

MARGIT KAFFKA AND DOROTHY RICHARDSON: A COMPARISON

STEVEN TÖTÖSY de ZEPETNEK

University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta,
Canada

One of the things that handicaps women writers in our - and every other - culture is that there are so very few stories in which women can figure as protagonists. Our literature is not about women. It is not about women and men equally. It is by and about men.
(Russ 4)

Livia K. Wittmann suggests in her article "Feministische Literaturkritik - ein Ansatz der vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft" that a central objective of comparative literature could be "Auf internationaler Ebene herausarbeiten, wann, wo und wie neue Weiblichkeitsvorstellungen in den Literaturen erscheinen, solche, die den realen Lebenserfahrungen der Frauen gerecht/er werden" (122).¹ In my opinion, such an objective indeed represents an exciting and surely fruitful perspective for the comparatist. Following the suggestion, I would like to explore in this study the possibilities of a comparative analysis of women writing from a feminist point of view.² The subjects of the analysis will be the Hungarian author Margit Kaffka's (1880-1918) and the British author Dorothy Richardson's (1873-1957) selected prose works. It should be added here that while turn-of-the-century women were, as we know, op(re)pressed - to a higher degree than today - and while the following analysis of Kaffka's and Richardson's prose thus appears to state the obvious, the aim of this article is directed by the postulate of Wittmann. Also, since Kaffka is not accessible to the English readership³ while Richardson and the secondary literature on her works are, I shall devote more attention to the introduction and discussion of Kaffka's work.

Kaffka is a canonized *woman* author. Such important authors and critics as the contemporary Aladár Schöpflin, Gábor Kemény, and members of the "Nyugat" group, and more recently Joseph Reményi, Dalma H. Brunauer, György Bodnár, László Fülöp, and Anna Földes, for example, have published articles and books on her work. For instance, in the *A magyar irodalom*

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története 1905-től 1909-ig, the entry on Kaffka contains the statement that this author is the most important Hungarian woman novelist and that her novel *Színek és évek* (Colours and Years, written in 1911 and published in 1912) is one of the best, most harmonious, and best developed Hungarian novels (216). Although in the critical body of Western literatures Kaffka, as an author from a marginal literature, is less noted, *The International Dictionary of Women's Biography* contains a several paragraphs long entry on her (Uglow 256). However, a distinction should be made between the canonization of Kaffka as an author *per se* and her importance as a *woman and feminist* author. My reading of the secondary literature is that, in general, Hungarian literary criticism has not as of yet developed a critical corpus from feminist point(s) of view.⁴ For this reason, Kaffka's work has not been read and analysed from such a critical perspective.⁵

We know that one of the first steps in the inclusion of the large body of women's writing in literary recognition (canonization) is the establishing of the corpus of their works and, hand-in-hand with that, descriptions of their biographies. In the case of Kaffka, where it has been first done from a feminist point of view, this was done in an English-language article, "A Woman's Self-Liberation: The Story of Margit Kaffka (1880-1918)" by Dalma H. Brunauer, published in 1978. The article does not offer a literary analysis of her works. Nevertheless, it establishes Kaffka's importance as a feminist author through her biography (cf. also Brunauer 1982).⁶ It is also true that in Hungarian criticism, Kaffka is *occasionally* recognized as a feminist voice. For example, in Nemeskürty's *Diák, írj magyar éneket: a magyar irodalom története 1945-ig* (1983) we can read: "Abban az asszony-írói hangversenyben, amelyben tisztán és áthatóan egy Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Zelma Lagerlöf műve szól, Kaffka Margit egyenértékű, egyéni varázsú, felejthetetlen hang." ("In the concerto of women's writing, in which the works of Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, and Zelma Lagerlöf are clear and penetrating, the voice of Margit Kaffka is tantmount to individuality, it is magical in the personal, and it is unforgettable") (Gábor Thurzó, qtd. in Nemeskürty 2 701). The most elaborate literary analysis of Kaffka's works appeared in György Bodnár's *A "mese" lélekvándorlása*, whose subtitle significantly is "A modern magyar elbeszélés születése" ("The Birth of Modern Hungarian Narrative") (1988). The objective of this study not being an evaluation of the critical body on Kaffka, I only venture to say the following: While it appears that Bodnár's analysis approaches a certain awareness of Kaffka's feminist stand, it is so only in the most innocuous and implicit way. Bodnár's main point is that Kaffka wrote her novels in the general context of the Hungarian gentry's demise and degeneration and only within that context is the feminist stand given a place

and justification - and no analysis. Without any doubt, Kaffka's works demonstrate that she stepped outside the gentry thematics and when she does that, as, for example, in the novel *Két nyár* (Two Summers) (1916), her writing clearly establishes a feminist position. (Obviously, this position exists in *all* her writing.)

Dorothy Richardson, as an English-language author and placed within the now existing significant body of feminist literary criticism, is definitely established as a feminist author. As the basis of a comparison between her and Kaffka is the proposition by Wittmann, namely the objective of comparatist studies to research and to establish when, where, and how new woman's images appear in literature. Gillian E. Hanscombe's "Introduction"⁷ presents a good example of such recognition:

Of the early twentieth-century English modernists, there is no one who has been more neglected than Dorothy Miller Richardson. There are several reasons for this. First, the style she forged in the writing of *Pointed Roofs*, the first volume of the *Pilgrimage* sequence, was new and difficult, later earning the nomination "stream-of-consciousness." *Pointed Roofs* was published in 1915 and was, therefore, the first example of this technique in English, predating both Joyce and Woolf, its more famous exponents. Secondly, the thoughts and feelings of its protagonist, Miriam Henderson, are explicitly feminist, not in the sense of arguing for equal rights and votes for women, but in the more radical sense of insisting on the authority of a woman's experience and world view. (1)

Hanscombe's third reason for her interest in Richardson's works, the author's relationship with German culture, although an important one, is less significant in the comparison with Kaffka's work. The first two, however, fall within the argued base, the significance of a specifically woman's and feminist position. These two, an innovative narrative style and the feminist position, I argue, are elements of Kaffka's writing as well.

In this study, I shall focus on the sociological significance of the feminist point(s) of view apparent in the selected prose of these two authors. Following Wittmann's postulate, I am aware of the importance of these authors' innovative narrative and I shall briefly discuss this aspect as well. However, in my view it is the socio-literary significance that should be pronounced in the first instance. In the case of Kaffka this is obvious because of her primary position in formulating the "facts" of women's position in Hungarian society before the First World War. In the case of Richardson, this focus is also justified because, in her case, the secondary literature focused on her narrative innovation and consequently, the socio-literary significance of her writing has been neglected.

The comparison of Kaffka and Richardson can begin with their similar social and educational background. Both come from an impoverished gentry and upper-middle class background, respectively; both had a strict religious (Catholic and Protestant, respectively) upbringing, and both were teachers. Kaffka's experiences of marriage and the male's world were more laden with negative experiences than those of Richardson. One interesting and telling example from Kaffka's life should serve here as a pointer. Endre Ady, the great Hungarian poet, is often mentioned as a friend of the young Kaffka. (This I take to be a kind of legitimization of Kaffka's importance as a poet in her younger years.) It is the more telling that one of Kaffka's first encounters with Ady was a disaster, exactly because of the apparent manifestation of patriarchal values on the part of Ady. On the occasion of a dinner party, Ady and Kaffka left together in a horse-drawn cab. Ady, who drank copiously during the dinner, made physical advances towards the attractive young woman (*nota bene*, not the writer, but the woman). Kaffka, who was interested in an exchange of ideas with the prominent and admired (by her, too) poet, was obviously distraught and disillusioned (qtd. Földes 89-90 from Dezső Szabó, *Életeim*).

An important dissimilarity of Richardson and Kaffka is their span of life and, consequently, their literary output and literary maturity. However, as I am concentrating on Richardson's early work and on Kaffka's prose writing, this dissimilarity becomes immaterial as the works considered all appeared before 1919, that is, shortly before and during the First World War. From Richardson's works I have chosen the above-mentioned *Pilgrimage* trilogy and from Kaffka's works the novel *Színek és évek* (Colours and Years) (1912).

To begin with Kaffka's *Színek és évek*, the novel is the story of Magda Pórtelky, the development of a woman in the gentry environment of demise and decadence, where a woman's only choice is marriage (Szabolcsi 224-25), and resignation to patriarchal values in society. Magda's disillusionment with her life begins with the realization that the initial game of the sexes, the dance of conquest and submission (social and sexual), is disproportionate to the aftermath, the reality of female submission in marriage (78-79). The reigning social codes and the importance of material considerations are omnipresent and determining factors of a woman's defenceless and subordinate position in society:

A tél végén már volt valami házassági terve énvelem, s a sánta lábú Kendy Elemérrel, akire nyolcszáz hold néz.... Akkor először öntött el hirtelen valami keserűség a tehetetlen voltom, lányi kiszolgáltatottságom éreztén. De nem lelt kifejezést; visszafjótott ott hamarosan a családi fegyelem és szokástisztelet megnyugtató, mert sehova nem fellebezhető rendjében. (95)

At the end of winter she already had some marriage plans with me and the limping Elemér Kendy, who was expecting eight hundred hectares [of land]. ... At this, the first time, I was filled suddenly with bitterness about my impotence and about my young female defencelessness. But this could not express itself; soon it shriveled into the soothing order of familial obedience and the respect of convention, which cannot be appealed anywhere. (95. All translations from the Hungarian are mine.)

The comfortable societal quality, that she is always surrounded by people whom she knows and whose families are intimate with her family, in no way alleviates the subordinate position she finds herself in as a girl and as a "maniable" girl (100). The marriage of Magda is, for all intents and purposes, arranged. After the Kendy match does not work out, her grandmother orchestrates another, now with a socially inferior, but financially acceptable "suitor," Jenő Vodicska. The fact remains however, that she willingly, or almost willingly goes along with convention. Her almost willing submission to convention and custom is perhaps the most tragic aspect of the situation and the most telling perspective - a paradigmatic social factor - of her position as a woman. When her "almost willingness" results in an inability to pretend love to the chosen groom, her family does not understand and blames her for being inept. Magda's inner response is "Vajon sohasem gondoltak arra, hogy asszony is megunhat, megelégelhet, elküldhet egy férfit?" ("I wonder whether they ever considered that a woman too can get tired of, cannot stomach any more, can send packing a man?") (104). Magda's immediate relationship with her "chosen" is confused. The young man, who realizes her qualities albeit still in an environment of male superiority, attempts to comfort her. She is responsive: "Hihetetlen nagy zavar volt bennem ebben a percben. Talán igaz ez, talán igaz!' dobbant fel valami a bensőmben. Senki, sohasem beszélt velem ilyen komolyan, atyáskodón még ... ". ("There was an incredible confusion in me at this moment. 'Perhaps it is true, perhaps it is!' No one ever spoke with me with such sincerity or with such fatherliness ...") (107). Magda's innate and significant revolt against both her own fleeting "gratitude" for the apparent sensitivity of her future husband and, implicitly, her objection to the social environment follows immediately her feeling of "gratitude": "De rögtön előtört valami gúnyos szégyenkezés bennem a könnyeim, az érzékenyülésem miatt. ... Hogy mer bíraskodni a hozzám tartozók felett?" ("But immediately something of an ironical shame broke to the surface in me, because of my own tears and affection. ... How dare he pass judgement on what belongs to me alone?") (107). Magda's struggle against the imposition of women's codes and behaviour, throughout her life, here and later, is always bound to universal codes, which most of the time work in support of the codes and required behaviour she is struggling against. In this instance, when her mother notices

her upset state, her objection to the environment of her impending marriage, she monologizes thus: "Milyen okosan beszélt most.... És igaza van, és az anyáknak mind igazuk van, tudtam én ezt. Sokkal okosabb voltam, semhogy valami bolondot, lehetetlent képzeljek." ("And how true it was what she said.... She was right. All mothers are right, I knew. I was much smarter than to imagine something silly or impossible") (111). And she gives up her struggle and marries Vodicska. In the narrative there are few references to sexuality or eroticism in their relationship. But why should there be? She did not love or feel physical attraction to this man. Rather, the realities of married life, as imposed on women, soon enough manifest themselves: "Az uram most kelt fel... jószagú vizektől és szappantól friss az egész ember.... És most elmegy innét mindjárt rend behozva, megreggelizve, kielégülten, mosolygósan; én pedig összeszedem utána a lomot, megvetem az ágyat, kihordom a tegnapi szennyes ruhát, eltörülöm a kávécsészét..." ("My husband just got up ... the whole man smelt of cologne and soap. ... And now he will leave like a gentleman, after breakfast, satisfied, and smiling, while I clean the junk he leaves, make the bed, put away yesterday's dirty laundry and clean the coffee cups...") (112-13). And she continues to list and describe the myriad house chores she is "responsible" for, finally asking herself: "És ez most már így is lesz mindig. Meddig? ... Amíg csak élünk!... " ("And this will continue. How long? ... For as long as we live!") (113). Her only remedy, if one can call it that, turns out to be a total commitment to the household. As mentioned before, Magda's struggle is compounded by the necessary pretense of social standing. The couple's financial situation is disproportionate to the expectations of their social position. Thus she must maintain the appearance of a gentry household (116-17). This makes her position more difficult, since she cannot break away from the demands social expectations place upon her and her husband. Her mother, again, attempts to give her her view of the "wife's" duties and ways of successfully combining the demands of marriage and social standing:

A házasságban egy kis ravaszság a főtudomány. Elsiklani a dolgokon, kicsit nyájaskodni, aztán tehetsz amit akarsz. Nem az a fő, hogy felül maradjunk a szóvitákban, hanem hogy belsőleg szabadok maradjunk, és simán éljünk. Azért férfi, hogy ámitsuk kicsit, szeretetből! (117)

In a marriage a little cunning is the most important ingredient. Don't notice things and be sweet to him, and you can do whatever you want. The important thing is not to win verbal battles but to remain free inside yourself, and that you can live smoothly. Deceive him a little out of love, that is why he is a man! (117)

Magda's efforts to comply with both demands, the marital and the social, are unsuccessful, perhaps because she does both under duress and, more

importantly, because she does not believe in the demands placed upon her by either.

An important episode in the novel brings out the clash of these imposed and forced commitments. It happens when she puts on an impressive dinner for her close relatives. Her husband's parents, who have no understanding for the demands of gentry pretense, openly disapprove of a gala dinner put on by the young couple (122-25). Such and other events in Magda's young marriage prove the validity of her struggle against the impositions of the society in which she lives. Yet, her strength does not let her succumb. Measured on the example of an elderly relative, she admits the possibility that "Lám, az asszonyélet... sem végső lemondás és elszakadás mindentől; van esélye, története, vágya - fájdalma is tán" ("The life of a woman... is not a final resignation and rupture from everything; it has a chance, a history, wishes and desires - perhaps even its own suffering") (127). This recognition on Magda's part establishes a psychological mechanism, which in turn is a manifestation of the "new woman," who, despite the omnipresence of gender oppression, aims at the liberation of her emotional and structural individuality. The "new woman," in its Hungarian context, appears for the first time in Kaffka's works as the depiction of the woman who wants to realise herself not through the male (husband), but through *herself* (Földes 118). At the same time, life continues to represent women's oppression and defencelessness. In this, Kaffka depicts the real difficulties of this "new woman." The self-realisation cannot result in victory for herself because while she demolishes her former dependence (still a kind of security), her new *partial* independence leads her into the morass of insecurity. For this *partial* emancipation she has to pay with her happiness in the intricacies of male/female relationship (Földes 118). In *Színek és évek* the relationship between Magda and Jenő and later Dénes, this problematical configuration of women's awakening is particularly prominent. And the lines of the configuration are fluid, i.e., they flow in and out at all levels of personal and social interaction. For example, the relationship between Magda and Jenő undergoes further open deterioration, when an admirer sends a love letter to her. She refuses the advances and destroys the letter and its contents: the admirer and his offer of an extra-marital relationship are only a fleeting possibility to Magda. Jenő observes the burning of the letter and questions Magda. When she refuses to divulge the demanded explanation, he hits her. Interestingly and tellingly, when she goes to her grandmother to talk and to seek some assurance and support, she cannot speak about it and their talk turns into a discussion about a suitor of her mother, who is a dreamy and unsuccessful social reformer. The situation of abuse, as often, turns into the husbands demonstrations of remorse, promises, Magda's desire to believe, and

the birth of their child... Yet, the continuation of their relationship after this incident appears to stabilize in the sense that Magda lets her aspirations and rebellion momentarily go underground. Jenő made advances professionally and financially (the social arena) and Magda somehow manages to enjoy her life (the personal arena), mainly by letting herself be caught up in provincial politics through her husband and by a total commitment to her household, both traditional parameters of a "wife's" and "mother's" existence. Nevertheless, the descriptions in the narrative that demonstrate the continuing marital and social demands, do not diminish her innate objection and struggle against these demands and impositions, even if at times they retreat into the background of awareness.

The initially successful fortunes of Jenő in provincial politics end in tragedy. After losing an election and accumulating debts, he commits suicide. The years after result in more experiences of defencelessness, now of course compounded by the syndrome of the "widow" and the "single mother." Magda moves to the capital and becomes disgusted with the different yet equally objectionable social circumstances and the obvious advances men make towards the pretty widow, the open prey.⁸ After a few weeks, she decides to leave this highly charged and disagreeable urban environment and returns to her home town. Since the death of Jenő, a friend of both, Dénes Horváth, also a lawyer, shows interest in and sensitivity for her. They have many talks which help Magda to overcome her fragile emotional state. Soon he is a suitor. The decision to marry again does not come easy. Magda walks with open eyes and observes and absorbs much around her. The descriptions of these observations tell us as much about the people and circumstances she analyses as about herself. In one instance, she inwardly exclaims "Ó, csak a fiatalság, csak az ne múlna el soha... Igen, nekem még van egy kicsi, hova tegyem?" ("Oh, youth, if only it would last forever... Yes, I still have a little of it, what should I do with it?") (235). But this serious and profound universal quality, expectation from life, will again betray her. It will betray her because of women's position in society. She has no way out but to resign to what everyone expects to be the norm.

In substance, Magda's life has not changed. The three forces pulling her, sometimes all in one, more often in different directions, are her acute awareness of her marginalized and defenceless position in society, her fear of growing old and what that means for a woman, and her resulting resignation that "úgy látszik, nem voltam küzdésre és függetlenségre alkalmas! De más révén, egy férfi révén tudtam akarni erősen, mindig" ("it seems, I was not able to fight and be independent! But through another, *through a man* I could want strongly, always") (259). Acting consequently with the recognition of having no choice, she marries the supporting old friend, Dénes. And soon the old and

already experienced environment of marriage and its trap engulfing the woman claim Magda. In addition to the well-known circumstances of servitude on the part of the wife, the new husband is a spendthrift and a gambler. When she attempts to stop the spending, the result of her attempts ends in the bitter resignation that "Kényszeríteni ilyenre csakugyan nem lehet... hiszen férfi!" ("To force him to do that indeed would be impossible... after all, he is a man!") (265). The marriage proceeds as "expected" and Magda bears children, two daughters. She accepts this and enjoys motherhood but at the same time she continuously struggles against the submission to serve to all the demands of the *paterfamilias*. Of course, she has no recourse, "Csak lélekszakadtig munka, ösztökés kötelesség" ("Only ceaseless work and prodding responsibility") (276). These manifestations of her realization of no choice are intermittently interrupted with glimpses of hope in the future, if not for herself, at least for her daughters: "Asszonyok lesznek valaha, mint én. De nem akarom, hogy sorsuk legkevésbé is hasonlítson az enyémmre. Majd teszek róla!" ("They will become women like me, but I do not want to their lives resemble to mine in the least. I will take care of that!") (277). During the ensuing years her husband slowly turns into an alcoholic, with all the well-known implications for the children and the "wife." The experiences of the woman's position in her society continuously feed her whole being with the negatives and the negation of it all. Perhaps the single most powerful male utterance of position-taking, as well as the a paradigmatic view of society of women, occurs when one protagonist, an otherwise socially progressive man, expresses the following after Magda speaks about her beliefs concerning the new situation of women in society:

Tudatlanok mániája, minden alap nélkül való. Mindig inferiális marad az asszony állapot, nem is lehet másképpen. Hisz az életideje kétharmad részét elfoglalják a fajfentartással járó öntudatlan, állati gondok, kötöttségek, s az értelmét ösztönök igazítják. Ha ezek alól felszabadítja magát, iránytalan, korcs, helyét nem lelő figura lesz, idétlen és boldogtalan. Az asszony vak eszköze a természet céljainak, öntudatra nem jutott, félig még gyökérző, növényéletű lény, akinek minden értéke az akaratlan báj és szépség, mely olyan, mint a virágoké, s a magvak hallgatag, igénytelen, váró termékenysége. Mind a bölcsészek, Platon, Spinoza, Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche megegyeznek ebben. Csak a mai beteges művelődés játszik erőlködve azzal, hogy komolyan számba vegye a nőt. (287)

All this is the mania of the uneducated, it has no base. The female⁹ will always remain inferior, it cannot be otherwise. Two thirds of her life span is taken up by the unconscious, animalistic care and the constraints of procreation, and her mind is governed by instincts. If she liberates herself from this, she will become a degenerate figure, without direction, without a place, idiotic and unhappy. The woman is a blind instrument of nature's purposes, she has not achieved consciousness. She is a still

rooting, plant-like being, whose total value is unintentional grace and beauty, like those of flowers and their seeds* expecting, voiceless, and wantless fertility. All philosophers, Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche agree on this. Only today's sickly games of education labour with the idea that a woman should be taken seriously. (287)

This ferociously sexist statement is not singular or particular, then or now. It has been and still is, perhaps with a different vocabulary, issued. What is revolutionary in Kafka's writing is the act of writing it down while speaking with a woman's voice about the life of a woman. It is her courage to manifest the male voice, and then the descriptions of the results of this male voice! Magda's response, although not in tangible action as far as she herself is concerned, is again and again directed towards hope, even if restricted to her immediate family, to her daughters:

Kislányaim, lelkeim, csak ti tanuljatok! Mindenáron, mindenáron! Ne csináljatok ti semmit a ház körül; majd főzök, seprek, takarítok én, az én kidolgozott kezemnek, szétment, elhanyagolt testemnek már úgyis mindegy. Ti csak készüljétek szebb, diadal-maskodó, független életre; magatok ura lenni, férfi előtt meg nem alázkodni, kiszolgáltatott mosogató cselédje, rugdosott kutyája egynek se lenni. Csak tanuljatok, mindent; ha az utolsó párnám is adom érte! (289)

My darling daughters, you must learn, you must study! At all cost! You do not need to do any chores around the house. I will cook and clean. It does not matter any more for my rough hands, my neglected and deformed body. You must prepare yourselves for a more beautiful, triumphant, and independent life, not to be humiliated by any man, not to become any man's defenceless dishwasher and maid, his kicked-around dog. Learn! Everything - even if I have to sell the shirt off my back! (289)

Increasingly, with advancing years, Magda's only aim is to secure for her daughters a future in which they are able to be independent in mind and body. At the end of Magda's story, when she is an old woman, her retrospective is still resignation and the need to compromise. She notes the desolate uniformity of her life in detail, stretching it to mention that her menopause was uneventful. She recognizes fatalistically that her life, as much she tried to revolt, was directed by superior forces against which she had no chance at all (311-13). Now an old woman, she fits the mold and societal expectations, she even became religious and visits the church and confession. Her hopes find *familial* realization, however. She is alone, but her aim for her daughters seems to have been successful. They are educated and obtained professions. One of the final paragraphs of the novel reads:

Klári is végzett, egyelőre jó zongoraleckékből él, de állás van ígérve neki egy pesti iskolánál. Marcsi azt hiszi, hogy, szerelmes volt egy tanárjába, valami nagy művészbe. Baj is az! Ő ráér erre a fényűzésre, nem kell férjhez szaladnia a kenyérért... (321-22)

Klári too graduated. At the moment she earns good money as a piano teacher but she was promised a position at a school in Pest. Marcsi thought she was in love with one of her teachers, some great artist. Who cares! She can afford such luxury, she does not need to run to a husband for money... (321-22).

Színek és évek is a "multi-dimensional" novel (Fülöp 67). The multi-dimensionality of the novel, its thematics, its psychological, sociological, narratological, etc., dimensions invite an analysis from several points of view. The critical body about Kaffka's works focused on the gentry thematics with sporadic mention of the position of women within the Hungarian gentry. Here, the above demonstrates Kaffka's preoccupation with the sociological factors of patriarchy by describing the sociological with specific attention to the position of women in Hungarian society of the time.

It is an important observation and proposition that Kaffka's novel at hand is a "tudatteremtő, lélekkeremtő [regény]" ("consciousness and spirit creating [novel]") (Fülöp 68). It is an obvious extension of this proposition to say that both aspects, namely the "creation of consciousness" and the "creation of spirit" is to be understood with reference to the woman/fern ale consciousness and spirit. This is its most important feature of innovation. Also, the above proposition by Fülöp is the more important because it underlines the suggested intertwining of the author's innovative sociological perception with narrative innovation. In other words, the exposition and critique of the patriarchal value system occurs in a specific narrative style. Thus, Kaffka's writing, in Wittmann's sense, is successful in the presentation of the new woman on two accounts: The work is a reflective ("visszaemlékező") novel (Fülöp 68-69) and its narrative innovation rests in the creation and in the study of the *Weltanschauung* of the remembering individual. The narrative in the novel expresses by the multitude of reflections not only the level of fictionalizing but, at the same time, it expresses this fictionalization on the level of meditation and intellectual position-taking. This is also important because the Proustian reflective narrative was neither as a primary text nor in the secondary literature apparent either in Hungarian literature or literary scholarship of the time, or in Kaffka's specific development as an author. In this sense, Kaffka's narrative innovation can be positioned in the narration of memory. In this too, her work broke new ground in Hungarian literature.

Richardson's trilogy differs from Kaffka's novel in that it does not have a similar up-front accumulative sociological presentation of the woman's

critique of patriarchal values. However, it is there even if in a more implicit manner. Her work was generally described in terms of a pre-Joycean stream-of-consciousness narrative (cf. Hanscombe 1979, 1982; Fromm; Staley, etc.). In the secondary literature, her innovation of the stream-of-consciousness narration has been sufficiently established. In this, her work is markedly different from that of Kafka. But similarities still abound. One of the areas of similarity inviting analysis is the reflective narrative. As mentioned before, this analysis does not focus on such similarities. What is more appropriate - as this is the main thrust of this study, namely the exposition of the socio-literary in relation to the critique of patriarchal society - is an analysis of Richardson's view of women's position. The trilogy is the reflective account of Miriam and her life, daughter of an impoverished "squire." The story of the first novel, *Pointed Roofs*, takes place largely in Germany - largely, because there are many instances when memory is injected about her previous stages of life - where Miriam obtained a *practicum* for her teacher's education. This novel has to be read carefully, because there is a dimension of strongly and vividly worded national perception in the text in the sense of frequent comparisons between the Germans and the English. What is disturbing in the reading of the novel is not that Miriam criticizes German society, men *and* women, but that she always ends her criticisms with a resolute preference and praise of the "better" English. This kind of nationalistic argumentation for social and cultural superiority is disturbing, particularly in a literary work. However, while this dimension in Richardson's work may be important and inviting for study, in the context of the present analysis it is a secondary dimension. At the same time, this dimension could be perceived, in the comparison with the *Színék és évek*, as an analogy of in that work prominent class perception, i.e., the German environment for Miriam is similar to the gentry environment for Magda. The second novel, *Backwater*, is an account of Miriam's life back in England, again teaching. Perhaps the most important dimension of this novel is Miriam's developing awareness of the submissive role women have in English society, particularly on the level of courtship and social interaction, and her conscious rebellion against religion. In this period of her life, Miriam also struggles with her conflicting emotions about the attraction to loneliness as a conscious choice and what price that would entail. In this struggle, Miriam reveals a mystic dimension of her personality and spirit. Her struggle with the dimension of lone existence is imbued with an implicit (sub/unconscious) sexual referencing (cf. Staley 48-50). In the third novel, in *Honeycomb*, Miriam takes up the position of governess in order to provide better financial support for her family. The affluence she is surrounded by at the Conies', is as much a trigger for envy and the awareness of her

exposed and subordinate position as a trigger to awake social responsibility in her. On the more narrow personal level, Miriam is still yearning for a *male* kindred spirit, which she believes to have found in Mr. Corrie until this hope is destroyed by his public rebuke of her. Another male protagonist, Bob Greville, proposes marriage to her. She refuses to marry him because she cannot reconcile the idea of marriage with the subjugation of the "wife," a necessary element as she well knows. The two immediately personal episodes fully awaken Miriam's rebellion against patriarchy, although she still manifests a yearning for male companionship - as unimaginable as this appears under her terms.

In *Pointed Roofs*, when Miriam is seventeen, she is more concerned with womanly appearance, thus complying more with society's expectations of the "female": "Miriam decided that she was negligible," she thinks when she compares herself to other women in the German school (I 39). In the same vein, Richardson's novels contain implicit references to the "manly" and sexuality (e.g. I 40; II 218-20). In comparison with Kaffka's work the reason for this cannot be that Miriam (and Richardson) was more interested in or occupied with eroticism or sexuality than Magda Pórtelky. It is much more likely that this is rooted in the social environment, both in Germany and in England, which was less rigid in its demands than that of Hungary. Admittedly, this is arguable. It is difficult to propose that in Hungary, in Germany, and in England the class system in general and within a particular class, the mores were or were not less or more prescriptive. Particularly in *Pointed Roofs* the reflection on sociological factors allow for an analysis similar to that of Kaffka's novel above. For example, Richardson writes that the impression of Miriam's physical surroundings "brought Miriam the sense of the misery of social occasions" (I 41). Miriam's objection to religion (e.g. I 48), a dimension in which she finds the "leadership" of men particularly distasteful and which will become an important topic in the second novel, manifests itself most poignantly when the social structure of the exercise of religion is observed: "Listening to sermons was wrong... people ought to refuse to be preached at by these men. Trying to listen to them made her more furious than anything she could think of, more base in submitting... those men's sermons were worse than women's smiles" (I 73). Such and other descriptions by Richardson of Miriam's stay in Germany are acute observations of the patriarchal environment. It is an event to her when "Miriam had made out nothing clearly, but the fact that the dentist's wife had a title in her own right" (I 86). The German preoccupation and tradition of the military is not attacked by Miriam because of a pacifist attitude, for example, but because of what this military element means in relation to the position of women:

'My fazzer is offitser' - as if this were the answer to everything Miriam had tried to say, to her remark about the almond tree and everything else; and then she felt that there was nothing more to be said between them. They were both quite silent. Everything seemed settled. Miriam's mind called up a picture of a middle-aged man in a Saxon blue uniform - all voice and no brains - and going to take to gardening in his old age - and longed to tell Elsa of her contempt for all military men. (I 93)

A personal interchange is not possible between the two young women because of the overwhelming class/patriarchal "importance" of the other woman's social positioning herself by the profession of her father. The position men have in the social structure continuously reminds Miriam of the position women do not have: "His expression disturbed her. Why did he read with that half-smile? She felt sure that he felt they were 'young ladies,' 'demoiselles,' 'jeunes filles.' She wanted to tell him she was nothing of the kind and take the book from him and show him how to read" (I 106). Miriam is continuously depressed about the social structure that prescribes not only the behaviour of women but more importantly, their emotional and spiritual being. Yet she struggles against it:

Miriam envied her. She would like to pour out beer for those simple men and dispense their food... quietly and busily... No need to speak to them, or be clever. They would like her care, and would understand. "Meine Damen" hurt her. She was not a Dame - Was Fräulein? Elsa? Millie was. Millie would condescend to these men without feeling uncomfortable. (I 118)

What is striking in this passage is the recognition on Miriam's part that the position of women is not determined only by class. It is the same in all classes, the gentry, the educated, the working class, etc. Yet, she herself cannot and would not want to break social codes, and when the occasion demands it, she too, like the young woman, whose father was an "offitser," positions herself in class consciousness, for example, when she pointedly remarks to Pastor Lahmann that "My grandfather was a gentleman-farmer" (I 128). But the effect, again, is what Miriam dreads. The Pastor replies:

'You have a beautiful English proverb which expresses my ambition.'
Miriam looked, eagerly listening, into the brown eyes that came round to meet hers, smiling:

"A little land, well tilled,
A little wife, well-willed,
Are great riches."

... It filled her with fury to be regarded as one of a world of little tame things to be summoned by little men to be well-willed wives. (I 128-29)

Miriam, similarly to Magda Pórtelky, often finds herself drawn to the acceptance, and even desire, of social codes prescribed and exercised by patriarchy. But both women again and again find the will to truggle against these codes and demands. Their rebellion takes many emotional, intellectual, and practical forms. At times, it surfaces that this struggle is possible only by deviance. Just as Magda's mother advises her (Magda) to "deceive him [her husband] a little out of love, that is why he is a man" (*Színék és évek* 117. See full quote above), Miriam comes to a similar conclusion: "Men ought not to be told. They must find it out for themselves. [...] But men liked actresses. They liked being fooled" (HI 400).

An interesting and curious chauvinistic consciousness also reveals Miriam's evolution as a feminist woman in the novels. In *Pointed Roofs* there are several references where Miriam's struggle against patriarchal values manifests itself in a dislike of the specifically German manifestations of patriarchal codes. So, for example, when she monologuizes about how German men "had all offended her at once. Something in their bearing and manner... Blind and impudent..." (I 167), and later she says "She was English and free" (I 180). But this chauvinistic differentiation between German and English will not hold once she returns to England. There, her struggle against the impositions of the patriarchy is just as strong as in Germany before. For example, the contemporary manifestation of the "free" woman, who smokes cigarettes: "She had chosen to smoke and she was smoking, and the morning world gleamed back at her" (II 210). And in England the German male, with his specific cultural baggage reveals himself even attractive, as in the figure of Max: "Max must be foreign, of course, German - of *course*. She could, if she liked, talk of the stars to him. He would neither make jokes nor talk science and want her to admire him, until all the magic was gone. Her mood expanded. He had come just at the right moment" (II 219. Richardson's italics).

The explosion of patriarchal codes is paramount to Miriam and it crosses, significantly, all social and class demarcations: "Of course she had never rushed about in a common park where rough boys came. At the same time - if the girls wanted to rush about and scream and wear no hats, nobody had any right to interfere with them" (II 240-41). This example illustrates Miriam's views of the struggle to break down the patriarchal system, thus allowing for gender equality. It also shows the built-in weak point: The reality of the danger of going to the park because of the "rough boys." The struggle against patriarchy is thus often limited by both external (social) and personal positions. For example, as in the case of Magda Pórtelky, who is forced into a choice between marriage and the if-not-married-then-a-spinster, Miriam's only avenue is her acceptance of and resignation in her position as a teacher. (As

she does not marry, she has no children to care for like the widowed Magda, and her family escapes poverty and social disgrace by the help of one of her sister's husband.) Miriam's *cul-de-sac*, her feeling of being trapped in stagnation, is a recurring theme in the three novels at hand (e.g. II 274). The resignation and feeling of entrapment, extensions of the individual situation, would be defeating if Miriam, like Magda, did not always find the strength to claim her own: "I am myself," she exclaims defiantly (II 286). A characteristic of both Magda and Miriam, this is a very important factor and it needs to be repeatedly pointed out because it is perhaps the single characteristic that allows both women, in the last analysis, to survive. Their struggle, continuously endangered by their resignation to the given, coupled with their aptitude to constantly re-structure their own realities, has a chance only with their resolute confirmation of their own worth - despite of what (the contrary) patriarchy demonstrates.

It can be said that Miriam has come further in her struggle than Magda, perhaps because she does not undergo the debilitating experience of marriage and has not been "executed" by the patriarchal demands of behaviour and role designation in that. Although she is more than aware of the male world on several levels ("Why do people always like a noise? Men. All the things men invented, trains and cannons and things make a frightful noise" pi 327]), in her situation and in her mind, there is still the possibility of finding the male, who will treat her as an equal:

She discovered that a single steady unexpected glance, meeting her own, from a man who had the right kind of bearing - something right about the set of shoulders - could disperse all the vague trouble she felt [...] there was no need to be alone in order to be happy. (II 319)

Somehow, independently from Miriam's struggle against patriarchy yet implicitly connected with it, she too, like Magda in Kaffka's novel, feels the loss of social status as deeply tragic (e.g. III 352 and 360). In this, she experiences the same parameters in her "career" as a teacher and governess, as Magda in her second marriage and loss of financial - and consequently social - position (e.g. III 370).

Important as the *possibility* of an equal relationship in marriage appears to Miriam, her observations prove themselves to the contrary. The submissive role that is necessary to have a "good" marriage often appears in her mind:

He might be heavy and fat. But a leading Q.C. must have thoughts... and he had been thin once... and there were those books... and he would read newspapers; perhaps too many newspapers. He would know almost at once that she thought he read too

many newspapers. *She would have to conceal that, to hear the voice going on and leaving her undisturbed.* (III 367. My italics.)

Miriam's perception of the masculine, i.e., patriarchal world is almost always negative (e.g. "Men's ideas were devilish; clever and mean" III 404), but it is very important to understand that this negative perception is grounded in and a result of her acute observation of the world around her and then decision to focus on what she has seen and experienced between men and women:

That was feminine worldliness, pretending to be interested so that pleasant things might go on. Masculine worldliness was refusing to be interested so that it might go on doing things. Feminine worldliness then meant perpetual hard work and cheating and pretence at the door of a hidden garden. Masculine worldliness meant never really being there; always talking about things that had happened or making plans for things that might happen. (III 388)

This macro-cosmos of the masculine, i.e., patriarchal world translates itself to Miriam into a horrible image of the *possibility* of her married state, one which continuously struggles with the other *possibility* of finding an equal partner.

Richardson created the image of a new woman who rebels against patriarchy with a determination rooted in a *Weltanschauung* fully recognizing the position of women in patriarchal society. Miriam's *Weltanschauung* is based on observation and intellectual position-taking. On the other hand, this frame of mind does not operate as a result of personal experiences like Magda Pórtelky's. Both authors and both protagonists arrived at a rejection of their respective patriarchal societies but both did so following different paths. Magda experienced the *effects* of patriarchy while Miriam *observed* them. For Magda the experience turns into the socio-factual, for Miriam the observation turns into intellectual reflection. This difference also accounts for the different narrative in the novels. Kaffka created the reflective narrative but which is socio-factual, while Richardson created the stream-of-consciousness narrative which is a result of her intellectual and emotional reflections of observations.

Notes

1. My own, somewhat narrow theoretical framework of feminist literary criticism is briefly as follows: 1) the critical assessment of the difference between the depiction/description of the male and the female in literature and how women are perceived/described by male and female authors; 2) the critical appraisal when, where, and how new image(s) of women appear in literature (Wittmann); and 3) the analysis of literary texts from a point of view that takes explicitly into account the above first two areas.
2. Although an important question, I would like to avoid here the problem of "male" feminist criticism. I take the position that it is possible for a man to have a feminist point of view. That a "male" feminist point of view is possible, indeed, necessary, I postulated in *In 1991: A Manifesto of Gender Responsibility* (1991).
3. The only translation of Kaffka's works, her short stories, is in Russian and a recent translation of her novel *Színék és évek* is into Italian not yet published.
4. Although, for example, Anna Földes' *Kaffka Margit: Pályakép* (1987) is still in no way an evaluation of Kaffka's works from a feminist point of view, it at least recognizes the patriarchal ideology prominent in the critical corpus on Kaffka. For example: "A kritikusokat megint elsősorban Kaffka témaválasztása, női látásmódja irritálja. Szemére vetik - nem teljesen alaptalanul -, hogy férfi hőseit is nő szemszögéből nézi. Ami fordítva évszázadokon át nem okozott az irodalom történetében gondot, egyszer csak a realizmus megengedhetetlen sérelmének, elfogultságának tekintendő" ("The critics are again, in the first instance irritated by Kaffka's choice of theme and female [N.B. not 'feminisf'] point of view. They reproach her - not without reason - for viewing her male protagonists from a female angle. What has not caused a problem for centuries in the history of literature, suddenly becomes an unforgivable affront towards realism and it is viewed as a biased (prejudiced) position") (123). Although beyond the scope of this article, I question Földes's assessment of the male critical writings on Kaffka. Földes's insertion of "not without reason" is curious; does this mean agreement with these critics?
5. The most explicit reference to a feminist point of view is in Lóránt Czigány's *The Oxford History of Hungarian Literature*, in the chapter "The Writers of the *Nyugat*" under the heading "3. Women in Revolt: Margit Kaffka" (333-36).
6. For a recent treatment of Kaffka and Richardson see Livia K. Wittmann, "Desire in Feminist Narration: Reading Margit Kaffka and Dorothy Richardson," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 21. 3 (September 1994): forthcoming.
7. To the trilogy of Richardson's *Pilgrimage I*, with the novels *Pointed Roofs* (1915), *Backwater* (1916), and *Honeycomb* (1917).
8. The story, until this time occurring in a provincial town, now depicts the urban environment of the capital.
9. In Hungarian, the speaker is using the medieval term "asszonyi állat". In English, the translation of this term would be "the female animal." I found this linear translation too strong - although it corresponds to what the speaker says - and chose "female," in context also connotating a negative perspective.

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