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Ellen Glasgow's Outlook Expressed in Her Essay *Feminism*

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Abstract

Ellen Glasgow's essay *Feminism* appeared in *New York Times* in November 1913. Following her previous interview-article *No Valid Reason against Giving Votes to Women*, published a few months earlier in the same newspaper, Glasgow continues explaining what, in her opinion, feminism is. In *Feminism*, Glasgow gives attempt to disclose the meaning of the term "liberation", which appeared first in *No Valid Reason*. With this purpose, Glasgow goes back in history and discusses some examples of English literature dealing with 'womanly woman', criticizing them, followed by analysis of contemporaneous authors bringing new insight to the concept. The purpose of the present article is to show that, as the perception of 'womanly woman' evolves into more reasonable understanding of natural woman, it is the emerging movement of feminism, which, according to Glasgow, can restore balance in disturbed woman—man relationship.

Keywords: Equality, feminism, 'womanly woman'

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Introduction

For centuries, woman was not considered 'womanly' un she behaved in a 'womanly' way. In her *New York Ti* article of March, 1913, *No Valid Reason against Giving V to Women*, Ellen Glasgow showed that her contemporane members of suffragist (suffragette) movement ventured to b this stereotype. In this article, Glasgow spoke about wom liberation as the ultimate purpose of the movement. A months later, *New York Times* featured another Glasg article, this time an essay, in which Glasgow continues explo the problem. The notion of 'womanly woman', exploitec English classics, had been eventually, fortunately, reconsid by leading English writers. Glasgow reviews some work previous and present (19th) century, moving later to more re works.

Conventional Image of 'Womanly Woman' in Eng Literature

The essay opens with the passage alluding to the key epis from Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, dealing with the no protagonist's visit to an undertaker, when she selects her coffin, orders a broken lily to be attached to the lid, and arrar for it to be sent to her home with the purpose of using it a working desk. Mentioning that this action of the heroine cau the great resonance from the reading public, Glasgow po that the heroine herself became the example of the so-ca 'womanly woman', a perfect embodiment of the masculine i of a woman.

Oxford Lexico defines the 'womanly woman' as "a woman behaves in a manner traditionally regarded as appropriate her sex; a feminine woman", and adds that the term origin in the mid-16th century. In the beginning of her essay, Glas juxtaposes the notions of 'natural woman' and 'womanly wom stating that Richardson was not able to portray the imag 'natural woman' because of the already established mascu stereotypes about woman prevalent in his era. At the same t woman herself became very accustomed to the establis image of hers, leading her to the denial of her true, natural and to the acquisition of her unnatural, artificial essence to extent that "she has denied her own humanity so long an earnestly that she has come at last almost to believe in the f of her denial" (*F*, p. 656).

Glasgow states that no writer before George Meredith well as Thomas Hardy, ventured to ascribe a woman feature natural being, treating her "as if she was the solitary excep from the natural law". Modesty, goodness, self-sacrifice, inordinate capacity for forgiveness were the features ascribe them to 'womanly woman', the image, pleasing the opposite and essentially depriving her of the possibility of development. Indeed, Richardson's Clarissa has to fight for the privilege of being able to follow the dictates of her abusers consciousness. She has to struggle, firstly, with her family, secondly, with Lovelace, and, thirdly, with a society as a whole. Still, being torn cruelly between her love for and loyalty to her parents and her frustrated passion for Lovelace, Clarissa forgives both sides, and, in sign of forgiveness, sacrifices her life in the end. On the one hand, the novel is an account of seduction; on the other hand, it is the story of a nice girl to the realities of life. Clarissa sacrifices herself because, in her soul, she remains obedient to the authority of her family, considering herself to be indelibly defiled by Lovelace.

The 'womanly woman', depicted by the writers of the 18th-early 19th centuries, says Glasgow, was totally satisfied with her modest status of an observer of man. It was pleasant for man to be reminded that woman was inactive and not prone to change, and no writer before Meredith and Hardy dared break this stereotype, proclaiming instead that she was, and actually had always been the 'adventurous' sex. A contemporary of Richardson's, Henry Fielding, who criticized the approach of his predecessor's toward social problematic, reincarnated Richardson's Pamela as the symbol of philistinism and class arrogance (Anikin & Mikhalskaya, 1975), a distorted version of the womanly woman. However, even fearless Fielding could not dare challenge the prevalent bias toward woman, believing that "woman was made of different clay from man", i.e. "while he progresses, she, corresponding to some fixed ideal of her, remains static" (*F.*, p. 656).

To illustrate Fielding's attitude, Glasgow refers to the sentimentalist novel of late Fielding *Amelia*. Her point is that the author admires Amelia, while ascribing to her features, making her an admirable woman in the traditional sense of this word. Indeed, Amelia's husband William loves her, but is not faithful to her, cheating her with another woman. Nevertheless, Amelia remains loving and faithful to her husband, forgiving his 'sin', thus remaining a perfect 'womanly woman'. Stating that in her times the world has already overcome the misconception that admiring a dissolute husband is an obligation of a woman if she wants to be considered 'woman', Glasgow points out that, still, one cannot help admiring Amelia for her capacity to love. Being a 'womanly woman' in the traditional sense, Amelia possesses the features of 'natural woman' at the same time.

From Richardson and Fielding, Glasgow moves to Dickens and Thackeray. These 'kindhearted gentlemen' do not perceive their women characters otherwise than clad in crinoline, nowadays an old-fashioned Victorian dress. Alluding to Dickens's women characters in general, and, in particular to his novel *The Old*

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Curiosity Shop owned by Mrs. Jarley, Glasgow identifies female characters with waxwork figures, which became pop in Victorian times starting from Madame Tussaud's muse Depiction of a woman as a waxwork figure is viewed Glasgow as a compliment to Queen Victoria, as her image i emblematizes waxwork figures popular in her times. The women who are truly 'natural', and not 'womanly' are Dicke old, ugly, and wicked women, as they are paradoxically depr of unnatural, 'waxwork' traits and enlivened as actual hu beings. Indeed, in *Oliver Twist*, for example, there are 'g ladies, such as Miss Rose or Mrs. Maylie. Miss Rose, the who cares for Oliver, is like a kind-hearted doll made of Her guardian, Mrs. Maylie is a kind, caring, loving woman, is ready for everything to please Oliver. If we compare them each other, and then contrast them with another character o novel, Nancy, we observe a striking difference. Miss Rose Mrs. Maylie are extremely flat characters, they are as flat as smooth surface of a waxwork figure, as perfect and 'dead the same time, as Madame Tussaud's displays. As for Na she is truly different. Being a 'bad' girl, member of the g led by Fagin, she is nevertheless a very round character. is bad by the nature of her occupation, but in her soul sh genuine, sincere, and warm, but her warmth is not the wa of an enlivened puppet of the waxwork theater, no, she ha authentic soul full with strengths and weaknesses, peculia a living human being. Nancy works for Fagin, as she has other option, but she is willing to defend Oliver whenever h in danger. She loves her sweetheart, Bill Sykes, but she ca accept his cruelty even at the moments he faces life and de Nancy is a 'bad good girl', a living woman, in contrast to 'g good girl' characters, who are in fact not living creatures waxwork figures.

Reconsidering the Image of 'Womanly Woman'

As for Meredith and Hardy, they move away from the and early 19th century sentimentality with regard to wom character, and, not deviating completely from traditional patte ascribe to woman 'capricious' traits, thus converting an unna waxwork womanly woman into a newer woman, whose fea of caprice makes her more feminine and natural.

At the same time, before Meredith and Hardy portrayed heroines, women were usually depicted from what toda regarded as the 'sexist' attitude. The woman should not only for man, she *was expected* to die for man, as the sole mea of her life whether in the beginning, or the middle, or the er her existence was only man. Deprived of the support of she was seen, by definition of Thackeray, as a 'tender paras And in correspondence with this definition she was viewe the sanctified tradition as an ever-passive creature – including during her obligation to perform her spousal duty, as even in love she was assumed to sit obediently and meekly and expect for the will of her husband. Whenever she became restless, Glasgow says, it only meant that she "was not the womanly woman", as by firm conviction of previous novelists, to become restless was an exceptional right and duty of man. This belief that it is only man's destiny to become restless has been firmly inscribed in the core belief of the masculine gender so deeply that it even made prominent man-of-letters John Galsworthy say that the passion for being wild "never dies in man's heart", which implies that this very passion was never to be born in the heart of a woman, or, if it was, then it died there in the state of embryo. Meredith and Hardy depicted many examples of 'restless' female creatures, let alone Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles with the love affair story similar to that of Glasgow's Dorinda Oakley. Tess is a young, immature, but, still, honest and daring maiden who is not afraid to go to the D'Urbervilles estate to find a job. She is so pure, so undefiled, and so active at the same time. Having met Alec D'Urberville, she immediately feels danger coming from him, however her parents encourage her to keep the relationship. Alec takes advantage of her, noble and pure creature, being forced to be passive womanly woman, and she bears child in her disgrace. Neither willing, nor inclined to be a womanly woman, Tess eventually is forced to face being the one, as she is humiliated by her second sweetheart as well. Glasgow's Dorinda Oakley could have faced the same destiny, had she not been made of different clay by Glasgow's conception. Dorinda falls in love with Jason Ealgood, but he defiles her by betraying her with another woman, looking for better fortunes. In contrast to Tess, who, finding the substitute for her abuser, only has to face another disappointment, Dorinda refuses to look for the one, and remains alone, a strong, venturing, restless woman, fighting for her future. Hardy's Tess is feminine, Glasgow's Dorinda is feminist, but neither of them is a 'womanly woman' in the traditional sense, both of them are restless, reckless creatures, not resembling their passive counterparts of the Victorian and earlier times.

The passivity of 'tender parasitism' of a 'womanly woman' has other expressions as well. Glasgow recalls John Galsworthy, who, according to her, "possesses an understanding of woman's nature", both her strengths and weaknesses, unacceptance of expediency, extravagance in love. She refers to Galsworthy's novel *The Dark Flower*, in which the author masterly portrays four female characters, "softly glowing", "mysteriously lovely", who, at the same time, possess a certain feature, which, as it seems, Galsworthy reckoned as inherent in woman: the longing ("wistfulness") for self-sacrifice, and, as a result of that, the

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incapability of achieving happiness. From this perspec women are ordained by Nature to suffer, sacrifice themsel and stay unhappy. These four characters serve as m samples of the immutable image of the 'womanly woman', woman whose meaning of existence is to live in love and thro love. As women, they cannot be self-sufficing creatures, as are called to live for – and only for – men, 'on their lover's bos They are reluctant to be free and independent from passior they draw their energy from passion. As such, their streng only fed through self-sacrifice, and hardly is this self-sacr denied by their men. At the same time, Glasgow tries to vindi the writer, assuming that, glorifying and praising this featur his heroines, Galsworthy should understand the costs which woman pays by her resignation, while she chooses the typ joy which is that of ordeal, and not of fulfillment.

Solution for the Future: Feminism

Having reviewed all these perspectives associated with 'womanly woman', Glasgow comes to the thesis of her es Having alluded to innumerous writers on the subject sta from King Solomon, she states that only now people begi understand the profound significance of the woman's movem "For what we call the woman's movement is a revolt from a prete of being – it is at its best and worst a struggle for the libera of personality" (*F*, p. 656). This thesis was used as one of headline definitions in the essay article "What is Feminism? eminent American suffragist Rose Young, published in the *G Housekeeping* magazine (1914, p. 683). Referring to the century rise of women fiction after centuries of male domina in the field, Glasgow points that, although her contemporane women novelists are still largely eager to imitate the models manners of male writers, there are brilliant exceptions from rule, among them Catherine Gasquoine Hartley (Mrs. W Gallichan) – the writer (historian of the Spanish art), with her b *The Truth About Woman* as the subject of discussion. Accor to Glasgow, Hartley managed to destroy a lot what the world cherished before, in particular, to "destroy the image worsh the womanly woman in fiction" (Ibid.). The book manages 'to from sex prejudices and superstitions'. Mentioning the m of the book divided into three sections – biological, histor and present-day aspects, Glasgow bases her argument ma on Chapter VIII ("Sex Differences"), which discusses cau leading to woman's different position in society.

Hartley writes with assurance, being just and genuine, appea well above the feminine arrogance, which is often so peevis asserting that woman is morally superior to man, the latter b inapplicable to the writer. Hartley, by Glasgow, understands virtue proceeds from spirituality, not from biology, whether a man, or a woman, and here Glasgow refers to Jesus, calling him "Wisdom", owing to which he forgave both the thief and the profligate. At the same time, Hartley, rejects the accepted belief in man's natural superiority just as she equally denies the already mentioned ostensibly woman's inborn quality for suffering. In other words, Hartley is unbiased either towards man, or towards woman, advocating equality between these two. This position had already been known as liberal feminism, which arose with the First Wave Feminism in the second half of the 19th century, whose godmother was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, contrasting with radical feminism, the child of the Second Wave Feminism, whose foremothers could be defined as suffragettes with Susan B. Anthony and Emmeline Pankhurst. "I find in the writings of almost all women on sex-subjects, not to speak of popular novels, an insistence on men's grossness, with a great deal in contrast about the soulful character of woman's love", writes Hartley in Chapter VIII (p. 258), referring to Ellen Key and May Sinclair. Delineating from female writers, who assert that men in love are crude and brutal, while women soulful and spiritual, she adds: "Now, from this view of the sex relationship I most utterly dissent. I believe that any difference in virtue, even where it exists in woman, is not fundamental, that it is against Nature's purpose that it should be so" (p. 259). There is no inborn spiritual superiority in love from the side of woman. This quality has rather "arisen as a pretence of necessity, because it has been expected of her, nourished in her, and imposed on her by the unnatural prohibitions of religious and social conventions" (p. 259), splitting female gender from its male counterpart, with the balance being disturbed. An integrate feature of the 'womanly woman' – the striving to self-sacrifice – arises exactly from this artificially created woman's quality, which Hartley denies as vehemently as she does that with woman's 'superiority'. According to Glasgow, she rejoices in womanhood, but it is a new womanhood, which is free, vigorous, zealous, and perseverant. The 'womanly woman' should free her 'womanly' self – the self, deprived of sociability imposed through ages of miserable existence. "Woman is what she is because she has lived as she has" (*F*, p. 657).

Glasgow focuses on the three parts of Hartley's work considering women-men relationship from the historical perspective: (i) the Biological Section; (ii) the Historical Section; and, finally, (iii) the Modern Section, in which she discusses the development (evolution) of the woman's role in nature, who stores the life force, being thus viewed as the key responsible side in relationships. These three periods of the evolution of the woman's role are considered from the objective point of view – the dominance of woman at the initial stage; the dominance of man at the second stage; and, finally, the contemporary strivings of the sexes to find the balance, however still unstable, are

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viewed by Hartley, "as nature's provisions for the better car the race" (*F*, p. 657). Not only does the work consider woma the victim of this process of evolution, but also it views man ir same way ("man appears not as a conscious tyrant, but, equ with woman, as a victim of the conditions of social evolution"

> If the balance of power passed from the patriarch to matriarch, this was possible only because the grow race needed to cradle itself in the fatherage befo could gather its strength. Not male tyranny, but selective agency of life decided the issue.
> (*F*, p. 657)

Thus, Hartley, followed by Glasgow, consider the histo course of the evolution of gender relationship from an objec dialectical viewpoint. This position can be qualified as Hege as it recognizes the working of objective laws in the cours the evolution. Although in her autobiography Glasgow does refer to Hegel specifically, the influence of Hegelian tho over her mind is evident. Hartley and Glasgow follow class Hegelian law of dialectical triad: thesis → antithesis → synthe First, there is 'motherage', where woman assumes governa (*thesis*); second, there comes 'fatherage', negating the leg of motherage (*antithesis*); and, finally, the age appears, w negates the previous stage, combining both into a new (*synthesis*).

In his work *The Immoderate Past: the Southern Writer History* (1977), Hugh Holman writes that, while conside the linearity of time and relationships between the past present, a southern American writer of the beginning of the century acknowledges the historicism of the process in Hege tradition, rejecting the distrust of timeline peculiar for my understanding, which refers to Nietzsche.

> In the dichotomy of historical theory into bro Hegelian and Nietzschean, we found the domi American mode Nietzschean, concerned with indivi experience and distrustful of the lessons of the p and the South, in contrast, Hegelian, interested process, in time, in what the past meant and mean (Holman, 1977, p. 100-101).

When the objective course of history required it, the wo was the leader. Then, again owing to the dialectics of history roles reversed, and woman became the subject of man. And the irreversible course of history there come times when wo again should become free, being equal to man, "for to go on man, not to get from man, is the goal of woman's freedom p. 657).

Conclusion

Ellen Glasgow's essay *Feminism* acts as a denunciation of centuries-long notion of 'womanly woman' and appraisal of new vision related to woman—man issue. With this regard, two main conclusions can be drawn from the author's ideas:

1. Glasgow reviews the history of views on woman's function and position. She considers a number of English authors starting from the 18th century sentimentalist novel, and shows that all of them considered woman from the standpoint of pitiful attitude. Women depicted in the novels of Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and, later in the beginning of the 19th century, Charles Dickens, William M. Thackeray, and other Victorian writers are inactive, passive creatures, whose ideal role is to sit down motionless and gaze at their 'master' – man. These women have to act and behave like 19th century 'wax figures', they cannot – and should not – express action, they otherwise become reckless, restless creatures, not favored by male gender. Their mission thus is to reveal passive admiration towards their beloved, while manifesting at the same time another, typically 'womanish' feature (according to the understanding of those times) – the willingness to self-sacrifice. The ability and desire for self-sacrifice as the highest manifestation of her love towards her patron is the ideal function and mission of womanly woman. To this notion, Glasgow juxtaposes another image of woman of the 19th century literature – that portrayed in the novels of George Meredith and Thomas Hardy, whose heroines become restless creatures, thus breaking the established stereotype of 'womanly woman' becoming converted to woman in more natural state;

2. Glasgow refers to a well-known contemporaneous female author to illustrate her understanding of the course of history of development of woman—man relationship. In her seminal work, Gasquoine Hartley identifies three general stages representing three paradigms from the standpoint of woman—man leadership: (1) 'Motherage' – woman rules the primeval community, assuming overall leadership over man; (2) 'Fatherage' – man replaces woman as a leader, however, at the same time, imposing his own laws and principles, thus gradually subjugating female gender; (3) Egalitarian stage – the values are being reconsidered and woman and man assume equality based on mutual respect and understanding. This stage coincides with Glasgow's times, growing into the future, and is featured with the raise of the feminist movement. Here both Glasgow and the author she refers to assert that there are two types of Feminism: the first strives to take revanche over men by imposing woman's dominance over them; while the second seeks not to quit man, rather restore the equality balance between woman and man. These two positions would later flourish into what now

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is known as radical feminism and liberal feminism. These two are representative of two paradigms of American mind: the first growing out of, paradoxically, Nietzschean philosophy, and the second – from Hegelian philosophy. In 1913, the year when *Feminism* was published, Glasgow, a Southern writer, keeps the moderate, Hegelian outlook on the issue, that advocating an objective view on history, and her following writings would show whether she would maintain that attitude or change it for a different one.

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