

Teaching Gender Studies in Hungary

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Teaching Gender Studies in Hungary

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Enikő Bollobás, From Consciousness Raising to Intellectual Empowerment: Teaching Gender Since the Early 1980s

Gender has been a constant interest and commitment in my teaching, whether I taught American literature, American Studies, or literary and cultural theories. Spanning over 25 years, my teaching career seems to be peppered with courses devoted in some way to understanding women's culture: literary texts by, about, or for women, the women's movement, or feminist theories.

In the following, I will give a short overview of my gender related academic activities of the past 25+ years, discuss the context that bred them, and outline certain changes in emphasis and direction. As in many other socially engineered intellectual enterprises in Central Europe, the historic years of 1989-1990 served as a watershed in the teaching of gender too. Before 1990, I considered teaching and activism to be co-dependent, with teaching serving social change in a rather direct way, while from the early 1990s on, I came to believe in slower, more indirect ways that changes might be triggered in a university setting. Teaching and activism never became completely separate, though. For however theoretical, objective, or

detached one may assume one is, teaching gender will always be — especially in countries with a history of gender relations such as East-Central European/ post-communist Hungary — more than just an academic pursuit: it will affect lives whether we acknowledge it or not. Parallel with the change over the years in the teaching/activism dynamics, another change became quite prevalent: that between teaching the textual (or factual) and teaching theory. As my teaching was less geared toward political activism, teaching theory became overwhelmingly important for both the students and me, neatly balancing the necessity to convey information. I explain the growing interest in theory by two factors: first, feminist political activism has emerged in the meantime, second, women have demanded to understand not only written texts, but also pertinent social texts. Feminist literary and cultural theories offer a particular empowerment to women, which will allow them to more fully understand surrounding social processes and to become actors, agents, in their own lives.

The 1980s: ELTE, JATE

These were the pioneering years in Hungarian feminism. It was in the early 1980s that I started to smuggle into classes some supposedly subversive ideas (ideas that at the time were censored in print) about the Civil Rights Movement, affirmative action, equal opportunity, gender segregation, reproductive rights, sexual aggression, date rape, sex roles, pornography, prostitution, etc.¹ Books, too, had to be smuggled across borders. My first feminist collection of ten books were all confiscated at Budapest airport in January 1982, and then “accidentally recycled,” as the friendly police interrogator informed me later. In the early 1980s there were no slots in the curriculum for teaching gender, so one had to shrewdly find covert ways to do that. I devised two such outlets for feminist ideas: the first within the framework of undergraduate “American Culture and Society” classes, teaching American women’s history; the second being in American literature classes, focusing on women writers, women’s literary traditions and genres, and patterns in women’s writing.

In the early 1980s I taught several classes at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Budapest, with such angles. I insisted on introducing the *Seneca Falls Declaration* next to *The Declaration of Independence*, Dickinson side by side with Whitman, or Gertrude Stein next to F. Scott Fitzgerald. I recall a particularly memorable class in a culture course. We were

¹ That they were indeed considered subversive by the authorities has recently received its conclusive evidence, when in my secret police files I found that my “spreading dangerous ideas about women” was recorded by informants as early as 1981.

discussing two somewhat scandalous (at least in those times) reading assignments, “The Bitch Manifesto” and Anne Koedt’s essay on the myth of vaginal orgasm, in the presence of an unannounced inspector, an intimidated older woman colleague, sent by the suspicious department chair. As I heard later, the chair was not amused. I remember other spirited discussions too: of Emily Dickinson’s female epistemology, female utopia in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and female slave narratives. In each of these cases the woman writer appeared as an equal to her male counterparts, and students who never really had a chance to contemplate such issues before, were shocked into agreement.

Obviously, teaching is always supported by writing and research.² My gender related scholarly publications from the period seem less covert. So, for example, I openly discussed gender roles in the poetry of Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, and Anne Sexton in conference talks and essays, or the American feminist movement in a late night radio program. However, feminist ideas were only tolerated within the realm of scholarly discourse: with state censorship in full swing, dailies and weeklies with a wider circulation all refused my pieces of journalism submitted there.

I had the chance deliberately further commit myself to teaching gender after 1985 at József Attila University (JATE), Szeged (now Szeged University). Here openly feminist courses, introduced under the curricular heading of Women’s Studies, were more welcomed. In addition to the general culture and literature courses where only a few sessions were devoted to women’s issues, now I could announce and teach courses on feminism, the Women’s Movement, or women’s culture and literature. The slow thawing that permeated the political climate of the whole Soviet block had its beneficial effects in the academia too in the sense that the American Studies curriculum became more diverse and more politicized. Courses with titles like “Feminist Movement and Feminist Thought” or “Feminist Studies: Myths of Womanhood” seemed to happily satisfy this new interest in ideas on pluralism, radicalism, and the personal as political. Hungarian students’ interest in personal politics and its intellectual aspects was amplified by the presence of a growing American student body, exchange students from Oregon, with an insatiable interest in the situation of women in the Eastern European region. For years I was involved in the JATE-Oregon Exchange, giving surveys of contemporary East-Central European culture, where women’s issues were duly highlighted. Just by serendipity, the inquisitiveness of the Americans was met by an outstanding generation of Hungarian students. Those in their senior years in 1988-90 formed

² For the bibliography of my gender related publications, see my home page: www.bollobas.hu/eniko.

the nucleus of my feminist courses and study groups, as well as consciousness-raising groups with activist cells. They went out to high schools to speak about contraception and safe sex; took polls among women students on how they viewed gender segregation; raised money to take taxi cabs, which at that time were plastered with pictures of nude women, only to glue over them their own home-made “Stop pornography” stickers. In that singular historic moment we formed a regular organization. This was *Hungarian Feminists*, the first non-communist discussion group in Hungary devoted to gender. Its members were primarily university professors and students who had been affiliated with JATE. Here we formed a work-team active both intellectually and politically. “By launching the first feminist group of Hungary, we intended to merge the academic with the political, and support a women's movement in Hungary,” the *Statement* claimed.³ These were momentous times indeed, when we felt that since we had not had a Civil Rights Movement, we could fold, so to speak, the sixties into the nineties.

During these years, my gender related writing was overwhelmingly political also. I was writing manifestos and pieces of radical journalism, demanding social and political visibility for women, calling for a general raising of consciousness, attacking a Hungarian sexist who called feminists “murderers of mothers” (sending them “feminist thorns”⁴), participating in abortion debates, or speaking in political rallies. Moreover, I withstood the growing attack of ever curious journalists, who asked for interviews about women under communism, women affected by the political changes, the future of women in post-communist East-Central Europe.⁵ Finally, there were the many links in the chain of international networking from Washington to Zagreb, as well as the international meetings and conferences from London to Vienna, New York to New Delhi — one was always on the move. During the little free time I tried to do my own research and writing. Even though one really had the sense of being part of history, ultimately I paid with my relatively scarce scholarly output during these years. It

³ For the whole text of the 1989 Statement of *Hungarian Feminists*, see my home page: www.bollobas.hu/eniko.

⁴ “Feminista tövisek Fekete Gyulának” [Feminist Thorns for Gyula Fekete]. *Hitel* 13 (1989). 52-53. For the English text, see my home page.

⁵ See for example: Chikán Ágnes, “Gyerekkorom óta feminista vagyok. Bollobás Enikő szerencsés csillagzata” [I have been a feminist since I was a child: the lucky star of Enikő Bollobás]. *Nők világa* II/25 (1990. június 20). 12-13; Petra Weber, “Women: Underpaid and Overburdened.” *The Hungarian Observer* 1990/5. 28-29; Lesley Abdela, “Testing the Winds of Change: What has the Hungarian Revolution Really Done for Women?” *The Guardian* [London] March 27, 1990. 17; Slavenka Drakulić, “Glasne žene Glasnosti.” *Svijet* [Zagreb] XXXVII (1990). 10-12; Chikán Ágnes, “Feministák Szegeden. A nőnek hallgass a neve ...!?” [Feminists in Szeged. Should she hold her tongue?] *Csongrádi Hírlap* March 1990; Márók Tamás, “‘Gyanús ez a kedvesség!’ Feminista csoport Szegeden” [Suspect formalities. The Szeged feminists]. *Szegedi Egyetem* March 1990; Párhuzamos interjú: “Szép lehetsz, de okos is! A Boróka-csoportról [Parallel interview: Be pretty and sharp — on the Ginevra group]: Faragó József, “Tűzhely vagy munkahely” [Hearth or work] — Chikán Ágnes, “Szüljék, ne szüljék?” [Have a baby or not?]. *Népszabadság* January 11, 1990.

was a relief when this very strained period came to an end by my accepting a diplomatic post in Washington, D.C. After this detour in Foreign Service, I returned to academia in 1994.

1994 to the Present: ELTE and other universities

Since the mid-1990s I have been teaching a rather large number of courses related to gender. Most of them have been offered in the Department of American Studies at ELTE for English or American Studies majors, while others were taught in the University of Debrecen, as well as the University of Oregon, the University of Iowa, and Turku University, Finland.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, American Studies has gone through a fundamental paradigm change: the discipline grounded in the modern and structuralist notion of literature and history opened up towards a more pluralist concept of culture. The old grand narratives were replaced by new narratives that were de-centered (or had many centers), de-privileged, de-hegemonized, exhibiting traits of diversity and post-coloniality.⁶ This poststructuralist-postmodern-multicultural-post-hegemonic context of “New American Studies” welcomed a focused interest on women. Teaching — as well as writing⁷ — within the New Americanist framework, I have insisted on offering courses on American literature and culture, as well as literary and cultural theory that were either fully geared towards women or included representative segments on women. When I teach the literary canon in the form of survey courses or courses focusing on literary movements, schools, genres, etc., I try to equally balance the attention between male and female writers.⁸ I have also offered several courses with a more direct angle on gender: among them, “Women’s Modernism,” “American Women Writers,” and “Contemporary American Women Writers.” My teaching is permeated by my strong belief that students of American literature, especially in our region, must be acquainted with the current expanded canon, one that is multiethnic, multiracial, doubly gendered and of multiple sexualities. Teaching women’s writing is part of this mission.

Feminist theory always takes a prominent place in my literary and cultural theory classes, whether offered at the graduate or doctoral level. Contextualizing feminism within post-structuralism, postmodernism, deconstruction, and queer theory, we read, among others, some

⁶ On the paradigm shift from “Old American Studies” to “New American Studies,” see my *American Quarterly* essay: “Dangerous Liaisons: Politics and Epistemology in Post-Cold War American Studies.” *American Quarterly* 54/4 (December 2002). 563-579.

⁷ For a multicultural canon in my own writings, see in particular my *History of American Literature* recently published in Hungarian: *Az amerikai irodalom története*, Budapest, Osiris, 2005, 874 pp.

⁸ For syllabi and reading lists, see my home page: www.bollobas.hu/eniko.

basic texts of French feminism (Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva, Wittig), study anti-essentialist and performative theories of identity and subjectivity (Riviere, de Lauretis, Butler, Fuss, Sedgwick), investigate theories of desire, gaze, and the body and theories of sexuality (Cixous, Mulvey, Braidotti, Bordo, Grosz, Sedgwick), explore issues of discourse, power, and authority (Millett, Foucault, Butler, Sedgwick), and interrogate Black feminism side by side with post-colonial theories (Barbara and Valerie Smith, Morrison, Spivak, hooks, Anzaldúa, Davies).

Today I see a rapidly growing interest among students in women's issues and feminist ideas. This applies both to our male and female students (the latter taking up ca. 70% of the student body in the humanities). Having observed the sexist/feminist dynamics among our students for many years now, it seems to me that while just 10 years ago, the resident vocal sexist could survive and even be popular among some "girls," today he is not really tolerated. Students seem to have become more and more demanding and, dissatisfied with under-theorized readings of women authors, they want to acquire the methodological-theoretical tools for reading them and so to take charge of their own lives. Every year we have a growing number of students who write their M.A. Theses on gender related textual-theoretical topics. Wholly committed to living a life based on agency and self-determination, they go out into the world to become high school teachers, reporters, public servants, or college professors. They carry and spread the germinated seed that was planted.

Mrs. Kegyes née Erika Szekeres: Gender and Linguistics

Introduction

Linguistic research and education in the field of gender is getting to be more and more accepted in Hungary, too. However, one of the most important problems is the exact definition of the object of our research and education, as we still do not have a proper Hungarian expression denoting the „socially qualified and conceptualized sexes” (Buda 2001: VIII), and thus we use the English term, or its variant using the Hungarian orthography (“dzsender”). Although we have not constructed the Hungarian equivalent of gender yet, there has been a decisive change in the field of the linguistic research of gender: gender-related linguistics has come to life in Hungary, too. This is also confirmed by the publisher's reader, György Szépe, who wrote his opinion about and into the book entitled *Gender Research in*

*Applied Linguistics*⁹. (This book is going to be published within a few days.) As the research is getting stronger, we can expect that the role of gender linguistics in education is also going to gain more strength.

Bellow, I will first give an overview of the most significant events leading to the formation of gender linguistics. After describing the background of research projects, I will highlight a few of the books being used in higher education, which deal with the relationship of gender and the language use, and then I will list the university and college courses dealing with gender and language use, especially those held at the University of Miskolc.

Gender Linguistics: A Brief Survey About the History of Research

“Linguists are lagging behind”

Before the 1990s, there were hardly any research projects analyzing the differences between the vocabulary, sentence structuring, communication strategies, etc. of women and men. Until the mid-1990s, the sex of speakers was only present in Hungarian scientific investigations as a “side-issue”, and manifest gender differences were regarded only as the by-products of the research. There are only a very few early analyses that treated gender and language use as a central problem before the 1990s (e.g. Szalai 1976, Nagy et al. 1983).

“Linguists step on the gas”

Since the beginning of the 1990s, we can see changes in the approach to *gender* as a secondary, independent, non-linguistic variable of social linguistics. Based on statistical data, most of the in-depth studies established that there were differences between the language use of male and female speakers, on a phonological, lexical and syntactic level as well. In these investigations, gender became a central category of research (e.g. Huszár 1994). This was the period when the first lectures on gender and language use were delivered at Hungarian conferences on applied linguistics. Most of these were reviews of international literature related to the topic (e.g. Salánki 1997). Parallel to this, the significance of *gender* as an independent variable in social linguistics also grew in research projects that did not treat the category of *gender* as a central category. More and more studies touched upon the empirical

⁹ Mrs. Simig née Fenyő Sarolta – Mrs. Kegyes née Szekeres Erika (eds.): *Alkalmazott nyelvészeti gender-kutatások* (Gender Research in Applied Linguistics), Miskolc, Passzer Kiadó, 2006.

examination of the impacts of *gender* as an independent variable on linguistic (dependent) variables (e.g. Kontra 2003).

Since the end of the 1990s, more and more Hungarian studies appreciate the international results of feminist linguistics, connecting these with our language (e.g. Pete 2000, Huszár 2001). Parallel to the development of independent scientific investigations on our language, more and more of the works of international gender linguistics has been published in Hungarian (e.g. Replika, issue 44-45. (2001); Tannen's *Miért értjük félre egymást?* (Why Do We Misunderstand One Another), translated by A.Á. Reményi). Finally, I have to mention the role of reviews on more significant volumes of the international literature (e.g. Mrs. Kegyes née Sz. E. 2001).

“Linguists are leading the way”

Since the turn of the millennium, we have had conferences related to the issue of gender and language use each year. At the conferences organized by the Gender and Culture Research Center in 2002 and 2003, there were independent sections on linguistics, called *Language and gender* and *Language, politics and gender*¹⁰ respectively. As Katalin Pécsi wrote of these lectures: „linguists have again proved that they are leading the way in gender-related research” (www.nextwave.hu/esztertaska). Although there was no separate section on linguistics at the 2004 conference, almost each of the presentations¹¹ brought up linguistic questions related to gender.

I must mention the meeting of the working committee of the Hungarian Association of Applied Linguists and Teachers of Foreign Languages held on 6th December 2004. Its title was *Gender Studies – in Hungarian*.¹² At this meeting, Hungarian gender linguistics really won its raison d'être. The dispute begun at this meeting was continued at the roundtable discussion entitled *Genders and Languages*¹³, organized at the XV. Conference of the HAALTFL in Miskolc. This was followed by the first national thematic “gender-conference” held in Szeged¹⁴, on *Women's Position in Hungarian Language Use*¹⁵.

¹⁰ Abstracts of the presentations: <http://gender.bkae.hu/genderkonf2003.php>

¹¹ Abstracts of the presentations: <http://gender.uni-corvinus.hu/genderkonf2004.php>

¹² Its program can be found at <http://www.manye.pte.hu/mhirlev04>

¹³ The roundtable discussion was published in Mrs. Kegyes née Sz. E. and Mrs. Simig née F. S. (eds.), 125-148.

¹⁴ For an account on the conference see Mrs. Kegyes née Sz. E., in: *Modern nyelvoktatás* (Modern Language Teaching), XI/4. (December 2005) 91-93.

¹⁵ The themes of the conference can be found at <http://www.jgytf.u-szeged.hu/~sandor/genderkonf.htm>

These conferences reflected on the linguistic aspects of gender linguistics from the point of view of researchers, and they only touched upon questions related to the teaching of disciplines in the field of gender linguistics indirectly. The reason of this is that Hungarian gender linguists had to unite first in order to create the necessary conditions for the teaching of subjects related to gender linguistics. The roundtable discussion held at the Center for the Study of Gender and Equal Opportunities at the University of Miskolc¹⁶ on 10th October 2005 already focused on a methodological question related to the education of gender. The discussion showed that the linguistic study and education of gender has a central role in the MA level training planned at the university, as none of the disciplines dealing with gender can evade the questions related to the linguistic embeddedness of gender.

The place and topics of gender linguistics in Hungarian coursebooks

The coursebooks for university and college students define the place of the question of gender and language use as belonging to the field of social linguistics. The lecture notes edited by Lengyel et al. (1998) (*Social Linguistics*) deal with introducing the characteristics of women's and men's language use in the 4th chapter ("Differences in language use arising from biological factors"). According to this coursebook, biological sex is a source of differences in language use (cf. p. 41.), and social factors are less dominant. Kiss also deals with gender and language use in his *Társadalom és nyelvhasználat* ("Society and Language Use", 1995). However, he stresses the crucial significance of socialization as opposed to biological givens. He connects the differences between the language use of women and men with theories of dominance and difference. He distinguishes the differences related to gender (linguistic elements used only by male or only by female speakers) from gender-preferential differences (tendentious divergences in the usage of the same elements).

The above-mentioned coursebooks are used most of all in the following departments: Hungarian language and literature (and teacher training), applied linguistics, communication (taught on both college and university level), and occasionally departments of foreign languages. The books written by Hungarian authors are supplemented by the translations of

¹⁶ The transcript of the discussion can be found at <http://www.uni-miskolc.hu/bolgender/20051010.htm>

the most important international works, which also contain one or more chapters on gender and language use (e.g. Wardhaugh (1995) Chapter 13, Griffin (2001) Chapters 32-34).

The place and topics of gender linguistics in Hungarian university/college education¹⁷

Gender and language use can appear in the themes of certain courses in three ways. Most often, lecturers use the technique of *smuggling in* topics related to this field of studies. In this case, a lecturer does not hold a course on gender and language use, but touches upon this subject when lecturing on something else. In departments of Hungarian linguistics, this is usually social linguistics or communication theory. At the Department of Hungarian Linguistics of the College of Nyíregyháza, questions of gender and language use come up at a seminar entitled *Everyday language and dialects*. Students of English or German may get to know the characteristic features of men's and women's language use in the same way. At the University of Veszprém, for example, there is program called applied social linguistics, in which they talk about "the linguistic expressions of gender differences." Students of German at the University of Miskolc can meet the concept of *genderlect* during a course on social linguistics. A common characteristic of these courses is that they view the questions related to language use, that is, men's and women's language use, too, in a social context, stressing that sensitivity towards the social judgment of linguistic variables is a competence that can be expected from future teachers of both Hungarian and foreign languages.

Another way of teaching about gender and language use is to start a course on this subject. Thus the topic is not integrated into a wider theme, but students can learn about it throughout a semester. At the Department of German Studies of the University of Miskolc, students can chose a special seminar on *Feminist linguistics*, and learn about the major trends of German feminist linguistics. In rare cases, students of other departments than Hungarian and foreign languages also have the chance to learn about gender and language use. At the University of Miskolc, students of philosophy can attend a seminar entitled *Gender and Language Use*, held by Judit Hell. This course pays special attention to the philosophical embeddedness of the results of linguistics.

¹⁷ In this brief survey, I am outlining the situation of gender linguistics in our system of higher education, and I will not mention each and every instance: I am only illustrating my experiences with a few examples.

There are only a very few departments in which students must attend a course on gender linguistics. One of these is a lecture students of applied linguistics must attend at the University of Miskolc. This one semester long course (*Gender and Language Use*, held by Judit Hell) gives a chance for students to study gender-related questions systematically in several disciplines of applied linguistics (e.g. social and psychological linguistics). The aim of the course is to teach students about the connections between gender identity and language use. There are more courses on gender and language use in departments of communication theory and media studies (e.g. English language courses at the Budapest College of Communication, held by Nóra Schleicher; courses held by Margit Feinschmidt in Department of Communication at the University of Pécs).

In the 2006 course catalogue of the German Department at the University of Miskolc, there is a special, optional training module entitled *Introduction into Gender Studies*. This is a unique feature of the BA training in German Studies. The elements of the module were developed by Tünde Paksy and myself. Students can learn about gender studies and gain 15 credits throughout 4 semesters. The module offers comprehensive knowledge on gender as a category of linguistics, literary studies, as well as the study of history and culture. It will consist of various lectures, seminars and projects built upon one another. The first element is an interdisciplinary overview, followed by gender-related research in literature and linguistics, a lecture and seminar on research methodologies. After the theoretical introduction, students will specialize in representations of gender in language and literature in the framework of projects, through analyzing and interpreting literary and other texts. The module finishes with a seminar on reading and analyzing studies.

In our opinion, this optional module will be a good basis and a good prerequisite for the MA level training entitled *Gender Studies and Equal Opportunities* we are planning to introduce at the University of Miskolc. The study of gender and language use will play a central role in this, as after joining the European Union we have become involved in the concept of gender mainstreaming, and we have to meet the requirements of gender monitoring. We need trained professionals who have a secure knowledge about the communication strategies of men and women, recognize the harmful consequences of sexism in language, and also notice the explicitly or implicitly manifested gender identities in language use, and can deal with these appropriately.

Considering this, the teaching of the different disciplines of gender linguistics is definitely a relevant aim. Right now, we are working on the structure and contents of these subjects. The themes Ágnes Huszár developed for the PhD course of the Linguistics Doctoral Program of the University of Pécs, at which the teaching of gender and language use has been going on successfully for several years, is of great help for us. Many of us have attended this course, and we pass on the knowledge we gained there when we hold our own classes. However, we have also gained lots of experience through “smuggling in” topics related to gender and language into the themes of more general courses, or through holding seminars.

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Katalin Koncz, The history, mission and work of the Women's Studies Center

The Women's Studies Center (WSC) was formed in October 1992 at the Corvinus University (the former University of Economics), with the support of its rector, the late Rudolf Andorka. *It was the first women's studies institution in Hungary.*¹⁸ Its formation was helped by the European Network for Women's Studies (ENWS), too, of which I was and am a board member and Hungarian representative. This is why we chose this *hybrid name* (Women's Studies Központ). I wanted to express my gratitude for the financial and moral support of the ENWS, I wanted to show that we follow the spirit of similar organizations working in the educational institutions of the more developed market economies, but I also wanted to express that this was a Hungarian initiative.

I got to know the *international results of women's studies* while working with the ENWS, and I also realized how *backward we were in Hungary*. I felt an urgent need for change. In the more developed European countries, women's studies departments are integral parts of the educational and research programs of universities. There are no institutions of higher education that do not have such departments. However, they did not exist in Hungary – and there are too few of them even today. There are very few researches concerning women's social status, and even those that exist are fragmented; policy makers and the general public

¹⁸ Koncz, Katalin (1993): Hungary: First Women's Studies Center. WIN NEWS, 19/1. p. 67.

alike are insensitive to the requirement of equal opportunities for both sexes. The lack of this approach and practice has *various harmful consequences*, both on the social and the personal level: this can be seen in the wasting of human resources, the disturbances of communication and socialization, partnership problems, and the presence of other burning social problems in the Hungarian society.

Establishing the Women's Studies Center was an important step in terms of both the country and the University.¹⁹ It contributed to adopting *European norms*, and created an organizational and intellectual basis on which *EU requirements* could be built. *Its mission is to introduce women's perspectives into the fields of education, research and, in the long run, into the everyday way of thinking.* The three strategic pillars of its activities are *education, research and networking / exchange of information.* To this day, its operation can be divided into *three periods: the heroic age, the age of building and the age of vegetating.* Its history also demonstrates that institutional support, especially the support of the head of an institution has a crucial significance in the work and development of an organization. Rudolf Andorka, the late Rector of the University, helped the work of the Women's Studies Center. He understood that women's studies were important to the university: that it was valuable. He supported the idea that students should learn about *women's and men's gender roles*, their past and present situations and future perspectives using an *interdisciplinary approach.* He also published studies on this subject. He thought that one of the pillars of democratic societies was teaching about gender in the educational system, so that female and male students could see the problems of social inequalities, and think about these.

The Heroic Age (1992-1995)

In the heroic age, the WSC got the financial and organizational support other departments usually get, and it was also judged like other departments. The University helped it build its infrastructure, and topics examining women's social position were included in the curricula, as optional subjects. The *ENWS* contributed to building its international connections and to

¹⁹ Koncz, Katalin (1995): "Women's Studies oktatása a Budapesti Közgazdaságtudományi Egyetemen. Új utak a közgazdasági, üzleti és társadalomtudományi képzésben." (Teaching Women's Studies at the University of Economics in Budapest: New Ways in the Economic, Business and Social Sciences Trainings") Jubileumi Konferencia (Conference), Budapest, 28-30 September 1995.

create the basis of its library. The work of the WSC was helped by an administrator, and we had an employee (*Erzsébet Tamási*) who organized programs.

a) During this time, the WSC *dealt with education extensively*. Regular and graduate students could choose among interdisciplinary (WS) and special women's subjects.²⁰ The center organized local and international *train-the-trainer programs* to attain "assertive behavior".²¹ It offered *free English classes for woman employees of the university*, held by volunteers of the Peace Corps. It held trainings financed by companies to develop the skills of woman leaders and entrepreneurs.²² It spread *the EU's requirements concerning equal opportunities* in various forms of education. I also dealt and still deal with questions of equal opportunities and the special social position of women when I teach other subjects.²³

b) An educational institution of high standard cannot operate without scientific research and connections with the international scientific community. The most significant results of the *research, mentoring and informational activities* of the WSC were the following: it took part in international research projects, organized conferences, and organized a *research group of students*. It compiled a list of local researchers, and informed them about the possibilities of joining the international scientific community through this "informal network". It informed the „WISE News” about what was going on in Hungary in the field of “women's studies”, and thus formed new international alliances.

As a board member and Hungarian representative of the most important European international organizations²⁴ and as one of the editors of a significant journal²⁵, I organized the participation of researchers in international conferences²⁶ and projects. We participated in

²⁰ „The secret and costs of women's success”, „The situation of women and men in the economy and the family”, „Conflict management for women”

²¹ Assisted by the Crainford Training Group.

²² A training for woman leaders (held two times a year): “Developing our personal efficiency”.

²³ „Human resources management”, „Career management”, „Interpersonal communication”, „Conflict resolution”.

²⁴ European Network on Women's Studies (ENWS), Women International Studies of Europe (WISE).

²⁵ European Journal on Women's Studies

²⁶ “Building a Europe without Frontiers: The Role of Women.” Athens, 27-30 November 1991; “Establishing Gender Studies in Central- and Eastern European Countries.” Wassenaar, 5-8 November 1992; “Gender Studies towards the Year 2000” Athens, 2-5 June 1993; “Equality and partnership towards Higher Education, Employment/Entrepreneurship and Environmental Management in Central and Eastern European Countries. Future strategic

several large-scale international research projects.²⁷ I also organized a preparatory meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing) in the Netherlands, with ten Hungarian participants (assisted by the European Network on Women's Studies). I picked the group of experts who wrote the government's report for the World Conference: the report was based on the material prepared by them.²⁸

The WSC maintained a close connection with students: it worked with a *group of student researchers*. They participated in international conferences, contributed to international research projects (making surveys, processing data, editing materials), and wrote successful papers delivered at students' conferences. We edited some of these, and published a volume of them.²⁹

The age of building (1996-2000)

During this time, the University stopped funding the WSC, without any reason or explanation. It was declared a self-financing unit. We had to begin to fight against financial difficulties. Our expenses were covered by the support of a few companies³⁰ and the University's foundation, some of the income of our graduate training program, and donations coming from the Science for Women Foundation. We could not employ an administrator any more. Since then, I myself have been maintaining the organization, as the head of the WSC, with a few long-term volunteers (*Zsuzsa Szendrő, Erzsébet Tamási*) and occasional helpers. We also take part in international projects. These circumstances made it clear that we would have difficulties, even at the time when the institution was being built.

goals and objectives." Hotel de Buunderkamp, Wolfheze, The Netherlands, 1-3 September 1994; The conference was attended by Irén Bor, Ildikó Hrubos, Erzsébet Kaponyi, Mrs. Tibor Pongrácz and Júlia Szalai.

²⁷ Barbara J. Nelson, Najma Chowdhury (Ed. 1994) *Women and Politics Worldwide*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London. p. 818.; Barbara Lobodzinska (1995): *Family, Women, and Employment in Central-Eastern Europe*. Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut London. p. 315.

²⁸ Koncz, Katalin (1994): *Nők társadalmi helyzete Magyarországon. Összefoglaló tanulmány a Humánpolitikai Kabinet részére.* (The Social Situation of Women in Hungary: Report for the Cabinet on Human Politics") Budapest, February 1994. (Manuscript.) (The writers of background materials: Mária Frey, Ildikó Hrubos, Katalin Koncz, Júlia Venyige, Beáta Nagy, Mrs. Tibor Pongrácz.)

²⁹ Koncz, Katalin – Erzsébet Tamási (eds.) (1995): *Felnőttek.* ("Adults.") Women's Studies Center, University of Economics, Budapest

³⁰ Magyar Telecom, BKV, Magyar Villamosművek

When the number of optional subjects was restricted, we began to focus on postgradual education, trainings abroad, and on trainings lasting for a few days. Regular students could get help from the WSC when writing papers. We took part in the board and education program of the “Women’s Academy” organized by the Hungarian Association of Women. We organized a training for woman leaders, assisted by the European Network for Women’s Studies (ENWS) in the Netherlands.³¹

Our most important task in this period was organizing trainings in order to help *underprivileged groups* (women, the Roma, Roma women). We got funding from the heads of the University’s Leadership Training Institute.³² We organized ten trainings for *woman entrepreneurs, Roma woman entrepreneurs and Roma entrepreneurs within the framework of the Management Training Cooperation in Hungary Program*.³³ With the assistance of Blanka Kozma, president of the Association of Roma Women in Public Life, we organized a training program for Roma students who finished secondary school but did not go to higher education: this training gave them a specialist qualification. In order to improve the chances of young Roma students, we achieved that they could attend preparatory courses at different universities for free, with the co-operation of mayors’ offices.

The first International Women’s University, organized in 2000 in Hannover (apropos the World’s Fair) intended to broaden the horizon of education. I took part in organizing it, shaping its program, and teaching in it as a representative of the WSC.³⁴ We published some

³¹ Koncz, Katalin (1999): Women’s Studies Centre at Budapest University of Economics. WIN NEWS, 25/3. p. 71.

³² Balázs Hámori and György Bógel

³³ With the University’s Leadership Training Institute, the Indiana University School of Business, the Roma Women in Public Life and its leader, Blanka Kozma. The training program of the MATCH financed by the USAID. Conference on “Women Mean Business: A Global Without Borders Exchange.” Chicago, 1-2 June 1999. Koncz, Katalin (2001): MATCH: Management training co-operation in Hungary. WIN News, Vol. 27. no. 2. pp. 83-84.

³⁴ The Hungarian participants were Éva Nagy and Carmen Svasztics. Readings: Koncz, Katalin (2000): Transformation from a gender (women’s) perspective in Hungary. Hannover. <http://www.work.uni-hannover.de>; Koncz, Katalin (2000): The social welfare system in Hungary. Hannover. <http://www.work.uni-hannover.de>

of the readings we used there in a book.³⁵ We took part in an education program (COMET program) organized by the Active Learning Centre at the Caledonian University of Glasgow and the Hungarian Women's Association, which aimed at familiarizing governmental organizations, trade unions and woman representatives of NGOs with the equal opportunities policies of the European Union. We took part in preparing the Training for Women in Public Life organized and financed by the Westminster Foundation; I was responsible for the communication module.

Our research on discrimination and how it can be restricted aimed at creating the foundation of training programs about equal opportunities. We examined how underprivileged groups were supported in the US, with Blanka Kozma's contribution, and we published our results in a journal.³⁶ We wrote studies for the government's report on the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)³⁷. In order to distribute knowledge about the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, we edited a series of publications in the *Társadalmi Szemle* (Social Review).³⁸

Our fight for survival, 2001-

The WSC was *gradually ousted from the regular university education*. Its alternative subjects disappeared. Although the Bologna Process declares that "subjects promoting equal opportunities" should be part of the basic curricula, the leadership of the University did not support the proposal to launch such a subject. I prepared the syllabus of a two semester

³⁵ The Gender-specific Division of Labor in Hungary Since the Regime Change. In: Regina Becker-Schmidt (ed.) (2002): *Gender and Work in Transition. Globalization in Western, Central and Eastern Europe*. Leske + Budrich, Opladen 2002.

³⁶ Koncz, Katalin – Blanka Kozma (1999): *Nők és kisebbségi csoportok megkülönböztetett támogatása az Egyesült Államokban: a tapasztalatok magyarországi hasznosításának lehetőségei*. ("Special Support for Women and Minority Groups in the United States: Possibilities of Using the Experiences in Hungary") *Munkaügyi Szemle*, Vol. XLIII. 1999/7-8. pp. 52-58.

³⁷ Koncz, Katalin (2000): *Nők a munkaerő-piacon a rendszerváltást követő időszakban az európai uniós törekvések fényében*. ("Women on the Labor Market after the Regime Change, in the Light of European Efforts") January 2000. *Nők a politikai hatalomban* ("Women in Political Positions") January 2000. Written for the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs, to be used in the CEDAW report. In: Hungary's IV. and V. government report written for the UN on the CEDAW. March 2000.

³⁸ *Társadalmi Szemle* (Social Review), 1996-1997. Contributors: Mária Frey, Ildikó Hrubos, Katalin Koncz.

special training on equal opportunities, which was announced by the University's Institute of Further Education in Economics in 2005. However, since we did not get any financial support, we got too few applications, so we could not start the training program. The Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities does not intend to finance the education. The accreditation of the "Equal opportunities further education program" I organized at the University's Institute of Further Education in Economics has not ended yet. This means that the educational activities of the WSC will only consist of *trainings*.

The researches we are working on are international projects.³⁹ We organized a large-scale international conference with the European region of the International Association for Feminist Economists (IAFEE-Europe⁴⁰) at the Corvinus University on 21st and 22nd January, 2005.⁴¹

The infrastructural conditions of the WSC have been deteriorating. The Department of Human Resources (where I teach) refused to host and cooperate with the WSC from the very beginning. Each new head of the department has told that the activities of the WSC did not match the department's profile, even though the department's employees regularly publish on subjects taken up by the WSC. The WSC is not a strong lobbyist: it is poorly financed, and the heads of the university do not support its existence.⁴² These make its positions even weaker. During the restructuring of the university, the leadership did not manage to find a proper position for the Center: more than one year has passed, and the WSC still does not have a clear place in the structure of the university. It is difficult or impossible to stop this process of deterioration. The WSC is hovering between two departments.

Conclusions

Theoretically, our membership of the EU and the Bologna Process create favorable conditions for the institutions promoting equal opportunities. However, this did not happen in the

³⁹ "A nők munkaerő-piaci helyzete" (Women's Situation in the Labor Market). (International research cooperation organized by the Women's Office of the City of Vienna and Europaforum Wien.) "A nők részvétele a politikai döntéshozatali folyamatokban" (Women's participation in political decision-making, Polish-Hungarian comparative analysis, with Renata Simienska, Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw), "Foglalkozási szegregáció a munkaerő-piacon" (Segregation in the labor market, German-Hungarian comparative analysis, with Ulrike Teubner, College of Damstadt).

⁴⁰ I am its board member and Hungarian representative.

⁴¹ Gender in the Transition and the EU Enlargement Process in Central and Eastern European Countries

⁴² The superior authority above WSC did not pay the expenses the Center was due to get for more than a year.

Hungarian economic, social and cultural fields, and it takes a long time until we can create the macro- and micro-climate characterizing the developed market economies in this respect.

To sum up the experiences of more than 13 years of the Women's Studies center: the difficulties of its operation and its lack of support have social, institutional and individual reasons. On a social level, the root of problems is that decision makers do not think that the questions of the equal opportunities of women and men are priorities. The expectations of the EU in this respect are only formal requirements, no one expects them to be fulfilled, and even gross encroachments are not sanctioned.

The effectiveness of the work of organizations working on women's issues is also limited by the fact that there are no objective measures to be employed in evaluating their activities (which could be the EU's system of requirements in our case), and there is no human or ethical control either on the social or on an institutional level. Given the lack of this control, the leaders can make very subjective decisions: recognition and support depend on their individual attitudes, commitments, or emotions towards those who work in a given field. However, social control would not help in itself, as today's social views lack the claims to enforce equal opportunities. Public opinion is not sensitive to equal opportunities, or the need to set limits to discrimination. My experience is that even highly qualified leaders do not think much about the issue of equal opportunities, and they often do not even understand what discrimination is.

Among these circumstances, organizations working for the equality of women can only be successful if they are supported by a good lobbyist institution that also undertakes representing their issues. However, there are not many of these institutions. After the regime change, there is a *stronger competition for the scant financial resources and for students than before*. The existing organizations try to protect what they have. Since the professors can lose their jobs if they do not hold the necessary number of classes, the competition for students and classes is getting ever stronger. The academics have an interest in collecting ever more classes, independent of the needs of the labor market and the students' demands. They try to oust one another. The competition favors the stronger departments, and not new organizations and freshly started subjects.

New organizations, like the ones dealing with “women’s issues” have to face financial difficulties. To get the necessary financial means they have to hold good positions in the power structure, and have a social capital. These organizations can only be maintained *if an institution finances their work*, or if they have firm sponsors. They cannot rely on applications alone: applications are often too bureaucratic, it is difficult to meet their criteria, their payment may be delayed, and their evaluation is often subjective.

There are other factors, too, that impede the survival of organizations working on women’s issues: *the lack of women’s advocacy, the lack of cooperation between women’s groups, rivalry and personal conflicts*. Our feminist groups do not have dialogues. We cannot stand others’ opinions. We do not support one another. Gently speaking: we do not like each other. If an organization that works as effectively as the WSC is weakened, impeded or put an end to in countries with developed market economies, several organizations begin to lobby in order to save the organization, as they work closely together. There is lobbying in Hungary, too: however, it is not along values but personal networks. Organizations and individuals working for equal opportunities in Hungary are not protected by an advocacy groups’ net based on common values. We do not contribute to the creation of such a system of protection, so any organization might fall out. Organizational mechanisms ruled by interpersonal relationships do not provide for lasting security in an ever changing political system. For this reason, it is a joint interest of groups working on women’s issues to strengthen the cooperation between these organizations.

Neményi Mária, Women’s Issues – Minority Issues

For me, women’s issues were always minority issues. When I began to teach (late, with numerous breaks, and not in one institute), originally as a social psychologist, I did not know feminism yet, but I often used examples referring to women’s social roles when I wanted to demonstrate something about the relationship of majorities and minorities. I could easily do that, especially as I used to teach graduate students working in social institutions (when the education of social politics started in Hungary, in the end of the 1980s), and most of them were women: thus myself as a teacher and my students were in harmony, and they could easily understand the situation of minorities through their own experiences. Actually, I had thought about the strange proportion of women and men in professional circles even earlier. When I attended a conference, either here or abroad, as a psychologist, and especially if the

conference was about an abstract notion, like social representations, the perception of distributive justice, or the phenomenon of conversion, the majority of the participants were men. However, if I met other sociologists while I was working as a researcher, and especially if my theme was related to the sociology of the family, my colleagues were almost all women – except for a few cranks from Scandinavia. I could easily see the hierarchy of disciplines and experts, and that gender division and systems of hierarchy play a significant role not only in our everyday lives, in the public life, or in the media influencing both public life and discourses, but in the realm of sciences, and even in the hierarchy of scientific disciplines, too. I could see, and I can see this to this day, that those disciplines which are deemed more masculine and their highly respected male professionals are more prestigious, get more funding and more attention from the media than the researchers of fields that are considered feminine. However, the gendered polarization of scientific disciplines is an intellectual question that I would hardly have been able to understand without getting to know feminist theory.

As it can be seen from this short and personal introduction, my career as a researcher and an academic lecturer (which is related to my researches, and has always been secondary compared to these) has had two distinct phases: that of the time before I got to know about feminism, and after. During the years after the regime change, like many other researchers of my generation working in the field of the sociology of the family (and let me emphasize: these were woman researchers), I had to face new questions coming from the second wave of feminist scientists and political activists of the West, which we might have been qualified for answering as professionals, but we had not known much about the points of view of these questions previously: they had not belonged to our professional repertoire. In order to be able to answer really simple questions (like how women were affected by the regime change; what their experiences were related to losing their former positions, if at all they had had such positions, in the labor market or in politics; or the somewhat more complex question of what the results of the emancipatory ideology of state socialism were in the field of gender roles; to what extent the dual-earner family model, which had become general by the end of the 1980s, had been integrated into the identities of men and women, etc.), we had to focus on women, instead of applying the gender-blind, neutral approach of social sciences. (As I would say today, we focused on women and men, or on gender, as this term had taken root by now in Hungarian, too, but then I would falsify the terminology we used then. During the early 1990s, we talked about women's studies and research. Those of my colleagues who wanted to

introduce this field into our colleges and universities began to hold courses in women's studies. The journal *Info-Társadalomtudomány* ("Info-SocialSciences"), a publication of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences devoted a whole issues to the subject of women's studies in 1995⁴³, and with this, both the name of the discipline and the branch of study itself entered the higher regions of the Hungarian scientific life, soon to be followed and substituted by other, more fashionable disciplines. But the Hungarian representatives of women's studies did not give in: they transgressed the restricting boundaries of the name, and occupied new positions under the name of „gender studies.”)

In the early 1990s, influenced by some explicitly feminist Western researchers, I began to try and answer the above questions. I saw that the Hungarian sociologists, even the new researchers who were engaged in the new field of women's studies, tended to rigidly separate the treatment of women's roles within and outside the family. More and more studies discussed women's position in the labor market, women's education, women's participation in public life, the differences between the opportunities of women and men, comparing the times between and after the regime change. Research in the field of the sociology of the family was probably even more extensive and nuanced: researchers wrote about women's roles within the family, their reproductive disposition and strategies, and the power relations of men and women within families. However, there were very few of these that studied women's course of life considering both macro- and micro-social influences, on an individual level, but in a way that can be generalized. Thinking in terms of this, I began to work on research projects (mostly using qualitative methods of social psychology) that aimed at shedding light on the contents of women's roles from women's own points of view. This is how I started a research that analyzed the life courses of two generations of women, based on interviews. The first generation in the study was my generation: women born right after 1945, who went to school during the early era of state socialism, entered the labor market at the mature era of socialism, and were socialized by parents who had become adults before the war. The second generation – the same age as my daughters – was represented by women who had been socialized by the former age group: they were in their early 20s when they were interviewed. Their childhood fell on the last era of socialism, which was characterized by a sense of emergency, and was more and more plural (both economically and socially), defined by a less and less homogenous ideology. The regime change took place when they were

⁴³ Mária Neményi: "A biológia – sors?" ("Biology: Is it our destiny?") *Info-Társadalomtudomány*, 32., May 1995. MTA Könyvtára and MTA VITA Alapítvány, pp. 7-12.

adolescents choosing their professions: so they had to reevaluate the strategies and ideologies passed on to them by their parents' generation, and face a new and unknown situation. My results reinforced that gender roles were social constructions built of the role models for women and men which are offered by a given society, and the social representations, expectations, rules, institutions and practices based on these, of course not independent of the process of socialization, which is built upon the biological sex, but is defined by social factors.

I was helped to a great extent by the readings I found when I traveled to the US and could visit the splendid libraries there. Besides reading the classic studies of feminism, I endeavored to get to know the feminist research and studies in my fields: psychology and psychoanalysis, anthropology and sociology. It was a book by Iris Marion Young⁴⁴ that made the biggest impact on my thinking, as it shed light on something of which I had had dim notions. She drew attention to the paradox that when we think in the ruling Western liberal universalist way and assume that we are enlightened and do not want to acknowledge the existing differences, be they originating in gender, ethnicity, bodily or mental state, or sexual orientation, we ourselves take part in oppressing differences. When we state that it is enough to apply the same measures for everyone, we do not recognize that in fact we are projecting the point of view of the privileged groups onto other groups that have different traditions and identification strategies. Young showed that the social movements of the late 1960s, feminism, black and gay liberation came about just because the traditional liberal thinking, adopting the categorization of social and historical sciences (categories based on class, nationality, religion, etc.) was unable to acknowledge the existence of group identities based exactly on the body, color, or sexual orientation. These are the characteristics the bearers of which seem to be "queer, dreadful, marked" bodies, and the oppression of these groups has the same motives. The "five faces of oppression" defined by Young, that is, exploitation, marginalization, the exclusion from power, cultural imperialism and violence equally affect these groups marked by and through their bodies. Thus the members of these groups are excluded from the experiences of the dominant groups, they become the subjects of stereotypes, and the majority regards them as deviants. The members of the belittled and subordinated groups tend to internalize the images the majority creates of them, they begin to feel the aversion and the distance the majority feels towards them, and their threatened, often

⁴⁴ Iris Marion Young: *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1990

negative identities may lead to passively accepting their subordinated position. Her arguments, supplemented by Julia Kristeva's⁴⁵ metaphor (according to which women are "imprisoned in their bodies", and according to her very graphic example about the scaled nature of bodies they can only assume a lower position than white European men, who take the peak if the imaginary scale, just like their weak, bodily or mentally ill or colored fellow sufferers, or those whose sexuality differs from that of the majority) contributed to directing my attention at people whose bodies are marked in two ways: the Roma women in Hungary.

In the local studies on sociology / social psychology, the researchers had not linked questions of *ethnicity* and *gender*, even though "race", "class" and "gender" had become the ruling clichés of the critical discourse by the 1990s. Numerous representatives of the mostly Western feminist social sciences try to shed new light on questions like why individuals and groups "marked by their bodies" were discriminated against, what the universal or particular reasons are of the "otherness" of certain skin colors, a sex, or different cultural practices, and the devaluing, stereotyping and discrimination of the people regarded as "the others". I think that my research and the volume based on it called *Roma Mothers and the Health System*⁴⁶ already mirrored my knowledge in this field, and my clarified thinking about national and ethnic issues.

As I mentioned in the introduction, teaching was only a secondary field for me: I never belonged to any university or department. Since the mid-1980s, I have been teaching social psychology and sometimes the sociology of the family as a guest lecturer to students of economy, and graduate students of sociology or social politics. I was also asked to hold courses later, after the "feminist" turn in the mid-1990s, perhaps because of my results in researching feminist trends and various topics offered by feminism. In these courses, I could allow myself to define themes related to my actual work, interests and knowledge. This is how I held classes on *The Sociology of the Sexes: Men and Women in the Society* at the Janus Pannonius University in Pécs, between 1994 and 1996; on *The Radical Feminist Critiques of the Family* at the Eötvös Loránd University, for students of psychology, in 1996; a lecture series called *The Social Psychology of Minorities* at the university of Pécs, within the framework of the so-called European studies, attended by students of Romology; and finally a

⁴⁵ Toril Moi, ed.: *The Kristeva Reader*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986

⁴⁶ Mária Neményi: *Cigány anyák az egészségügyben* ("Roma Mothers and the Health System"), NEKH, Budapest, 1998

series of lectures entitled *Gender and Ethnic Discrimination* at the Special College of Social Theory of the University of Economics in 1999. I think of the latter as a very fruitful semester because I managed to infect the students with my enthusiasm for the work of Iris Marion Young, and they translated and published a decisive part of the book I mentioned, entitled *The Five Faces of Oppression*.

I think I should talk about why I remained only a distant viewer of my colleagues' fight for the existence of gender-related studies, why I did not take part in forming new departments, specialization courses and curricula. I could simply argue that I was already in my forties and fifties, and it would have been late for me to start a new career, whereas as a researcher, I had just got ripe enough to apply for resources to the research of questions that were important for me. Or I could also say that in our climate, which is often hostile or just ironic towards feminism, none of our universities offered me a teaching position. But I am more honest, and I confess that I have always been ambivalent about the discipline first called women's studies and then gender studies. I have always been suspicious when my colleagues (and often myself, too), who were well-versed in one discipline but were bungling in others, necessarily, strayed into different fields and tried to illustrate the workings of patriarchy using examples from linguistics through anthropology to medicine – examples and arguments they only knew superficially. I think that the study of gender is not *one* discipline, but rather an approach, a commitment (like “gender mainstreaming”, which has become fashionable in Hungarian women's politics recently), which should pervade every single branch of studies related to human beings and society. Both before and after the Bologna Process, I think it is important that the knowledge about gender, the attention directed at gender should be present in the teaching of history, psychology, literature, or any other subject, so the language of teaching might never become defined by the language of men again. And I wouldn't mind if this new way of thinking was represented not only in the contents of subjects, but in the composition of the teachers, too: if men and women had equal chances in shaping the field of higher education.

Andrea Pető, Judith Szapor, From the teaching of a “discriminative” women's history to that of gender studies in Hungary

In November 2003 fourteen women academics, all members of the Hungarian Historical Association (HHA), * signed the founding charter for a section of Women's and Gender History, only to be voted down by the general assembly of the Association. A year and a half later the new section was finally incorporated, with the understanding that it should not expect any financial or organizational support from the HHA.⁴⁷

This episode is characteristic of the state of women's and gender history in Hungary today: it demonstrates the infrastructural vacuum and institutional resistance against which a few committed practitioners of women's and gender history have been struggling to establish a foothold.⁴⁸ To attribute this lamentable situation to patriarchal power structures in academia would not do justice to the complex origins and motives of this resistance; here we can highlight only a few of them.

Mainstream Hungarian historiography had long been known for its resistance to theory in general and reluctance to break with the positivist tradition in particular. From at least the late 19th century, representatives of the historical profession had been tied to the political leadership of the day to a degree unthinkable for Western academics. The tradition of anti-democratic political leaders and their ideologies willingly supported by leading historians continued after 1945, with the relationship between power and academia becoming even cosier, and the uses of history harnessed more directly than ever before. Shortly after 1945, a complete overhaul of academic infrastructure resulted in Soviet-style institutes, staffed with the best and brightest but judged politically unreliable to teach on the one hand, and university personnel and curriculum tightly controlled on the other, hence the teaching of history completely divorced from its research.⁴⁹ Yet for all its revolutionary zeal, when it came to women as subjects of history, the new, Marxist historiography displayed a remarkable continuity with the old, nationalistic historiography. Their respective pantheon of eminent women almost completely overlapped, from the heroines of the centuries of battles for independence to the writers and educators of the Hungarian Enlightenment and progressive national revival. To these were added the heroines of progressive causes of the recent past

* An earlier, shorter, version of this article, Andrea Pető, Andrea and Judith Szapor, „The State of Women's and Gender History in Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungary” is forthcoming in *Journal of Women's History* 2006. 3.

¹ One woman member considered the proposal “discriminatory.” *Századok*, 2004/ 4, p. 962.

⁴⁸ See recent comparative historical survey on European situation by Ilaria Porciani, Mary O'Dowd, „History Women” in *Storie della Storiografia* 46 (2004) pp. 3-34.

² György Péteri, *Academia and State Socialism: Essays on the Political History of Academic Life in Post-1945 Hungary and Eastern Europe*. East European Monographs (Boulder, Colo: 1998).

with a few pioneers of women's emancipation thrown in for good measure. In keeping with this curious continuity, the new, Marxist, version of Hungarian historiography buried even deeper the memory of the bourgeois women's rights movement of the early 1900s than the pre-war Horthy regime. After all, was not "the women question" superseded and solved, once and for all, by the Marxist-Leninist state and "statist feminism," and bourgeois feminism, along with the liberal notion of women's rights, condemned to the dustbin of history?

Following the deep freeze of the Stalinist years, from the late 1970s the historical profession had experienced a gradual renewal while the university curriculum kept lagging behind. During this period, historical research benefited from a relative liberalization of academia, marked by increased tolerance for East-West academic relations, the "rehabilitation" of previously banished sociology, and, generally, interdisciplinary methodologies. In the early 1980s Péter Hanák led a charge on the traditional, positivist and vulgar Marxist, frameworks, challenging the long-entrenched divisions of political, ethnic, social and economic history. He re-introduced cultural and intellectual history and inspired a host of younger scholars to embark on the study of urbanization, domesticity, and the family.⁵⁰ With the establishment of a chair of Cultural Studies, he even managed to break the seemingly unassailable walls of Budapest University. Around the same time, the methodologies of economic history, historical demography and sociology embraced by historians paid dividends in investigations into the roots of economic and social modernization, including historical studies on women's employment and specific female occupations.⁵¹ Meanwhile, historians of the medieval and early modern period quietly joined the *Annales*-influenced European mainstream with works on witches and female saints.⁵² The widespread influence of the *Annales* – as in other East-Central European countries in the period of state socialism – while indicative of the traditional French orientation of Hungarian intellectual life, also highlighted the limitations of Hungarian historiography, ready to absorb methodological change without challenging the dominant discourse. During the same period, historians, art historians, and literary historians – coincidentally, all women - contributed a

⁵⁰ The studies of András Gergely, János Mazsu, Gábor Gyáni, András Gerő, Ilona Sármány testify to his role.

⁵¹ Gábor Gyáni's pioneering study on urban domestics, *Család, háztartás és városi cselédség* (Budapest: Magvető, 1983), was only recently followed by studies in the same vein.

⁵² Ilona Sz. Jónás, *Árpádházi Szent Erzsébet* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1986); Gábor Klaniczay (ed., with Ildikó Kristóf and Éva Pócs), *Magyarországi boszorkányperek* (Budapest, 1989).

string of biographies of women artists and historical figures, demonstrating, without explicitly addressing them, a subtle understanding of gender history issues.⁵³

At the fall of state socialism in 1989, these promising developments and the beginnings of alternative loci of academic research, established in the late 1980s, raised hopes for an overhaul of the stale academic structures, including a methodological renewal. During the “democratic honeymoon” of the early 1990s this optimism was shared by academics of all disciplines committed to women’s and gender history, and echoed by Western women’s historians whose own attempts to widen the scope of comparative women’s history were so fortuitously met with the opening of this new frontier.⁵⁴ Only a couple of years later, other Western women’s historians with a decidedly more activist bent noted the rising obstacles to the hoped-for academic sisterhood of Eastern and Western feminist scholars: linguistic and cultural misunderstandings and miscommunications, the mixed blessings of Western feminist theory in the region, along with the rise of aggressive antifeminist discourses.⁵⁵

Still, the scholarly production and institutional developments of the first ten years after 1989: conferences, published proceedings, exhibitions and two series of translations of Western women’s history, seemed to prove the optimists right.⁵⁶ Biographies of prominent women politicians were published,⁵⁷ along with an overview of Hungarian women writers.⁵⁸ Important episodes of women’s agency, from the earliest debates on the woman’s question to

⁵³ Katalin Péter, *A csejtei várúrnő: Báthory Erzsébet* (Budapest: Helikon, 1985); Katalin S. Nagy, *Anna Margit* (Budapest: Képzőművészeti, 1971) and idem, *Országih Lili* (Budapest: Arthis, 1993); Erzsébet Vezér, *Lesznai Anna élete* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1979).

⁵⁴ Ida Blom, „Introduction” in Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson and Jane Rendall (eds.), *Writing Women’s History: International Perspectives* (London: Macmillan, 1991) heralded the founding of the IFRWH in 1987 and the 1989 Belaggio Conference as signs of a „new phase” in women’s history with a cross-cultural, comparative focus. Andrea Pető, „Writing Women’s History in Eastern Europe. Toward a ‘Terra Cognita?’” in *Journal of Women’s History* 16 (4) 2004, 173-183 offers an Eastern European perspective on the dynamics of East-West relations in the 1990s.

⁵⁵ Nanette Funk, “Introduction,” in Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (eds.), *Gender Politics and Post-Communism; Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993), 2.

⁵⁶ The series “Feminism and History” and “Artemis” are published, respectively, by Balassi, Budapest and Csokonai, Debrecen. The Ministry of Labour organized the first exhibition of Hungarian women’s history in 1998 and in 2000 Katalin Keserü curated an exhibition of Hungarian women artists.

⁵⁷ Eszter Dizseri, *Zsindelyné Tüdős Klára. Életrajz dokumentumokban 1895-1980* (Budapest: Kálvin, 1994), Ilona Mona, *Slachta Margit* (Budapest: Corvinus, 1997), Andrea Pető, *Rajk Julia* (Budapest: Balassi, 2001).

⁵⁸Fábri Anna, “*A szép tiltott táj felé*”: *Magyar írónők a két századforduló között (1795-1905)*(Budapest: Kortárs, 1996).

the bourgeois women's rights movement in the early 20th century and women's roles in the Revolution of 1956, regained their rightful place in Hungarian political and cultural history.⁵⁹ Finally, the establishment of Central European University in 1990 and its Gender Studies Department in 1995 seemed to supply the "missing link:" an influential institution whose very mission was to facilitate the flow of ideas between Western and Eastern scholars.

But when the dust settled, the optimism of the first years faded, and some of the most prestigious Western representatives of women's and gender history returned home from their visiting professorships at the CEU, all the above listed achievements could not disguise the general sense of unfulfilled promises. A cursory overview of the conferences and proceedings mentioned above, reveals deeply running problems of scholarship and academic infrastructure. A 1994 conference, organized by CEU's Department of History, was the first attempt to provide an interdisciplinary forum for women's history and as such could be excused for its rather haphazard mix of papers and lack of common theoretical or methodological approach.⁶⁰ The next representative volume, published in 1997, made a valiant, if not entirely convincing attempt to establish a modicum of thematic and methodological coherence.⁶¹ Two recent conferences and the published proceedings, between 2000 and 2005, however, despite the organizers' best efforts, demonstrate endemic problems: a striking unevenness in the quality of contributions, the continuing lack of familiarity with basic concepts of Western women's and gender history and a reluctance to acknowledge previous scholarly contributions.⁶² Last but not least, with a very few notable exceptions, the small-scale studies have not materialized in general overviews and monographs. These problems all highlight the failure of women's and gender history in Hungary to create a scholarly community that transcends the traditional chronological and disciplinary boundaries. In the absence of high-quality output and a consistently represented, distinct

⁵⁹ Fábri Anna (ed.), *A nő és hivatása. Szemelvények a magyarországi nőkérdés történetéből, 1777-1865* (Budapest: Kortárs, 1999); Susan Zimmermann, "Hogyan lettek feministák? Gárdos Mariska és Schwimmer Rózsika a századforduló Magyarországon," in: *Eszmélet* 7 (1996) 32, 57-92, Borbála Juhász, "Women in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956; The Women's Demonstration of December 4th" in Andrea Pető and Béla Rasky (eds.), *Construction and Reconstruction. Women, Family and Politics in Central Europe 1945-1998* (Budapest: CEU, 1999) 19-31.

⁶⁰ Mark Pittaway and Andrea Pető (eds.), *Women in History - Women's History: Central and Eastern European Perspectives*. CEU History Department Working Paper Series. No. 1, 1994. The department was headed at the time by P. Hanák.

⁶¹ Beáta S. Nagy and Margit Sárdi (eds.), *Szerep és alkotás* (Debrecen: Csokonai, 1997).

⁶² Margit Balogh and Katalin S. Nagy (eds.), *Asszonyorsok a 20. században* (Budapest, 2000); Mária Palasik and Balázs Sipos (eds.), *Házastárs, Munkatárs, Vetélytárs?* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2005)

framework and methodology, women's and gender history have yet to gain acceptance as a legitimate, distinct field of scholarly investigation. Even less significant is the effect of women's and gender history on high school and university curricula; witness the recent crop of otherwise excellent textbooks, written by historians well versed in the current debates of Western historiography, without any mention of women.⁶³

And here we have come to what is possibly the linchpin of all these problems: Hungarian women's and gender studies cannot progress beyond its present state without a solid foothold in the universities. At present, there is no undergraduate or graduate programme dedicated to women's or gender history at any Hungarian university. (CEU's Gender Studies Department has only recently been accredited as a university in Hungary; with faculty and students, recruited from the wider Eastern European region and high tuition fees, its ties to Hungarian academia have never been strong.) For lack of institutional base, the handful of committed women's and gender historians have to resort to organizing conferences and proceedings, in addition to their - often unrelated - academic obligations. A foothold in the university curriculum would change the marginal position of women's and gender studies and attract motivated students. In turn, full-time scholars would be able to shape future research by directing graduate students to fill the gaping holes in the historiography, too numerous to list. As it is, students interested in gender studies will turn to other fields or take advantage of graduate scholarships abroad, widely available since Hungary's membership in the EU.

While the EU membership's long-term effect on Hungarian academia and higher education remains to be seen, the EU draft constitution's marked agenda of gender equality and mainstreaming should be cause for cautious optimism. The European Union's 2004 enlargement further divided the formerly socialist Eastern Europe, creating a two-tiered system between the new members and those still waiting at the gates. Among the new members, the three Baltic states, perhaps because of their cultural ties to the Scandinavian countries, are in a class of their own in terms of women's leading role in politics.

⁶³ Originally published in Hungarian, they were all published in English as well: Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Corvina-Osiris, 1999); Gábor Gyáni, György Kövér, and Tibor Valuch, *Social History of Hungary from the Middle of the 19th to the End of the 20th Century* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 2004); László Kontler, *Millennium in Central Europe – A History of Hungary* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2000). Statisztikai Tájékoztató: Felsőoktatás 2002/2003, Oktatási Minisztérium Közgazdasági Főosztály Statisztikai Osztály, Budapest 2003. 27.

¹⁸<http://www.mta.hu>. Only one, Mária Ormos is a historian.

Field Code Changed

As for official statistics indicating the ratio of women among history students and professors, skeptics would be ready to point out that it would not be the first time in Hungary that lofty principles of gender equality had been prescribed while the optimists could rightly point to the fact that, in accordance with EU regulations, we now at least have statistics. According to 2002/03 data, there were 2374 male and 2059 female students in 4 and 5-year history programs, showing a slightly different picture from the traditional over-representation of female students in the arts in general; and the male/female ratio of Ph.D. students (174 males vs. 146 females) in the same year represents an increasing imbalance.⁶⁴ Even fewer women will embark on a full-fledged academic career: among the 128 holders of the highest academic degree, doctor of the Academy, in history, only 19 are women and among the 27 members of the History and Philosophy Section of the Hungarian Academy of Arts and Sciences, only 3.⁶⁵

According to the text of the Lisbon strategy of the EU, a new framework of European education needs to help sustain economic growth and offer greater social cohesion as well as training for active citizenship. This education should also offer equal opportunity and, through mobility and exchange programs, a competitive education. And here we arrive at the problems of how to fit gender studies education into that logic.

At first sight we think that is easy: scholarly works have proven in the past 20 years that gender studies indeed enhance equal opportunities and contribute to social cohesion.⁶⁶ On the other hand feminist academics working at different departments have a very hard time to smuggle in their existing courses the newly required training and educational structure.

In Hungary gender studies education developed mostly in higher educational institutions.⁶⁷ Dedicated scholars have offered courses with gender studies specialisation as a part of their teaching program. The few existing university level courses are undergraduate courses; there are no doctoral programs, nor degree programs in gender studies in Hungary. However, students enrolled in other doctoral programs very often sign up for undergraduate courses in women's and gender studies.

According to the accreditation documents [of Hungarian universities] gender studies as such will not be taught on the BA level. The bachelor level of education is expected to provide

⁶⁶ Lásd többek közt: *Doing Women's Studies. Employment Opportunities, Personal Impacts and Social Consequences*. ed. Gabriele Griffin, London-New York, Zed Books, 2005.

⁶⁷ Andrea Pető, "The Process of Institutionalising Gender Studies in Hungary" in *The Making of European Women's Studies. A Work in Progress. Report on Curriculum Development and Related Issues*. Vol.I. eds. Rosi Bradiotti, Esther Vonk, Utrecht University, Holland, 2000 pp. 32-35.

education without specific qualification. In the educational stream titled “knowledge of society” (introduction to social sciences) some courses are offered if dedicated faculty is already employed. Only elective courses will be offered in gender studies which are far from being satisfactory to change the structure and content of Hungarian higher education. The educational criteria for the MA level are to be determined in a year. However, taking into consideration the few resources and the junior position of academics currently teaching gender studies it is difficult to imagine that any state financed university will be able to submit a teaching program consisting of 120 teaching credits in gender studies in the near future.

The development of gender studies depends on the individual lobbying of feminist academics within the higher educational institutions. Gender studies courses have been developed in Hungary strictly on a disciplinary basis, since the institutional framework does not promote interdisciplinary models. The Bologna process is expected to reinforce this disciplinary organizational framework. Moreover, as gender studies in Hungary are part of humanities, their prestige is expected to decline, alongside the other disciplines in the humanities.

In Hungary there are no gender studies centres that would serve as umbrella organizations for interdisciplinary research, teaching, documentation and activism. Internationally, it was the co-operation of women NGOs, feminist academic networks and public institutions that has been able to achieve policy change.⁶⁸ In Hungary the women’s NGO sector is weak, and the only feminist NGO aiming at reforming the Hungarian education system: IGEN, is marginalised.⁶⁹ One of the conclusions is that international pressure, such as the Bologna process, cannot help national actors in implementing change unless they are rooted in a variety of networks. There is no hope for a radical change while gender studies is lacking in not only institutionalisation but also professionalisation. These two processes will not happen without political pressure coming from the women’s movement demanding socially informed education. To end on a personal note: the authors of this paper both had been, at various points, the students of the late Péter Hanák. From our respective vantage points – the thick of the battle for the recognition of gender history in Hungary and North American academia, with its diminishing attention for all things Eastern European - we have witnessed the promise

⁶⁸ More on this: „Explorations. Feminist and Economic Inquiry in Central and Eastern Europe“ Guest Editors: Marianne A. Ferber, Edith Kuiper, Contributors: Agnieszka Majcher, Krisztina Majoros, Andrea Pető, *Feminist Economics* 10 (3) November, 2004, pp. 81-118.

⁶⁹ Andrea Pető, „The History of the Women’s Movement in Hungary” in *Thinking Differently. A Reader in European Women’s Studies*, eds. Rosi Braidotti, Gabriele Griffin. Zed Books, London, 2002. pp. 361-372.

of a theoretical and methodological renewal of Hungarian historiography and its eventual defeat by entrenched divisions, parochialism and political maneuvering. We would like to believe that, despite all the signs pointing to the opposite, such renewal is still possible and that our own trajectories, representing a constant interchange between “East” and “West,” will be indicative of the direction of this change.

Nóra Séllei: Reflections

Looking into the mirror, one can see one’s own reflection, and, apart from that, also one’s position in the environment, no matter how limited the image of that environment is. In addition, on looking into the mirror and at one’s own reflection, one cannot but reflect upon that reflection, almost by way of a reflex, no matter how deceptive that self-reflection might be. In this essay, I am going to play with some of the potentials of these (self-)reflections as a feminist scholar, a feminist literary critic who came into this field at the time of the political changes in Eastern Europe. My experiences, thus, also reflect to a certain extent a special positioning encoded in the past one and a half decades.

What can I see if I look into the mirror of the past more than one and a half decades, and look for what I like to call myself? I observed the political changes of 1989 and 1990 mostly from the sidelines as at that time I did no paid job: on maternity leave, I was taking care of my son. The summer of 1990 saw me applying for a job at the Department of English (half a year later turned into the Institute of English and American Studies), Kossuth Lajos University, Debrecen (turned into the University of Debrecen in 2000). The application for this new job became possible as a result of the political changes: whereas before 1989 the greatest number of foreign language major students admitted to the university were doing Russian, and English and other “Western” languages were kept to a minimum (consequently, there were hardly any job openings), after the changes English became a priority, so the enormous demand resulted in an increase of staff members never seen either before or after.

This lucky coincidence, however, took its toll. I always had the feeling this relatively new, “upstart” generation of staff members was more closely watched by older colleagues if we really deserve admission to the club. Put it differently, I felt a double pressure on me in terms

of deadlines and expected achievements: both as one of the “newcomers” and as a woman (in a year’s time a divorced woman with a small child). Parallel with this, the changes were reflected in the institutional framework as well: on the one hand, the increase in staff and students made the cosy, old Dept. of English unmanageable as one and undivided administrative unit, so it turned into an Institute with three (later four) departments, on the other hand, as a result of the increase in student numbers and in new training programmes (like Russian teachers’ retraining programmes) made us face tasks never heard of before. What I can see in the past sixteen years is a constant process of transformation and adaptation to the newer and newer demands and varying funding circumstances.

Whereas this constantly changing, and basically expanding academic environment never allowed us to settle into any routine, from the perspective feminist scholarship and gender studies it worked quite favourably. In spite of the fact that in the early 1990s feminism as an academic discipline was practically non-existent at our university, the Institute management acknowledged its function, relevance and legitimacy as a mode of discourse in English-speaking countries and cultures, so when I had this idea of coming up as a feminist scholar, no real obstacle had to be removed from the way. What is more, my first immersion in feminist literary criticism was facilitated by an institutional TEMPUS exchange with the University of Hull, where I could do research for my doctoral dissertation, which I actually even wrote up in Hull. This research could not only be translated into a postgraduate degree and promotion, but also into teaching new courses: on my return from Hull, I was offered the chance to teach courses related to my research, which could be understood as an honour (junior colleagues normally start teaching core courses before developing courses of their own). For me it all started, then, in February 1993.

The “primal” feminist course for third and fourth-year students was on 19th-century English women writers, with a general introduction into interdisciplinary feminist theory which the following year evolved into two distinct courses: “Reading Woman”, a interdisciplinary theoretical introduction, and a course “purely” on 19th-century women writers, but from a feminist perspective. In due time, it was followed by various other feminist courses on literature for undergraduates, most of them evolving from each other: 20th-century British women writers; Virginia Woolf; The Brontë sisters; The genre of autobiography; 20th-century female Künstlerromans; Women and madness in literature. Not only literary courses expanded but the theoretical and interdisciplinary introduction was also extended into a two-term course: Gender Studies I: Society and Gender Studies II: Culture (this double course was also adapted for purposes of mature upgrading students’ distance learning course, later as e-

learning). It was followed by forays into other other disciplines (like the course on Film, literature and adaptation); by adventures into other fields and languages (a course was introduced as a general humanities module in Hungarian called Film and gender – a new version of it was adapted to the English-major programme). As yet another expansion: so far I have participated in the PhD-programme of the Institute with four theoretical feminist courses: Gender and identity; Women and madness in literature; Gender, subjectivity and representation; The theoretical junctures of feminism and (post)modernism.

So far so good: it looks quite a success story, particularly as it was accomplished with one more degree on the academic ladder (habilitation) and resulted in a matching and accompanying promotion (associate professor/reader), with the publication of three books, numerous articles, reviews, series editing, volume editing, translations etc. I am sure, however, that all this reflects not simply that I have been doing certain things in the past years, but also that there was a relatively favourable institutional environment that provided certain conditions for making all this possible – and I am sure several of us have shared it. To go back to my opening metaphor: I am convinced that although the details of our faces as reflected in and by the mirror are certainly diverse, the ones who do feminist scholarship and/or gender studies at any of the English, or English-language departments in this country may still share both most of the general outline, and also the background, the environment.

At the moment, however, the success story seems to come to a close, to a kind of a short circuit, or at least we seem to encounter more difficulties than before. As I see the situation, from my own perspective, whereas the reasons are numerous, all of them are located, first, in that relatively short time span that passed since feminist scholarship was admitted into the academia, second, in the rigidity of the academic system, third, in the resistance of the dominant discourse of literary theory and criticism to feminism and gender studies (and in this respect our status as “modern philologists” has to be considered), fourth, in our “growing up” as a democratic country, which resulted in the withdrawal of various support schemes from the country, and, finally, in our ambivalent status as a new EU member state. To explore all this, we would need a wide mirror, indeed. It cannot be granted, so I will try and focus on some of these issues, and point out how they are interrelated, how they reflect each other and reflect upon each other, and how they make the future positioning of teaching gender studies rather difficult.

I graduated as a Hungarian language and literature and English language and literature major (also qualified as a secondary school teacher of Hungarian and English) in 1984, but all through the five years I did not hear the word gender except in grammar practice where it was

pointed out the the third-person pronoun has more than one gendered form. This fact clearly indicates a great extent of gender blindness in the curriculum, which remained intact practically for one more decade at the department. It means that no one precedes me in this scholarly area at the Institute, which looks a prestigious position – which it is not in a lot of ways as the future of teaching gender may depend on it. What position can one achieve in our current system of promotion in the humanities? *Our* university regulations require that one cannot be a teaching assistant/junior lecturer for more than eight years during which the PhD must be submitted and defended; that completed, one is promoted to be an assistant professor/lecturer, but that is still not a tenure position: if you do not do your habilitation (the second postgraduate degree) in twelve years, you will be dismissed. If you have your habilitation, you may be promoted to be an assistant professor/reader (which is already a tenure position), but you can only be a full professor if you submit and defend the third postgraduate degree (academy doctorate). Can three postgraduate degrees in the humanities be accomplished in one and a half decades? In two decades' time, in some exceptional cases it is possible, but I certainly have not seen anyone do that in fifteen years.

Why does it matter? Because, at this moment of yet another transition – this time the Bologna process – to the best of my knowledge there is not one feminist literary scholar who holds a full professorial position, and the accreditation criteria of MA programmes include that a full professor must be in charge of each MA programme (so no feminist literary MA can be launched at the moment). Regulations do make an exception, though, but because of the rigidity of the academic system I can see a touch of ingenuity there: for new, experimental programmes an associate professor/reader will suffice, but when this exception was made it was almost certainly not gender studies what they had in mind. The reason for this guess (or insinuation) is the following: academic research in Hungary has a double institutional framework, universities on the one hand, and the Hungarian Academy on the other. Whereas officially they can be separated, they overlap each other as qualified university lecturers contribute to the work of the Academy, whereas members of the academy comprise the accreditation and assessment committees for universities. The Academy, thus, has its say in every decision of any significance. The Academy has its research field classification, which defines the working framework. The framework goes back to the nineteenth century, and distinguishes apparently clearly separable areas like literature, linguistics and history, etc.; and within literature: Hungarian literature and modern philology (whatever that is).

The problem here is that on the one hand it hardly allows any space for interdisciplinarity: it is very simply not acknowledged; even less does it acknowledge the legitimacy of gender

studies; not even does it acknowledge English (or any other non-Hungarian) literature as proper literary scholarship: the judgement is reflected in the rather old-fashioned term “philology”, which, together with “modern” is almost an oxymoron. Undeniably, this marginalised position of “modern philology” made it possible for several of us to enter literary discourse with a non-canonised theoretical (feminist) background and approach, the residue of this marginalisation, however, is the offhand gesture of dismissal: the ones who do not do Hungarian literature, are not considered proper literature scholars. Supposedly, all they can do is perhaps just mediate some scraps of knowledge from their respective fields, but no originality is supposed or even expected of them/us.

This is one of the reasons why feminist literary criticism could hardly take hold in the Hungarian literary discourse. In a self-reflexive review, Judit Kádár poses the question: “Why is there none, once it exists?”⁷⁰ All she can do is take account of what has happened on the literary scene, what has been published, what has been translated, which journals devoted special issues to feminism and gender, and go on claiming mainstream institutional resistance and marginalisation. I can but agree with her conclusion and statement. I would, nevertheless, add one more element. Partly due to the belatedness of feminist scholarship, partly due to the relative lack of women staff members in the higher positions of the academia, partly due to the clear distinction made between pure science/scholarship and politics, dominant literary scholars tend to resist the idea that textual analysis should be contaminated by the political – let alone by the personal –, and they are right from their own perspective: they have their own vested interest in that position. As long as the idea that the male/masculine is a gender neutral position can be maintained, and vice versa: as long as the claimed gender neutrality is not acknowledged as a disguise for masculinity, there is no need to acknowledge that neutral science/scholarship does not exist, that it is only a masquerade for the mainstream/the masculine. What would be needed is the acknowledgement of the opposite, and its accompanying move: gender mainstreaming, but at the moment – considering the almost impossibility of launching MA programmes in the field and the marginalisation of “modern philology as well” – I cannot see too much chance at the moment.

The internal system of the academia, in this way, cannot offer much help in establishing and institutionalising feminist scholarship either in its interdisciplinary form, or in one area of study (e.g. literature). Let us examine, now, the potential external support, and how that is reflected in our internal institutional system. As one of the ex-Eastern block states, Hungary

⁷⁰ Kádár Judit: Miért nincs, ha van? A kortárs nyugati feminista irodalomkritika hatása Magyarországon. *Beszélő* (Nov 2003.): pp. 100–107.

has received substantial funds from all kinds of sources that were meant to accelerate political, intellectual and mental changes, to create a civil society, to support intellectuals in their liberal and democratic thinking, and, as a result, to introduce new modes of discourse as well. One of the beneficiaries of this process was the feminist scholarship (gender studies): in the 1990s one could apply to various sources ranging from TEMPUS funds to Soros Foundation, from the British Council to USIS, etc. for funding research, conferences, publications, etc. In various steps, around the millennium, practically all these fundings ceased to exist, or were reduced to a minimum, or their support was shifted over to other cultural areas. They all claim that Hungary has become a truly democratic country, the support schemes have reached their aims, so they withdraw.

In a way, it is true. What is missing, however, for a mature democratic educational and research system is the proper functioning of the academia – in financial terms as well. The term research money as automatically allocated to certain university positions/lecturers is still an unknown concept (by law, it exists, in practice it does not – I personally have never seen any of it). In this way, to do research, one has to submit project proposals to certain academic bodies, which are not necessarily favourable to innovative gender studies proposals, thus one has to think not twice but thrice before the final formulation of the proposal is written up as practically there is no expert on these bodies who could really evaluate the significance of these projects. In addition, feminist scholarship is still evaluated partly as a Western ideological import (an imposition on us after we got rid of the “Eastern” ideological import – an idea “proved” by the fact that in the 1990s it was foreign sources indeed that supported these research projects), partly it is misconceived: identified with a relatively early, 1970s phase of feminist research, and as such it is considered as *passé*.

As a final, and in a way all-rounding element comes our EU membership, the sign of our full maturity, democratisation, and equality. Does it really function that way, though? Undeniably, there are enormous fundings in EU sources. As we are warned very often: all you have to do is apply. Why do we not all apply, then? It is quite a bit of work, indeed, but can we be all that lazy as to leave that opportunity untested? What is the problem? This is where the snake bites its tail. Most EU projects (and I have explored some of them, together with some colleagues abroad) suppose on the one hand an already established institutional framework, on the other hand the proper financial background. It means that no matter how well developed a set of courses you have in gender studies/feminist scholarship as long as it is not accredited and institutionalised, you cannot establish e.g. joint MA-cooperation with other programmes, nor can the EU-framework be used for developing an MA programme in any of the EU member

states. In addition, both students and staff members – should they be so lucky as to institutionally establish themselves as an MA and participate in a joint MA – are supposed to live off their student grant and salary, respectively, that they get in their home country, and finance their stay abroad from that. (No need to say, at the moment neither our salaries, nor the students' grants are EU compatible.)

Whether this presupposition underlying the EU projects is realistic or not should be tested and decided by everyone individually. In my view, however, this structure, in its complexity, entirety and the mutual interdependence of its elements, truly reflects and reflects upon both our achievements so far and our potential future. At the moment, it looks a vicious circle to me. Yet, as an incorrigible optimist I hope someone will break both this circle and this mirror – so that all these elements will shift, and will create a different system a reflections and reflexes.

Schadt Mária,

At the faculty of arts of our university, where the majority of students are women, the head of the Office of Student Affairs (a man) told the first-year students during the opening of the school year last September that they should get over all obstacles so that they can say when they get their diplomas that „we've had a good time – we've done a man's work!”⁷¹ None of the members of the faculty was surprised at this, although most of them were women. In fact, my women colleagues did not even understand my indignation.

Thinking of similar situations, we might think that not much has changed since the early 1990s, when I began to teach about approaches that took gender into consideration at my university courses. However, thinking about these fifteen years, I think that even seemingly small changes mean a lot compared to the previous eras.

The Institutionalization of Women's Studies and Gender Studies in Pécs

The first step was a specialization lecture series entitled *The Social Aspects of Gender Roles*, which we began to hold at the Faculty of Law of the University of Pécs in the early 1990s. As a topic of the seminar on the sociology of the family, we began to examine women's legal and social (de jure and de facto) opportunities, and the role of the division of labor within families in the reproduction of social / gender hierarchy. We also did research on the social motives of

⁷¹ From Mihály Vörösmarty's *Thoughts in the Library* (1844). (Translated by Paul Desney.) Although women's roles have changed significantly during the past 150 years, and women stand their ground in society just as well as men, stereotypes have not changed so much: “man” is still a synonym of prominence.

the feminization of the legal profession in the 1950s, and its defeminization from the end of the 1970s. The enquiries and everyday experiences of my students urged me to look into the Women's or Gender Studies courses in Hungary and abroad. A colleague of mine was of great help: she studied the legal system of the European Community in Florence, and through her numerous contacts, I got countless materials, e.g. the reading lists of the Interdisciplinary Working Group on Women's Studies seminars.

I also owe thanks to Elaine Chang and Bill Lions, a couple teaching at our university during the 1992-1993 semesters, sponsored by the Soros Foundation. They provided me with a number of books on gender, and we had great discussions on the issue of the equal opportunities of women and men, regarding the impacts of the regime change on women in Hungary, too. My review on *Women in the Face of Change: The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China* (edited by Shirin Ray, Hilary Pilkinton and Annie Phizaktea, New York, Routledge, 1992) was also influenced and shaped by our debates.⁷²

In the beginning, I made connections and collected materials. Then, from 1996, already as a lecturer at the Sociology Department of the University of Pécs, I began to focus on taking into account the gender aspects of the subjects I taught. When the Women's Studies and Women's Leadership Development Program of the Central Connecticut State University (Hardford) invited me in 1999, I could further develop my courses and curricula, and work on adopting what I learned there into our own university program.

As for teaching the sociology of the family and women's studies, the works of Joan W. Scott, Joan Kelly-Gadol, Pierre Bourdieu and Carole Pateman⁷³ were the most significant for me. Through discussing their theories, we can directly study the historical and present-day reasons of the social inequalities of the sexes, as well as their forms and manifestations, and the culturally specific construction of gender identities.

⁷² In *Women and Politics*. Volume 17, Number 1/1997, pp. 102-103.

⁷³ Arlene S. Skolnick and Jerome H. Skolnik: *Family in Transition*. Harper Collins, New York, 1992; Pierre Bourdieu: *Férfiuralom* (Masculine Domination). In: Miklós Hadas, szerk.: *Férfiuralom - Írások nőkről, férfiakról, feminizmusról* (Masculine Domination: Writings about Women, Men and Feminism) Replika Kör, Budapest, 1994. pp.7-54.; Kelly-Gadol: "A nemek társadalmi viszonyai: A nők történelmének módszertani jelentősége" (The Social Relationships of the Sexes: The Methodological Significance of Women's History) In: *AETAS* 1993. 4. pp. 139-153.; Joan W. Scott: „Társadalmi nem (gender): a történelmi elemzés hasznos kategóriája" (Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis). In: Scott, J. W., ed.: *Van-e a nőknek történelmük?* (Do Women Have a History?) Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2001. pp. 126-160.

The seminar on women's studies, which had been held ten times already, is popular among both students of arts and social sciences: there are always more applicants than the allowed number of participants. The papers they write for the seminar often form the basis of their later work: writings for university competitions or their theses.

The other subjects I teach, like social history after 1945, theories of social structures and stratifications, or social mobility, also give countless possibilities to approach and critically analyze sociological theories, the changes of social structures and mobility from the point of view of gender.

We can only explore the discriminative aspects of seemingly neutral statements and our view of the society built on masculine representations if we take into consideration „the epistemological background of the new analyses of women and gender”⁷⁴.

„The adaptive requirements of maintaining the society as a system ... entail the relative separation of gender roles, [...] married women cannot compete with the men belonging to the same class for employment statuses and their primary award symbols. [...] It impedes 'equal opportunities', as women are generally degraded into lower functions than men, irrespective of their performance, and they are at least relatively excluded from some of the most prestigious positions.”⁷⁵

„Perhaps the women who want to become recognized as the equals of men in more prestigious positions need to possess a cultural capital even more than the men who would like to achieve much in the field of their profession. For boys coming from high status families, it may be more important to learn to value girls who appreciate high culture during their secondary school years than to value high culture itself.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Sandra Harding: „Epistemológiai kérdések” (Epistemological Questions), In: *AETAS* 1993. 4. pp. 154-164.; Gary N. Powell, ed.: *Handbook of Gender and Work*, SAGE Publications, London, 1999.

⁷⁵ Talcott Parsons: A társadalmi rétegződés elméletének átdolgozott analitikus megközelítése (A Revised Analytic Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification) In: Róbert Angelusz, ed.: A társadalmi rétegződés komponensei (The Components of Social Stratification). Új Mandátum Kiadó, Budapest, 1997. pp. 118-119.

⁷⁶ DiMaggio, Paul: „A kulturális tőke és az iskolai teljesítmény” (Social Capital and School Performance). In: Péter Róbert, ed.: *A társadalmi mobilitás* (Social Mobility) Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó Bp. 1998. 212.

The above quotations prove that behind the seemingly neutral approach many sociologists apply, be they theorists or the analyzers of empirical research, there is a disinterest in asserting and dealing with gender issues.

In the course entitled “The 1950s on films and films on the 1950s”, we analyze both the social history of Hungarian women and the representation of women’s roles in films. While the critical analysis of women’s / gender roles in films began as early as in the 1930s and ‘40s in the United States and in the 1960s in Western-Europe, these kinds of focuses have been marginalized in Hungarian film studies. In my lectures and seminars, I analyzed the presence and roles of women, their representations as heroes in films. It is easy to see the ambivalence of the ideology proclaiming women’s equality and the social realities in these films, regardless of the time they were made: in the 1950s or the 1980s. On the one hand, women do not play central roles in the scripts, and on the other hand, even if they happen to be central characters, these films introducing woman heroes are also characterized by male dominance.⁷⁷

The historical and social aspects of research on gender

In my research and thesis writing seminars, approaches from the point of view of women and gender, this way of thinking plays a major role when we discuss different subjects, and this is also reflected in the interests of the students who apply to these courses. Many of them write their theses on related subjects.

I also hold classes on the social relations of the sexes in camps aimed at helping our students’ research projects, and in tutorial seminars, too (which are about the treatment of previously collected materials). At a conference entitled “The Regime Change and the Local Society”, held on 17 November 2000, several of my students delivered papers on subjects related to analyzing women’s social roles, from various points of views.⁷⁸

While I always consider the approach of gender studies when I draw up the curriculum and critically analyze theories, my research has also focused on the study of the social history of

⁷⁷ *Becsület és dicsőség* (“Honor and Glory”) (1951). The central character is a communist woman (played by Mária Sulyok), who withdraws into the traditional role of a wife in the end of the film, and watches with a devoted bliss as the workers are listening to her husband – who had become one of the best workers with her help.

⁷⁸ Schadt Mária, ed.: *Településszerkezet, társadalomszerkezet: Rendszerváltás és helyi társadalom* (The Structure of Settlements and the Society: Regime Change and Local Society). (Essays), Pécs University Press, Pécs, 2001.

Hungarian women.⁷⁹ I emphasize this as in this way I can help my students choose topics and relate professionally to their research on the social aspects of gender. As a result of this, several students choose to write their theses on this subject each year, and my students have been successful at student conferences, too, for more than ten years.⁸⁰

I have been the president of the Scientific Students' Body of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Pécs since January 2003, helping the scientific activities of students. As I think it is very important that the papers written on the subject of gender should be published, so that others can refer to them, I suggested that the Social Sciences Section to be held in 2007 in Pécs should include a sub-section: that of gender studies.

I think that both the teaching and the research of gender have become institutionalized in the Faculty of Arts in Pécs. The fact that our women's and gender studies courses are attended by students of literature, political science, English, history, etc., reflect this, too.

Deficiencies and further possibilities

While we have achieved much in the field of university education, we have to do more for the practical applicability of the theories learned.

It is important to follow the feedback of our former students on questions like whether they have a chance to / can / want to use what they had learned in practice. I think that the book edited by Andrea Pető⁸¹ on related research, which traced the labor market positions and changes of identities of former students of women's studies was a very useful initiative, which should be continued.

⁷⁹ Between 1995 and 1999, I worked on a research on the role of the structure and contents of education in the reproduction of social inequalities between women and men ("Representing Women's Roles and Preparing for them in the Institutions of Public Education"). At the same time, I was a doctoral student of the program called *Europe and Hungary in the 19th and 20th Centuries* at the Faculty of Arts of the Janus Pannonius University (Pécs): the title of my dissertation was "Hungarian Women in a Changing Social Structure".

⁸⁰ 1993: three students won special prizes at the sociology sector of the National Students' Conference; 1995: two students won special prizes at the sociology sector of the NSC; 1997: a student won the second place at the sociology sector of the NSC; 1999: a student won the second place at the sociology sector of the NSC; 2001: a student won the second place at the sociology sector of the NSC; 2003: two special prizes at the sociology sector of the NSC.

⁸¹ Andrea Pető, ed.: *Női egyenlőség Európában* (Women's Equality in Europe). Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2003.

I think that gender studies should become included in teacher training, as most teachers currently reinforce stereotypical and negative views.⁸² They never learn about the gender aspects of social phenomena, and thus they pass on stereotypes and prejudices, which are also reinforced by the information they have to teach as parts of universal human culture: the obligatory readings, the illustrations and stories of schoolbooks pass on images that are even more traditional than our reality.⁸³

Gender mainstreaming in all school materials should be a requirement in teacher training and special pedagogical trainings. Thus, teachers would be able to efface gender stereotypes, the “hidden curriculum” present in many subjects, and to prevent reproducing the hierarchy of the sexes.

The institutions currently provide “gender neutral” knowledge. The approach of gender studies should be employed whenever possible. (There are good examples, like gender studies courses, or gender-focused approaches of social history for teachers of history.)

I think that the project realized by Andrea Pető is a very useful initiative in this respect.⁸⁴ The methodology of this training should be extended and applied for other fields of study, too.

We also have to pay attention to the introduction of gender studies into the MA level of the Bologna training system, as well as the PhD training built upon it. Without this, we cannot expect fundamental changes in making gender studies accepted as part of our culture and universal science. At the same time, the reform of the educational system on this basis is also a prerequisite of applying gender mainstreaming in our everyday practices. Without this, the majority of the society assumes that the division of labor and the power system that maintains men’s social advantages are natural, and acquit men of putting women in a disadvantaged position, arguing that they only want to meet the social requirements.

⁸² Like what the (woman) director of an elite high school told: we miss male teachers, men’s roles and discipline.

⁸³ Judit H. Sas: „A nő és a férfi a családban és a társadalomban” (Women and Men in Families and the Society) In: *Társadalmi Szemle* 1976. 8. pp. 121-131., Ágota Horváth – Mihály Andor: „Társadalomkép az általános iskolai olvasókönyvekben” (Society Reflected in Elementary School Books). In: *Szociológia* 1974/4. pp. 562-576., Czachesz-Lesznyák-Molnár: „Lányok és nők a kötelező olvasmányokban, tankönyvekben” (Women and Girls in Obligatory Readings and Schoolbooks) In: *Educatio* 1996/3 Autumn, pp. 417-430.

⁸⁴ The training of further education (entitled “Teaching about Children, and the History of Women and Men in Secondary Schools”) and the volumes used for the project, for teachers and students of history.

Judit Takács: From sex towards *gender*

I must admit, that for a while I did not consider my research topics to be part of gender studies. I came to realize that it was in fact gender studies gradually, as I recognized that the research of gender in Hungary and abroad comprises the topics I understand and love most. Today I think that the field of gender studies is a kind of “postdisciplinary”⁸⁵ endeavour, which has a broad framework, and thus contains themes, methods and viewpoints that often look very different.

I consider myself mainly a social science researcher. I tend to regard my teaching at a university as a byproduct of my research: the topics I study define the contents of the courses I teach.

I began to teach while I was working on my doctoral dissertation as a young scholar becoming independent: I focused on examining the social phenomenon of homosexuality.⁸⁶ I held my first course in 1998, at the ELTE-UNESCO *Ethnic and Minority Studies M.A. Program*. Its title was „*Inventing Sexualities – Gender Issues in a Minority Context*”. I wanted to hold classes like those taught by Gert Hekma and Dorelis Kraakman at the University of Amsterdam. (I had attended their courses five or six years earlier.) They introduced me to the theories of the different European sexual cultures, and to the historical approach to sexuality as a field to be studied. I remember how appealing these topics, and how refreshing our readings were for someone who had come from the world of Eastern-European taboos: we read Foucault⁸⁷ about the society of blood and sex, Giddens⁸⁸ about how modernization affected and changed the intimate sphere, and how gay people were represented as the emotional pioneers of modernity, or Castells⁸⁹ about how the gay community contributed to the quality of city life in San Francisco. My first course was literally built upon the material I had brought from Amsterdam. It was a class held in English, which I must mention as the readings were not available in any other language at that time. I

⁸⁵ Seidman, Steven – Jeffrey C. Alexander (2001) “Introduction.” In: S. Seidman – J. C. Alexander, eds. *The New Social Theory Reader*. London and New York: Routledge. 12.

⁸⁶ My book entitled *Homoszexualitás és társadalom* (“Homosexuality and Society”) is an edited version of my doctoral dissertation (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2004).

⁸⁷ Foucault, Michel (1978 [1976]) *The History of Sexuality. Volume I. An Introduction*. London: Penguin Books. (The book was published in Hungarian by the Atlantisz, in 1996.)

⁸⁸ Giddens, Anthony (1992) *The Transformation of Intimacy. Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁸⁹ Castells, Manuel (1983) *The City and the Grassroots. A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*. London: Edward Arnold.

still hold all my courses in the field of *gender studies* in English, although today it would be easier to compile a Hungarian (or at least partly Hungarian) reading list, due to the publication of both translations and studies written by Hungarian authors.

In these courses, I spread the word about social constructionism: I tried to persuade my students to treat essentialist arguments (which always seemed to be the most readily consumable) with at least some caution. In connection with exploring homosexuality – as it soon turned out that the „sexualities” in the title referred to the invention of homosexuality (or homosexualities) in Hungary for me –, we problematized the self-evident nature of heterosexuality. We set out from discussing that the categories of hetero- and homosexualities gain their meanings in certain given social and cultural environments, and thus we must concentrate on the creation of social meanings constructing hetero- and homosexuality. Among other things, I relied on Kenneth Plummer’s⁹⁰ social interactionist approach. He directed people’s attention at the cultural relativity of sexual norms, stressing that sexual meanings are not the direct psychological and social expressions of biological characteristics. Thus sexuality is not an independent, but a dependent variable, and a review of social context is indispensable in its understanding.

To illustrate the wide variety of sexual meanings, we also had a look at various exotic fields: I could refer to the results of cultural anthropologists, and show that there are cultures in which the symmetrical dualism we consider a self-evident norm, which rules our ideas about gendered relationships – and thus our thinking about “normal” sexuality, too – do not exist.⁹¹

I often refer to Margaret Mead’s research on how different gender socialization patterns are culturally defined⁹² – and Derek Freeman’s critical remarks, in which he refutes Mead’s conclusions.⁹³ Outlining one of the most famous polemics in the history of anthropology also gives an opportunity to illustrate the phenomenon of interference: that is, to show that the gender of the researcher may have a significant impact on the results and the objects of the research. When we talk about this, I can also call my students’ attention to the dangers of

⁹⁰ Plummer, Kenneth (1975) *Sexual Stigma: An Interactionist Account*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

⁹¹ Ortner, Sherry B. – Harriet Whitehead, eds. (1981) *Sexual Meanings. Construction of Gender and Sexuality*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

⁹² Mead, Margaret (1928) *Coming of Age in Samoa*. New York: William Morrow; Mead, Margaret (1930) *Growing Up in New Guinea*. New York: William Morrow

⁹³ Derek Freeman (1996) *Margaret Mead and the Heretic*. Ringwood: Penguin Books. (The book was originally published under the title *Margaret Mead and Samoa* by the Harvard University Press, in 1983.)

sexist research methodologies: for example being male-centered, generalizing, applying double standards, or interference.⁹⁴ (I often talk about Mead's results in the field of gender socialization and about non-sexist research methodologies as well in my general classes on sociology, too. Talking about the concept of *families of choice* is also a significant element of my lectures about the sociology of the family.)

I have found Judith Butler's critique of the coherence of identity very useful from the very beginning. She claims that the thought of the internal coherence of identity, which is manifested in the opposition of asymmetrically divided female and male characteristics in the cultural matrix of gender norms, and in the „heterosexualization of desire”, is illusionary, and more and more untenable. When we talk about a person, it is not necessary that there is a causal link between her/his sex, gender and culturally constructed gender roles and sexual desire or sexual behavior (which are usually interpreted as the expressions or effects of these two „basic dimensions”).⁹⁵ My experience is that it is difficult for students to read Butler's texts, so I usually refer them to other authors who discuss Butler's critique.⁹⁶

I held a course at the Institute of Sociology of the Eötvös Loránd University for students who chose to specialize in the sociology of minorities. Its title was *Studying Women*: it focused on the reasons and methods of studying women. We first read Mary Wollstonecraft,⁹⁷ and then Engels⁹⁸; then we went on discussing the Russian and American versions of sexual revolutions, and thus got to the present. When defining my teaching strategy, my point of departure was that the history of women's situation may be interpreted as the emancipatory efforts of an oppressed minority, just like the efforts of the groups having a marginalized sexuality in the heteronormative social environment, fighting for recognition. In this context, the situation of lesbian women deserves particular attention, as it illustrates how social repression stemming from a multiple minority status operates on multiple levels. Lesbian theorists have rightfully criticized the mainstream of feminism, which is directed at and

⁹⁴ Margrit Eichler (1988) *Nonsexist Research Methods*. Boston: Allen & Unwin Inc.

⁹⁵ Butler, Judith (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

⁹⁶ E.g. Preves, Sharon E. (2003) *Intersex and Identity. The Contested Self*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1-22.

⁹⁷ Wollstonecraft, Mary (1982 [1792]) *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

⁹⁸ Engels, Friedrich (1902 [1884]) *The Origin of the Family*. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company.

tailored to the needs of white, middle class and heterosexual women⁹⁹, and showed that feminism can be deconstructed into innumerable versions of feminisms.

I have been teaching a course called *Gender Issues in Eastern Europe* at the Institute of Sociology of the Eötvös Loránd University, within the framework of the University of California Study Year Abroad Program for seven years. This is mostly attended by foreign students. I change the contents of the course each year. Its main objective is to show the results of gender-related studies going on in our region, and to introduce the differences between „Eastern” and „Western” approaches. We talk a lot about the different definitions of feminisms, and especially about how Eastern-European women’s movements, which have achieved a lot against the former paternalistic regime, often have difficulties in dealing with the new Western environment – which is unusual for them in that it is class-based, and sometimes characterized by patriarchal hierarchical relationships.¹⁰⁰ I found the approach of the feminist anthropological perspective also very useful here, especially as those who work in this field want to strengthen the politics of solidarity in anthropological research, which assumes that the researchers ally their work about their subjects with research that is aimed at them, and is performed together with them.¹⁰¹

During the past two years I have started work in a field that is less well known and written about, especially in Hungary and in the neighboring countries: transsexuality. Again, it was my current research topic at that time that motivated me. In 2004, a few of us worked together on an empirical descriptive research, employing social science methodologies, which was the first of its kind: we dealt with the situation of Hungarian transsexual people.¹⁰²

The theoretical framework of the research was defined by the approach of ethnomethodology, which questions and challenges meanings that are considered self-evident, and stresses the significance of *creating* reality manifesting itself in the language-based description of

⁹⁹ De Lauretis, Theresa (1988) “Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation.” In: H. Abelove, M.A. Barale, D.M. Halperin, eds. *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. 1993, New York: Routledge. 141-158.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Gal, Susan (1996) “Feminism and Civil Society.” In: *REPLIKA* 1996 Special Issue. 75-81.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Kathleen Kuehnast (2000) “Ethnographic Encounters in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. Dilemmas of Gender, Poverty and the Cold War.” In: H.G. De Soto and Nora Dudwick, eds. *Fieldwork Dilemmas. Anthropologists in Postsocialist States*. 2000. 100-118.; or De Soto, Hermine G. (2000) “Crossing Western Boundaries. How East Berlin Women Observed Women Researchers from the West after Socialism, 1991-1992” In: H.G. De Soto and Nora Dudwick, eds. *Fieldwork Dilemmas. Anthropologists in Postsocialist States*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press 73-99.

¹⁰² The research started by the Hatter Society for Gays and Lesbians in Hungary is summarized in: Judit Takács, ed. (2006) *A lélek műtétéi*. (“The Operations of the Soul”) Budapest: Új Mandátum Kiadó.

different situations, instead of getting to know a reality that presumably exists independent of us.¹⁰³ There is an inherent assumption in the question that seems to be so simple based on our everyday experience, that is, what makes someone a woman or a man: the assumption that the two categories are clearly given and mutually exclusive, that they exclude transitions, and can clearly be separated from one another.¹⁰⁴

There are several reasons why I thought it was useful to include the discussion of transsexuality (which is organized around an active dissatisfaction with gender characteristics) in teaching about gender studies. First, because the difficulties of defining transsexuality are rooted in the – more and more obvious – difficulties of defining sex. In the theoretical discourse of the social sciences it has almost become a commonplace to analytically separate (biological) sex, gender and sexuality, that is, to acknowledge that one's sex does not necessarily define either one's gender or one's sexual identity. However, through studying the phenomenon of transsexuality, we can not only get to question the Butlerian „illusionary identities”, but arrive at the theoretical deconstruction of biological sex.

Second: through the history of the social treatment of transsexuality we can also obtain very useful pieces of information about the formation of the terminology of gender studies. The idea that one's gender identity is exclusively defined by one's biological sex was challenged already in the 1940s: the distinction between psychological and genetic sex became general especially among doctors and researchers dealing with intersexuality. In the case of intersexual people, their liminality as for their biological status could not be considered a self-evident point of departure when it came to the formation of their gender identity. Their gender was defined by doctors when they were children: thus, the pillars of their gender identity could be hormones, chromosomes or other physiological factors, but only the expectations pertaining to (social) gender roles, according to which they were brought up as men or women. The explanatory force of psychological sex, stemming from the context of correcting ambiguous gender characteristics, makes it applicable for transsexuality, too. In the case of transsexual people, their biological sex may have meant a self-evident starting point to the shaping of their gender identity, but it was just this definition of their gender that they could not reconcile with their real inner self while shaping their own self-identity.

¹⁰³ Garfinkel, Harold (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

¹⁰⁴ Kessler, Suzanne J. – McKenna, Wendy (1978) *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

In the 1960s, Robert J. Stoller, an American psychoanalyst began to use the expression (social) gender identity in the sense of psychological sex.¹⁰⁵ The new terminology made it possible to separate sexual identity (linked to sexual practices and phantasies) on the one hand, and gender roles on the other hand, which reflect the expectations of the society (manifesting themselves in masculine and feminine modes of behavior), and what individuals feel towards their gender identity, related to their being men or women.

The concept of gender, which has become so widely used in the English language area, had begun to be built into scientific common knowledge by the 1960s, partly due to the innovation of psychiatrists, who tried to explain, among other things, transsexuality, too. The *concept of gender*, which changes historically as well as culturally, is so appealing just because it makes the seemingly fixed biology (at least analytically) separable from seemingly fixed biological sex characteristics, and may even be contrasted with them. The British Ann Oakley tried to show the independence of gender identity (taken on in one's social life) from bodily gender through the example of transsexuals, also introducing the concept of gender (taken from the medical discourse) into the sociological discourse in 1972.¹⁰⁶ However, her model, inspired by feminism and trying to relativize the significance of biological differences, which regarded biological sex as a firm raw material and gender as a changeable social construction, showed its weaknesses precisely when it came to transsexuality, which works with a different raw material.¹⁰⁷

One of the most important results of the debates about the social phenomenon of transsexuality is the formation of a new approach to gender relations, which is more nuanced, accepts different transitions and continuity, and is becoming more and more widespread – instead of the monolithic dualism of earlier times. On this basis, the discussion of transsexuality in classes about gender proved to be a fertile soil of surveying the basic theoretical frameworks from several different points of view.

¹⁰⁵ Stoller, Robert J. (1968) *Sex and Gender*. New York: J. Aronson.

¹⁰⁶ Oakley, Ann (1972) *Sex, Gender and Society*. London: Temple Smith.

¹⁰⁷ Orobio de Castro, Ines (1993) *Made to Order. Sex/Gender in a Transsexual Perspective*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.

Finally, I would like to mention that I began to work on a new research on the changes of fathers' roles in 2005. It focuses on changing social norms and fatherhood as a characteristic male role. My new research subject has already influenced the curriculum of my courses: I assign more and more readings about fatherhood, and about the transformation of men's roles in general.

Anna Wessely, Perspectives

Restructuring university education according to requirements of the Bologna Agreement in fact only accelerates processes that have been going in the field of Hungarian higher education, and in other countries, too. Although it also declares the importance of academic freedom, it essentially strengthens supposedly marketable professional training forms at the expense of what we could call the arousing and satisfying of the need for getting to know and understanding things, as well as being able to orient oneself in a reflective way. This one-sidedness is supposed to be mitigated by the obligation that all university students should attend a certain number of so-called "intellectuals' training" courses. Needless to say, this is both delusion and self-deception. The more unpredictable the marketability of certain trainings are in the near future, the more people expect that universities should ensure education valued by the labor market. And the more clear it is that instead of diplomas proving that someone had gained a special training, universities only issue admission cards into different levels of the labor market, which certify that their holders can learn anything in case it is needed, the more loudly universities are going to argue that their specialized trainings are as practical as anything. Behind this quibbling in higher education, there is a very tangible transaction: only those universities can afford the luxury of specialized trainings of high standard that have basic (BA and MA level) trainings crowded by students: it is only their tuition fees or the state funding institutions are due to get after them that makes it possible for universities to finance their time- and resource-consuming work with doctoral students.

In this structure, lectures on *gender studies* will have a secure place among non subject-specific courses – which students are obliged to "acquit". The teacher of the subject will not be in an enviable position. S/he will have only one semester to talk matters over "in general" about the significance of considerations related to *gender*, as s/he cannot expect that the

students who are studying the basics of very different professions have any in-depth historical, sociological, psychological or philosophical knowledge to which s/he could refer to illuminate the heuristic value of this approach. Students for whom any ground is a *terra incognita* will not be shocked at finding out that they know nothing about the changes of women's legal position in European history, the theological interpretations of women's sexuality, or how men's and women's gender roles mutually presuppose and construct one another. If the lecturer is really clever, s/he will at least try to be amusing, so that s/he can avoid being regarded as a late successor of the teachers of outdated ideological subjects.

The other possibility is, of course, that *gender studies* becomes a subject, and is taught on an MA or doctoral level. In this case, we should openly admit the fact our colleagues in other departments tend to demurely conceal: that getting a diploma does not mean that one has the necessary training to fulfill a certain job. It only means that one has a qualification, proving that s/he had obtained a diploma at a university, which is in fact a requirement of most job applications. However, teaching gender studies would mean that we have to face new challenges: we wouldn't be allowed to prey on conventional professions, which we have been doing in a very fruitful way. We would have to construct the field of *gender studies* as a discipline, as well as its methodological principles that express its characteristic viewpoints.

This is still a question for the future, but it is very close. However, I should talk about the past now. Although I have held classes related to *gender*, in fact I do not teach, but use gender studies intensively and consciously in my lectures on sociology, cultural theory, aesthetics, and art history. The classes I held at the Gender Studies Program of the Central European University mirrored this practice: I taught philosophical, anthropological and sociological cultural theories to students who chose *gender studies* as their major subject. And this is not an accident. Just as the existence of social classes, orders or milieus and individuals' belonging to these groups is not the object but a point of view of analyzing social structures as well as individual or collective actions, the gender of individuals as well as the interpretations of gender in different social situations and institutional orders are also exceptionally significant *analytical points of view* in each and every branch of arts and social sciences. The heuristic force of these points of view always reveals itself when we are examining specific situations and scientific problems. Arlie Russell Hochschild began to elaborate the concept of *emotional labor* when she was studying a profession usually filled by women (that of

stewardesses)¹⁰⁸, Susan Gal got to the definition of the fractal-like structure of public and private spheres when analyzing the social and political practices of Eastern-European women¹⁰⁹; Claudia Honegger identified the turn of physical and philosophical anthropology in the late-18th century while examining the history of theories about women¹¹⁰; Anna Chave rendered an illuminating analysis of Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* and the roots of cubism mobilizing the viewpoint of the figures' gender and race affiliations¹¹¹, etc. Luckily, I could list pages of excellent examples, but even the list of authors and works I refer to in my lectures and seminars would be very lengthy. However, it is not talking about representative theories and achievements that matters, but that applying the point of view of gender should become so self-evident that students should recognize the lack of it, and demand its use in any course on arts or social sciences.

List of Contributors

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¹⁰⁸ *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. University of California Press, 1983.

¹⁰⁹ „A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction”, *Differences* 13 (2002), 1, pp. 77-95.

¹¹⁰ *Die Ordnung der Geschlechter. Die Wissenschaften vom Menschen und das Weib 1750-1850*. Frankfurt-New York: Campus, 1991.

¹¹¹ “New Encounters with *Les Femmes d'Alger*: Gender, Race and the Origins of Cubism”, *Art Bulletin*, 1994.

avantgarde, and free verse prosodies to women's fiction, gender studies, and U.S. Studies theories. She has published three books on American literature: *Az amerikai irodalom története* [A History of American Literature], Budapest: Osiris, 2005; *Charles Olson*, New York: Twayne, 1992; *Tradition and Innovation in American Free Verse*, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986. Her numerous essays have appeared in international scholarly journals such as *American Quarterly*, *Journal of Pragmatics, Language and Style*, and *Word and Image*. Currently she is working on *Performing Texts: American Writing as Act and Dialogue*, a pragmatic approach to textual constructions of identity and reality.

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