

Attachment

Work Package 1 (WP1)

The Representation of Gender Roles in Kurdish Literature and Cinema: Shaping political emotions and alternative citizenship. Dr hab. Joanna Bocheńska (Section of Kurdish Studies at Jagiellonian University)

ALCITfem will pay attention to the lived practice of activism and citizenship, but also to its moral foundations rooted in different cultural narratives. Ideas about citizenship and belonging are found in narratives and symbols that circulate through cultural production. For people born and raised in the community, these ideas are transmitted early on through families. In order to understand how alternative citizenship is related to the moral and cultural foundations of Kurdish culture, ALCITfem will investigate both the gendered structure of cultural production (WP1) as well as the transmission and lived experience of gender roles in families (WP3). Rooted in Bocheńska's research on ethics in Kurdish context (2018a), ALCITfem proposes that successful activism and citizenship projects require reconsidering the traditional sense of honour by inventing a new dignity-centred moral imagination. This is understood primarily as a practice of imaginary dealing with human actions and relations often with the help of different narratives. It pays attention to the intimate dimensions of human lives and bridges the gap between the individual, social and political areas of human activity which is salient for any citizenship project and provides the wider understanding of the transformation of social reality (Bocheńska 2016, Bocheńska 2018a).

Objectives of WP1:

- 1) Provides a deeper understanding of how modern activism is rooted in moral and ideological imaginations from the past, how these narratives were adapted and mobilized and practiced in today's circumstances, and it will focus on the gendered character of such narratives.
- 2) Provides an overview of the roles played by women figures in Kurdish culture, including literature, cinema and art while exposing the transition from the spiritual, idealised symbol toward the real female body. By studying the poetic of that transformation, its rootedness in Kurdish classical and oral heritage as well as in multiple foreign inspirations, it will provide in-depth insights into moral and cultural changes, political emotions and social mobilisation.
- 3) Pays attention to how users transform traditional and modern narratives in order to raise awareness toward gender inequalities and mobilize people to take action.

This WP focuses on the transformations of Kurdish cultural narratives that have been taking place during the last century representing and triggering social changes and enabling people in Kurdistan to imagine women as playing new roles in public. Initially, women as literary or cinema characters represented spiritual symbols rather than any living, thinking and acting individuals. Yet, with time, and along with the increased engagement of women in public life their image started to change. The project will deal with the transformation of the representation of women and family as well as of femininity and masculinity through the reconsideration of honour and reinventing "equal dignity" understood as the basis of any citizenship project. It will seek to identify the links between oral, literary and cinema narratives, moral imagination and social action by applying the concept of political emotions (Nussbaum 2013, Ahmed 2011) and by studying the role of emotions, cultural imaginary, intellectual elites and cultural institutions in creating a space for criticism, public debate, education and political reforms.

Not surprisingly, one of the most meaningful instruments applied for the purpose of social transformation is the symbol of woman, which, in Kurdish context, has recently become associated not only with God (classical literature) or nation (modern literary works) but also with life and freedom (as in the popular slogan "Jin, Jiyan, Azadi/Woman, Life, Freedom"). Curiously, while the representation and works of women were analysed in several publications related to oral, classical or modern literature, little attention has been given to the history and role of the image of women in Kurdish culture and its potential to convey new ideas and reshape political emotions, which to Martha Nussbaum is crucial for any successful citizenship project. Also, there is no study on the representation of Kurdish family in Kurdish culture. It is important to stress that women characters do not exist in a void and their fictional fates are deeply interwoven with the fates of other characters who are often the family members. Therefore, this WP focuses on the historical and ideological dimension of the image of women and family in Kurdish culture. What is more, it will open to the ecological dimension of the figure of woman, so often in Kurdish culture associated with natural beauty and Kurdish landscape. It is important to stress that the portrait of the real body drawn by modern Kurdish literature, and body eroticism and sensuality, is often deeply embedded in the natural environment, which serves as the source of metaphors or descriptions of the intimate context. No doubts that this new body poetic is

deeply rooted in Kurdish folklore but at the same time it is eye opening when it comes to the various human-nature interrelations and thus contributes to developing ecological awareness and engagement. Moreover, it can help to overcome “anthropodenial”, which to Martha Nussbaum is “the refusal to accept one’s limited animal condition” (2013:173) This happens by promoting wonder and love, that is “the outward erotic movement toward the world and its alluring objects” (174). As stressed by Nussbaum (2013), long before women became real agents of public life in Europe, the woman figure and the so called “feminine spirit” had started to play an important role in social transformation. In the 18th and 19th century Europe, many intellectuals and artists who were engaged in building the new “religion of humanity” carved feminine politics “to express the idea that the new regime must depart radically from an earlier culture of masculinity. In keeping with its emphasis on play, humor, and heterogeneity, the new culture would not be coercively imposed, and it would preserve space both for dissent and for different human experiments (2013:55). The Kurdish modern narratives bear many similarities with the above mentioned process. Women figures became frequent proponents for change and bold storytellers. They often guide male characters to reconsider norms that were previously thought important. At once, more attention is given to interrelations of people, and macroscale issues (freedom, national liberation, citizenship) has started to be viewed through the prism of individual human fates and their complexity. This forges a new sense of honour based on equal humanity and value of both sexes and is accompanied by a fresh approach to body, eroticism and sexuality. The presence of such themes invites the presence of carnality treated with contempt in many religious poems, and adds to a more embodied vision of the human being with their biological, social and cultural contexts. It can be associated with - what Nussbaum calls – “a spirit of subversive erotic creativity” (2013:99) which means that a society “continually have access to, a kind of fresh joy and delight in the world, in nature and in people, preferring love and joy to the dead lives of material acquisition (...) and preferring continual questioning and searching to any comforting settled answers” (2013:93). Finally, it is deeply rooted in Kurdish culture, expressed in Kurdish language and often claims the political space for the Kurds. Therefore, it constitutes the foundations of “alternative citizenship” in Kurdish context.

WP1 will be implemented by: 1. The new analyses of texts dealing with gender including classical, oral, literary and cinema narratives. We will focus on A). the representation of women and its role in transforming the social reality, B). transforming gender roles within families as represented by narratives C). Woman body, nature and ecology, 2. Identifying and analysing the role of motives and figures rooted in Kurdish history and culture that feature in the narratives of women activists. 3. Interviewing writers, poets and artists whose activity goes beyond the artistic creation and engages in advocating women rights.

WP1 will be supplemented by realising the two photo exhibitions prepared with the cooperation of Asia and Pacific Museum (Warsaw). Being rooted in both literary and visual representation WP1 aims to stimulate the debate on “the relationships between representation and equality” and how these relationships can be “analysed and conceptualised in present times?” (Danielsen et.al, 2016: 2).

References:

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