

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY

The Faculty of Letters

The Doctoral School of Linguistic and Literary Studies

EMILY GERARD: A MINORIZED VICTORIAN AUTHOR

The Summary of the Ph.D. Thesis

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Key words: victorianism, feminism, realism, identity, otherness, collective unconscious, archetype, gender studies, masculinity, style and narration, omniscient narrator, collaborative writing, eros, short story, travelogue, Transylvania, Romanian literature, nomadism.

This doctoral study is a monograph about Emily Gerard's life and work. The Scottish female writer is under focus from a wider perspective namely the notions of convention and transgression, that is the conflict between tradition, rule, etiquette, on the one hand, and breach, infringement, overstepping the boundaries, on the other hand. Emily Gerard's life and destiny is within this relation.

As we deal with a minorized Victorian writer, the biographical sources are but few. As far as the Romanian scholarship on Gerard is concerned, it is only Mihaela Mudure, Carmen Andraş, and Radu Teuceanu who wrote about Emily Gerard, especially about her travelogue, *The Land beyond the Forest* and her novel, *Beggar My Neighbour*. The British and American scholars who wrote about Gerard are few as well: Helen Black, Bette London, and Lokke Heiss. Nor do they offer a comprehensive study of the Scottish female writer but

rather some unilateral observations demonstrating the questions they asked at the beginning of their individual research.

The present paper contains ten chapters. We began with the main features of the Victorian age, the female status in Victorianism, the novel as the preferred genre of the epoch, and also the Romanian contributions to the study of the Victorian age. This chapter is followed by the theoretical apparatus comprising the methods used for the analysis of the text: identity studies, including Freud's and Jung's psychoanalysis, gender studies, stylistics and narratology.

The second chapter deals with Emily Gerard's biography. The writer was born on the 7th of May 1849 in Scotland and died on the 11th of January 1905 in Vienna. Emily was a Scottish writer in Great Britain and a Roman-Catholic in Scotland, a Protestant country which points to her marginality. Her literature is somewhere at the border between accepting the boundaries and surpassing them by her transgressive condition as a creative writer. Her first literary attempts belong to the lyrical and dramatic genre. Her proclivity towards the artistic domain is a legacy from her great-grandfathers who were both writers. The great number of Poles in Gerard's work is due to her marriage to a Pole, who was also an immigrant. Her family's nomadism is, firstly, caused by the Catholic religion they converted to. Secondly, her husband's military career entails mobility and change of residence. However, from a Romanian point of view, the period from 1883 till 1885, when her husband was commander in Transylvania was the most important.

The doctoral study continues with the collaborative novels which Emily Gerard wrote together with her sister, Dorothea: *Reata What Is a Name* (1880), *Beggar My Neighbour* (1882), *The Waters of Hercules* (1885) and *A Sensitive Plant* (1891). What is significant is the way the two sisters support and aid each other the moment they enter the public sphere as

authors. Their literary pseudonym, E.D. Gerard, unites them and makes them become a single authorial entity. The difficulties they encounter are evidence for the troublesome position of female authors in the Victorian period. The figures that consecrated and individualized them are the Austrian officers, the Pole aristocracy and peasantry, the Jews. In *The Waters of Hercules*, a new ethnic community appears, the Romanians who are presented as superstitious minds and with clear propensities towards immorality and crime. It is almost impossible to divide the sisters' joint literary works by saying that this part corresponds to Emily, while the other belongs to Dorothea. Transformations occur in a couple or a team and the levels of a story finish by overlapping, juxtaposing, or extending in order to form a unity.

Emily Gerard's self-authored novels (*A Secret Mission*, *The Voice of a Flower*, *A Foreigner*, *The Extermination of Love*, *The Heron's Tower*) are analysed in the sixth chapter. They demonstrate the literary maturity that Emily Gerard reached and which made it possible for her to preserve her readership. Both the collaborative and the self-authored novels are analysed using the methodology we have mentioned earlier. Therefore, every novel is tackled according to its themes; characters are perused from the point of view of identity and gender studies, the self and the other, the archetypes, the eros and the narrative style. The self-authored novels are shorter than the three collaborative novels. The evolution is not visible, but we can trace a romanticizing tendency and a subjective approach even if Gerard aims at objective detachment.

The major theme in Emily Gerard's novels is love and its multifarious variants. For this reason, we have dedicated an entire chapter to this feeling which oscillates between salvation and curse. From the indomitable love passion between Roman and Biruta to aggressive and impossible to control passion of Wolfram for Livia, from the sincere and serene love between Livia and Guido to the "international" love affair and marriage between Phemie and Leo, from Chrissy's love for her husband based on equal partnership to Eric's

love for Gusti as a disease which has to be annihilated to love as the passion between Luita and Gastone. Every love relationship has its own history and uniquely defines this connection between the feminine and the masculine element.

Besides novels, Emily Gerard also wrote three collections of stories: *Bis, An Electric Shock and Other Stories, The Tragedy of a Nose- A Brief Delirium*, which constitute a new chapter of this doctoral study. The theoretical part of the analysis is based on Edgar Allan Poe's *The Philosophy of Composition* and on Susan Lohafer's insistence on those moments of complete honesty or "moments of awareness" that alter her characters' lives completely. Emily Gerard is unpredictable in her plots and her focus is on the insignificant detail at first sight, but essential in the long run. The conciseness of this literary genre which only refers to one episode from the characters' lives enables the reader to get meaning and a moral lesson.

The penultimate chapter of this Ph.D. thesis analyses Emily Gerard's most interesting literary work: *The Land beyond the Forest*. From 1883 until 1885, Emily Gerard accompanied her husband to Transylvania, because Chevalier Micicislas de Laszowski, had been appointed the commander of the cavalry brigade in Transylvania. She visited Cluj, Sibiu, Braşov, Sinaia, and other surroundings which she liked sometimes and which amazed her other times. During these two years, Emily Gerard gathered documentary material for her travelogue. *The Land beyond the Forest* presents Transylvania as an exotic and primitive realm. Gerard does not perceive Transylvania as a backward land in a negative connotation since she appreciates everything that is natural and virgin, untouched by civilization and modernity. The writer interacted only with the elite of the Transylvanian society, but she also noticed the ethnical structure of the province and the Romanians' potential, the most numerous, the poorest but also the most vital minority because of its large families. Gerard proves to have a very sharp sense of observation and remarkable intuition.

The *Conclusions* complete this monograph by a discussion of the notions of convention and transgression in each of the Gerardian literary works. Emily Gerard vacillates between two possible alternatives: either the individual internalizes the requested mentality that disempowers him/her altogether, or the individual cherishes freedom from constraints and develops his personal quest which can be positive or negative.

Although Emily Gerard is a minor/minorized Victorian author, her literary work is not devoid of interest as an example of Victorian women's writing and the Romanian reader can be interested in her work as she is one of the few British writers who wrote about Romania and the Romanians.