemnity (*Lib. Deuteronomii, XXII, 28-29*). Islam based his polygamy upon the same decrees of the Mosaic law.

That was the Marriage Act of the traditional society. If somebody had a concubine and could not marry her because he already was married, he paid her an indemnity. As in the Middle Ages only the marriage with dowry was considered serious, that meant that most of the female servants served for six years, as prescribed by Moses and than their Lord married them giving them a dowry which also was the indemnity for their lost virginity. In Venice a specialised court was set up *Gli esecutori sopra la bestemmia*, where seduced virgins were plaintiffs asking money from their seducers or pretended seducers. In these court the male is always a satyr

and the female the defenceless victim of his lust. In cases of disagreement in that matter it was the rule in most of the Christian countries that the competent authority was the local bishop. Jelena came home from a pilgrimage in Rome and found her husband with a concubine. She sued him for divorce to the local bishop who ruled out that the divorce is not given, but the husband has to dismiss his concubine with a sum of 40 lire (DAZ, Thomas de Stantiis, 3, 1142r-v.). For so much money one could purchase a cow and this money was enough for her dowry. Franica Piciko from Rab, who was the daughter of a nobleman sued her seducer Kristofor Mišić, who was a commoner asking an indemnity *pro compensatione virginitatis et honoris sui* (DAZ, 24. Notary Krsto Fabjanić, VIII., 42v.). This time the competent authority was the *legatus apostolicus in Venice*. We do not know how much money the seducer paid for her indemnity and dowry but we guess that was much money because the victim was the daughter of a nobleman. The defloration was considered something like an assassination and could be resolved by indemnity. The traditional asociety was by no means rigid in that cases and concubines were common place and so were also children born out of wedlock. There were in many periods easy going policies in that matter. Fathers and brothers were not inclined to compel the seducer by force and threat of arms to marry the seduced girl.

In Lessing's tragedy *Emilia Galotti* (1772) things changed and the father preferred to kill his daughter with her consent rather than to allow her to become the concubine of the Duke and so did Schiller in his tragedy *Kabale und Liebe* (1773-1784). The problem of this tragedy is the love between an aristocrat and the daughter of a commoner. Therefore the marriage between the two is impossible. Out of this love emerges the fact that love is one thing while marriage is a quite different thing and that is also the creed of modern sexual manners, which came over to Europe from the US as Paul Bourget wrote it in his travel book upon America. Both these tragedies were based upon a stern morality which fiercely opposed the old feudal marriage with concubines and condemned the phallic feudalism. This morality is also a bedrock protestant value as both Lessing and Schiller were protestants. The tragedy of Schiller is a defence of marriage between different social strata, love as a personal inclination is the only criteria in contracting marriage. That was the real watershed to modern times when love not the familiar opportunities was the main criteria in contracting marriage.

Both these tragedies can be read as a manifesto or petition for a new legislation on marriage and a condemnation of the traditional feudal marriage with concubines. Such a law was in fact passed by Napoleon and modern marriage is severely monogamic and similar to the marriage as seen by St. Paul who considers the wife to be in condition of inferiority to her husband but obliged the husband to love his wife as Jesus loved his Church (Cor. XIV, 34-35, Cor. III, XIX, 4-8 and VII). We point out that these protests against the traditional marriage with concubines came from

men, not from women and in fact very little protests against the concubinate are recorded in history from women. It seems that women speaking in general terms were not opposed to concubinate.

Let see how was this modern marriage and the modern concept of women's honour. The practising of the new legislation imposed to girls premarital chastity. Premarital defloration was considered a social disqualification which could not be remedied by money as in the traditional society; the seducer was forced to marry his girl or challenged to duel and killed. Otherwise the girl suffered a lifelong disqualification either by living as a spinster or by marriage and in that case the social disqualification extended to her husband as the wife was the honour of her husband. The outlook of life was grim for a spinster because girls were not educated for work and that meant that a spinster had to live in genteel, or even grinding poverty. Men could address prostitutes or married women, widows for sex, never girls because the way to the bed of a girl led through the altar and the father gave the marriage permission and no priest would wed a couple without the father's benediction. Children born out of wedlock suffered life long social discrimination, they could not serve in the army, or have a job a state functionaries, most of jobs were not accessible to them. If one was born after six or seven months of marital pregnancy, that were written in his birth record, and so were written if one was born out of wedlock and his parents married later. A man could have sex with prostitutes, or married women only, but in this case he exposed himself to the rage of the husband who could challenge him to duel and kill him. In that case he was condemned to a sentence and was than pardoned by the monarch. Such sexual manners resulted in a number of unsuccessful marriages of couples who first met in a bed after contracting marriage. Sometimes the wife refused sex with her husband or even returned home, other time the husband resulted not to be fit for sex with his wife or impotent at all.

Such sexual manners and duels were marks of conservative societies. Honour and virility were the bedrock values of conservative societies and conservative periods of the XIXth Century and were criticised by liberals who preferred sexual permissiveness and abolished duels imposed ban or passed laws against duels. Liberal societies respect the right of a girl to marry the man of her choice and that became a common place of the XIXth Century literature all over in Europe.

This idea of woman's honour created large strata of social outsiders - women who could be slept with, prostitutes, who were girls first seduced and than abandoned having no other mean to make their living, children born out of wedlock branded with words and terms, which depicted them as *bastards* and compelled to rob and steal because they could not have a job for being social outsiders etc. So the society was composed by a social ingroup and a social outgroup of outsiders. The honourable men lived in anguish of being challenged to duel or being forced to challenge somebody else to duel. If an army officer was insulted and he challenged not his ad-

versary, he was discharged of his military rank. Therefore people treated each other with maximum of courtesy and politeness to avoid duels. Théophile Gautier travelled in the mid 1830ies from the liberal France to Spain and remarked in southern Spain that the Spaniards are extremely polite and courteous, but always inclined to draw a knife. *Il est à remarquer que la politesse française, autrefois proverbiale, a disparu depuis que l'on a cessé de porter l'épée. Les lois contre le duel acheveront de nous rendre le peuple le plus grossier de l'univers.* The Austrian author Franz Grillparzer, who visited London in the 1836 was surprised to see prostitutes flocking in front of the theatre. The Austrian police has laid down that no prostitute or even a woman who had a lover could enter the theatre. The Austrian police passed severe rules for the behavior and manners in theatre even for men and "honest" women in theatre and the Casino which was the club for the educated class, the gentry, aristocracy, the functionaries, priests rather than for the world of fashion. The Casino and the theatre were the means for social education and disciplination.

The woman's honour was also the cause of controversy because on the one side premarital sex was banned and on the other side according to Schillers *Kabale und Liebe* the interference of parents in the wedding of the daughter was intollerable, marriage was the matter of personal choice for both the bride and the bridegroom and this personal choice could not be opposed by difference of social strata and was a point of honour for both men and women. Premarital virginity was a point of honour, not of morality or religion. So the honourability of marriage was somewhat a agreement between the father as the guardsmen of her daughter and her honour, which forbade her to marry an unloved man. That caused much strain which is to be looked for in the definition of honour in the tragedies of Lessing and Schiller. The woman's honour was a question of sex, but in the same time honour banned sexuality out of the public life and even literature because the heroines of realist literature have an uterus for delivering children only.

That had a notably influence in literature. Dostojevski describes Micha Karamazov and his suffering because his beloved Grushenka had a previous lover. Arthur Schnitzler described in his novel *Therese* the life of a girl, who was seduced, she had an unwed birth and was than abandoned with child. Her life as a single mother was a constant way downhill a way in social depravation and crime. Premarital sex is a commonplace of social depravation and the life in a slum which is the hell of the social and religious life in the XIXth Century. Blasco Ibañez described in his novel *La Bodega* how Maria de la Luz is seduced by the son of her employer. Her brother Fernin Montenegro forced the seducer to marry her, and as he adamantly refuses, he stabs him to death and the honour of his sister and his modest social class is reconstructed by a method which is not the revolutionary struggle, because that novel is a conservative *roman terrier* rooted in the lower middle class and its social emancipation. August Šenoa and other Croat authors describe premarital sex as



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec: Salon v Rue des Moulins, detajl.

sinful and fatal, the seducer of honest Croat girls are mostly German aristocrats or German army officers coming from Vienna and to sexual morality becomes a fact of strengthening the national cohesion of a small nation in a large empire reflecting also the fear of this small national community from the big modern and German speaking city what XIXth Century Vienna was.

Both the tragedies by Schiller and Lessing did not leave an indeleble mark in literature, but rather in suggesting to pass a modern matrimonial legislation and also to build up the mentality of the XIXth Century man and in that both tragedies are unequalled in modern literature.

Let us finally see what is honour or state some notes towards the definition of honour. In the Bible and Gospel we read very little on honour, Jesus's suffering and humiliations are not his dishonour, but his humility and so we can say on Joseph's suffering following his sale in Egypt, his captivity as he turned down Putiphar's proposal to have sex with her. So honour is not a problem of religion or morality. On the other side the honour is the problem which unites some human groups, professional, social, political or even sexual groups, their common point of view which is different in these groups and an element of their arrogance from time to time, the insult of their honour is the destruction of their social or professional behaviour. An unmarried woman keeps her honour so long she is a virgin but it makes her appear arrogant in front of a man who pays court to her, a military officer is arrogant when he voices concern even for petty insults of his honour and so the army is in a conservative society treating civilians with contempt and has a vulnerable honour. So honour is an element for the build up of social groups and we speak of a decent, respectably tradesman, a honourably judge further words are honest, righteous, upright, proper, somebody has a good reputation or dignity, serves with distinction in the army etc. An army can be dishonored on the battlefield or when she lays down arms. Officers in captivity are allowed to keep their pistol or sword in order to keep their honour. Francis I. was defeated in the battle of Pavia and captured but he lived in captivity in a castle and so his royal honour was kept. Battles or military operations are described in a solemn language. Military prisoners are frequently humiliated in order to destroy their professional honour and personality and to disable them for further fighting. An Austrian military officer who was insulted was discharged of his military rank unless he has challenged his opponent. When he killed the opponent in a duel he was sentenced by a court for manslaughter and than pardoned by the Emperor. In 1474. the vicars of Rab in Croatia Mate Martinis and Damjan Spalatin fined some priests because they stood outside *post tertiam campanam* what was *contra morum honestatem*. The priest Martin Fabjanić from Rab has drawn his sword and attacked Dominik from Pag and was fined because this misconduct was considered *contra morum honestatem* and *in opprobrium ordinis sacerdotalis* (DAZ, Thomas de Stantiis, XX, 600v. and 654r.) and that probably would not be considered

dishonest if a soldier did so. The priest from Novalja Jakov criticized the bishop of Rab Ivan Skafa for having a mistress what was not a sin but *contra honorem clericalem* (DAZ, Thomas de Stantiis, 1472, XV, 92r.). Political prisoners behave with dignity in order to keep their honour when their face prison or even death sentences. Their point of view is that their opponents can deprive them of freedom or even of life, but not of their honour. Most of these words refer to the professional career, some of them can be applied to women having a good sexual conduct or having not a sexual misconduct. A raped woman is dishonoured. The honour of the girl means her capacity to marry and have a husband who shall support her in a society which banned women from the professional life. Emilia Galotti's honour means her refusal to accept the social status of a concubine, a polemic against the phallic feudalism and a system where women could easier afford rich than poor men and polygamy was a preserve of the rich. It was a struggle for equal opportunities in having sex and sex became a hotspot of democracy. The woman and sex became the hotspot of social struggle; children are not mentioned in this tragedy. Her father and she prefer the death to the dishonour. It is a new point of view, because in large period of history the concubinate was not considered sexual misconduct and even nowadays many girls or women accept voluntarily to be a mistress to a married man. It was bad that these new point of view neglected the insurance of the woman which was not admitted in professional life and was not a bread winner for itself or the family. The new mean to insure the woman was the modern Marriage Act where the husband was liable to support his wife even in case of divorce. However the adultress suffered a lifelong social disqualification as Tolstois Anna Karenina or Effi Briest in the novel of Theodor Fontane because their have *dishonoured* their husbands. Tolstoj criticized this modern marriage in his *Kreutzerova sonata*. The honour is an element for the build up of the social status of these groups and their image, it is entirely human and not divine.

ŽENSKA ČAST V WIELANDOVIH IN SCHILLERJEVIH TRAGEDIJAH TER SPOLNE NAVADE LJUDI V 19. STOLETJU

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POVZETEK

Prispevek v uvodnem delu podaja pregled običajev in norm v spolnem in zakonskem življenju tradicionalne družbe, ko se je med bogatejšimi ustalil zakon s priležnicami. V nadaljevanju so opisi in analiza tragedij G. E. Lessinga Emilia Galotti in Friedricha Schillerja *Spletka in ljubezen* (Kabale und Liebe), ki nastopata

proti tradicionalnemu zakonu s priležnicami in terjata strogo monogamni zakon, kakršnega sta pozneje definirala Napoleonov in avstrijski državni zakonik. Iz teh zakonikov oziroma iz omenjenih tragedij izhajajo nazori in običaji v spolnem in zakonskem življenju v 19. stoletju, v katerem je bil zakon strogo monogamen, nezakonski otroci v vseh pogledih brezpravni, zvodniki pa so se morali oženiti z zapeljanimi dekletimi ali pa se spopasti v dvoboju z njihovimi očeti ali brati, kar se je zanje lahko izšlo slabo. Defloracije v 19. stoletju ni bilo mogoče poplačati z denarno odškodnino kot v tradicionalni družbi, ampak le z zakonom ali s krvjo. Zapeljana dekleta so bila, še posebej tista z nezakonskimi otroki, za vse življenje diskvalificirana. Zato so se dekletom približevali samo tisti moški, ki so se želeli z njimi poročiti, spolne zveze pa so iskali pri poročenih ženskah ali prostitutkah.

Ključne besede: etične vrednote, čast, ženske, zakonodaja

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