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CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture
ISSN 1481-4374
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Volume 2 (2000) Issue 1 Article 5

Gender and Modernity in the Work of Hesse and Kazantzakis

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Recommended Citation

Petropoulou, Evi. "Gender and Modernity in the Work of Hesse and Kazantzakis." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 2.1 (2000): <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1065>

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CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374 <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>
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Volume 2 Issue 1 (March 2000) Article 5
Evi Petropoulou,
"Gender and Modernity in the Work of Hesse and Kazantzakis"
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol2/iss1/5>

Contents of ***CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 2.1 (2000)**
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol2/iss1/>

Abstract: Evi Petropoulou discusses in her article, "Gender and Modernity in the Work of Hesse and Kazantzakis," selected basic tendencies of the modern European novel, in this case pertaining to gender identity and she exemplifies her postulates with an analysis of texts by Hermann Hesse and Nikos Kazantzakis. She examines the mainly male dominated literary discourse in the work of these authors in light of their theoretical indebtedness to the thought of Nietzsche and Hegel. The study offers new insight into literary representations of gender relations in modernity and how Hesse and Kazantzakis define identity, the self, and otherness.

Evi PETROPOULOU

Gender and Modernity in the Work of Hesse and Kazantzakis

In this study, I address the problematics of the apparent emphasis on male individuality in modern literary discourse. I am interested in the question as to why it is mainly male figures who are the protagonists in modern literary texts and the literary and cultural discourse this entails. Further, I am interested in exploring the question of gender as the principal organizing nucleus of modern literature. Today, there is a sizable corpus of theoretical and applied work available on the topic of modern literature and gender by scholars such as Sandra Bartky, Susan Bordo, Judith Butler, Nancy Chodorow, Jane Flax, Carol Gould, Christine Pierce, to name a few (for useful websites in gender studies, see Louisiana <http://www.lsu.edu/wgs>; Eckerd <http://www.eckerd.edu/library/women.htm>). In my opinion, to offer some answers to the complex issue of gender and modernity, the discipline of comparative literature may be the best approach because this discipline deals a priori with interdependencies of literature and culture in a cross- and inter-cultural perspective. At the same time, the comparative approach can be advantageous for a further reason: if applied unbiasedly, it profiles the deeper and non-apparent affinities between cultures, and, consequently, literatures. For instance, a comparison of the work of a German and a Greek author can result in the modification of our notions of stereotypes associated with Central European and Mediterranean mentality concerning gender identity and, as I will show in my present study, it can reveal more similarities than previously assumed.

In my application of the comparative approach I analyse the work of the German writer Hermann Hesse and the Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis (see also Petropoulou). Hesse, who received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1946 is perhaps the most widely translated German author into English today and Kazantzakis succeeded in popularizing Greek culture in North America and in Europe with his acclaimed novel *Zorba the Greek* (for Hesse, see Gottschalk <http://ic.ucsb.edu/~ggotts/hesse/>; for Kazantzakis, see Interkriti <http://interkriti.org/culture/kazantzakis/>; *Bohemian Ink* <http://www.levity.com/corduroy/kazantza.htm>). For the present study, the two authors were chosen not only because both function as representatives -- within their respective national and cultural contexts -- of Modernist literature but also because owing to the differences in their intellectual and stylistic craftsmanship when mastering their themes and subjects, their work manifests paradigmatic tendencies toward gender identity found in the modern European novel. But first I need to elaborate briefly on my categorization of Kazantzakis as an exponent of Modernism in Greece. While this positioning of Kazantzakis may appear a daring suggestion, there are scholars of modernity who have suggested this categorization of the Greek author's works previously: for example, Owen Aldridge, Gerhard Emrich, Morton Levitt, and Pandelis Prevelakis. Aldridge for instance suggests that Kazantzakis's modernity is revealed through the symbolism of personal travel and this, in Aldridge's view, epitomizes the work of the Greek writer. According to Aldridge, the latent symbolical travel in Kazantzakis's work is expressed as "an urge, a satisfaction and a means to self-fulfillment" (303). Further, Aldridge suggests that the "spirit of alienation," the ambivalent "refinement of self-awareness," the existential conflicts, and a predilection for contraries are symptoms in Kazantzakis's work and they bear witness to modernity. Indeed, I agree that a closer look at Kazantzakis's work reveals parallels with the work of many representatives of Modernism. Aldridge takes his notion of modernism in Kazantzakis from the writer's professed point of departure, *The Odyssey* (311). Odysseus, a representative combination and escalation of all Kazantzakian heroes, has also been compared by Prevelakis to the anti-heroes in the works of such Modernist writers as Cocteau, Gide, Kafka, Camus, and Sartre. Colin Wilson claims that the character of the "paper pusher" in Kazantzakis's *Freedom or Death* and in *Zorba* symbolizes the dilemma of the existentialist hero as expressed, for instance, in Camus's *Myth of Sisyphus* (180). Wilson goes as far as to suggest that that the "failure" of Kazantzakis's work to achieve essential and true Modernism is deliberate: There is "such a strong element of personal conflict that there can never be the supreme synthesis" (168; see also Rose; Woerner). In turn, Emrich examines exhaustively the relation between Kazantzakis's *Comedy*, Sartre's *Huis*

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1065

Clos, and Beckett's *En Attendant Godot*, whereas Levitt exposes the analogies in the works of Kazantzakis and Joyce.

As far as I know, the comparative approach has not yet been applied to the work of Hesse and Kazantzakis. That is, the approach has not been applied to the question of subject with regard to the male hero who is presented in Modernist texts as the wanderer between identity and difference, between Selfness and Otherness. I elaborate: The question of the Other as a correlate of the Self appears when Modernist authors posit a subject and it acts as a repository for all that the subject is not. We may designate this situation, alternatively, also as "modernist complementarity" where the Other acts as the representation of the female gender to complement the male gender. It is thus that I examine -- in the object(s) of desire -- the Other of the subject, that is, I examine the problematics of gender in Modernism. In Hesse's and Kazantzakis's works specifically, I analyse the said problematics of the object(s) of desire, the Other, as locus that acquires substance mainly through the figure of the/a female or females presented tandem to the male protagonist.

There are a number of assumptions regarding the Self and the Other that I would like to examine, comparatively, in order to describe the proposed notion of the literary subject. This study is thus a description and demonstration of two of the basic tendencies -- as (re)presented in the work of Hesse and Kazantzakis -- prevalent in the mainly male-dominated literary discourse of modernity as an indirect (perhaps subconscious) reflection and transmission of the values of an established culture from a position of power, namely the male authorial voice. This male authorial voice of power is doubly charged: once as the representation of the dominant cultural and literary discourse and then again as the male voice they represent as authors. Of course, one cannot avoid the danger tandem to this comparison: The ideological bases, a necessary confinement within the cultural system, one is trying to expose; a system which is still pervaded by gender bias: "One can no more speak of `woman' than of` `man' without being trapped in within an ideological theatre where the proliferation of representations, images, reflections, myths, identifications, transform, deform, constantly change everyone's Imaginary and invalidate in advance any conceptualization" (Cixous and Clement 83).

The two authors under scrutiny have in their multifaceted work different aspects of themselves in order to create a world that embodies all their conflicts during the struggle to gain identity. One of these facets is the relationship of man to woman and woman to man, that is, the gender problematic. My purpose here is to examine the selected texts by Hesse and Kazantzakis in this context of gender-based problematics and to account for it in the context of modern European literature (for similar theoretical points of departure, see Karstedt in Hesse; Rosenthal-Kamarinea; Poulakidas; Stamatiou in Kazantzakis). There is some further information useful to have about the comparative background of the two authors. First, there is the influence of Nietzsche?s thought on both authors, mainly expressed on the level of themes and leitmotifs. In Hesse's *Demian* and Kazantzakis's *Freedom and Death,* the authors underline the difference between the ingenuity of an extraordinary subject and the mediocrity of the masses. Central in their works is also the ambivalence of a subject torn between will and action, spirit and world. The relevance of intuition and the psychological sensibility of the protagonists in both novels must also be attributed to Nietzsche's ideas on the notion of gaining insight and gnosis: Emotionality often ranks higher than rationality. Furthermore, psychoanalysis -- especially Jung's theories -- and Eastern philosophies and religions fascinate both Hesse and Kazantzakis. In my opinion there is no direct influence between Hesse and Kazantzakis, however. This of course means that this study cannot be a fully systemic analysis of the similarities and/or differences on the basis of analogous production and reception circumstances. Rather, my study may be considered an attempt to develop a typological model. My main concern is to suggest with sufficient evidence that Hesse and Kazantzakis are the representatives of an aesthetic tendency, a cultural as well as literary expression current in the first half of the twentieth century as exemplified in the said representation of the fictional subject oscillating between imaginary and pragmatic-empirical existence.

Hesse in *Demian* and Kazantzakis in *Freedom and Death* express the memories and the collective experience of two cultures at a time preceding war. In each work there is a dominant

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1065

figure. This dominance, in Peter Bien's words, means that the dominant male protagonist professes and represents an "anti-rational virtue of spontaneity" and that his thoughts and actions are determined by the imprinted memories of past events in his subconscious (Bien 1989, 4). Remembering and memory are an a priori condition for these narratives. I explain this condition with the notion of *anamnesis*: in both cases it represents the organizing principle of the creative and organizing power of the text. As a category of human thought it defines the evolution of the subject, for the Self exists during the event but also by virtue of a temporal distance from the event via *anamnesis*: in reliving decisive parts of its life as a judging third person, the subject undergoes a metamorphosis that is necessary for individuation. *Anamnesis* represents here a combination of the re-evaluation of one's life and hence with the ability to think, understand, make decisions, and act accordingly. Such a mental process is an essential and dominant human characteristic despite the fact that Kant attributes it to males only (see Gould 207-24).

Anamnesis moulds a permanent state of mind, a *cogito* defined by epic values of heroic renown, a relic of former centuries, and protocols of pride and guilt/shame as expressions of the hero's authenticity in his yearning for individuation, in his struggle against existential and moral dilemmas. In both novels, the male hero faces problems of identity. An ever-growing and developing sense of individuality seeks full articulation as a matter of urgent concern. The existential dilemmas considered in the condition of *anamnesis* involve, primarily, a relationship with the Other. Here, I postulate that the problematics of Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought and behaviour. The subject -- trying to acquire identity -- defines the space of the Self on the subsequent existence of inner coherence but mainly on the exclusion of the Other. We can read both novels as texts in which Otherness is represented principally through the female figure. Considering the fact that the protagonist of the novels is not a representative of the "fair sex," it is possible to conclude that the artists' imagination expresses, thus, a pervasive fear of the chaos a role reversal might evoke. In both novels, women are the cause of the existential Odyssey of the protagonists. Such a reading of the texts suggests the women's profound yet concealed importance for the narratives. That is, although the women represent satellite characters with significance, neither Hesse nor Kazantzakis focuses on them in order to exemplify and define the subject that aims towards individuation: "The world, Kazantzakis seems to say, is a stage built only for men" (Poulakidas 177; all translations from the Greek and German are mine unless a translation is indicated in the Works Cited). The emphasis of the authors on the exclusion of woman from the domains of the developing Self leads to the conclusion that either the female -- as a category -- has developed its existence to its full extent or that it lacks the "humanly essential characteristics" and "the sort of moral agency which is characteristic of human nature" (Kant 81; see also Gould 221). This clearly paradoxical conclusion is explained if we consider the impact of the socio-ideological context of modernity in which our authors live and create in conjunction with the impact of philosophical theories developed at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The heroes of Hesse and Kazantzakis are the result of the status quo in the cultural (literary and philosophical) discourse established by such as Nietzsche's nihilism, his notions of "will to power," and his concept of "superman," Hegel's theory of consciousness, Kant's and Schopenhauer's aphorisms on women, etc. In the case of Kazantzakis, Nietzsche's philosophy exerted a life-long influence, including an impact on the writer's perception of the gender question (see Bien 1971, 249-56).

Hesse's and Kazantzakis's positioning of the gender question in *Demian* and *Freedom and Death,* we can establish two categories substance: 1) The individual versus the masses relationship based on Nietzschean thought and 2) The master versus servant relationship found in the thought of Hegel. Hesse and Kazantzakis show a tendency to merge the Nietzschean concept of the strong individual with the Hegelian concept of the master-servant relationship (for a discussion of Kazantzakis's heroes in the context of the Nietzschean superman, see McGinn). It appears to me that both writers consider the master-servant relationship as a conscious interdependence that in turn is of paramount importance for the individuation and completion of the Self. Sinclair and Michalis, the protagonists of the novels under examination epitomize individuality as defined by Nietzsche in his *Zur Genealogie der Moral* and exist thus in an antithesis

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1065

to the masses. These heroes are performers of a logic and morals which differ from everyday's conventions and they lead a peripheral existence; they negate conformity with rules and the ethics of the social sphere they live in; they have profound knowledge of their Otherness and of their existence beyond the monolithic dualism of "good" and "evil." They even dare to affirm -- again in a Nietzschean way -- war as a practice and reality capable of energizing the genesis of the "new man." The subject constitutes itself in the existence of the Other, that is, in the notion of the difference. The Self exists only in relation to the Other and this co-existence culminates in a dominance in the relationship insofar as the simple being of the Other deprives the Self of the complete certainty of its own existence. Hence it becomes a necessity for the subject either to reestablish the certainty of the totality of its existence on an equal relation with the Other or on the dominance over the Other. Hesse -- realizing the necessity of this interdependence -- tries to build the individuality of man on the affirmation of the female identity: he attempts to accomplish an inner convergence which would eliminate the differences, whereas Kazantzakis understands this relation as a difference created by the complete domination of the subject (man) over the object (woman): "There is no dominant heroine or female protagonist in any of his works, because passivity, inactivity, weakness, gentility, femininity, would corrode the tenacious spirit and fibre of such heroes as Zorba, Captain Michales, Captain Polyxigis, Father Yanaros, Papa Fotis, Odysseus, and even his saintly Francis of Assisi" (Poulakidas 177).

Both novels reflect Western attitudes of society -- intellectuals included -- at the turn of the century and they simplify dialectic dualisms such as man vs. woman, activity versus passivity, deeds versus being, rationality versus emotionality, transcendent versus immanent being. These antitheses exemplify the thought of Hesse and Kazantzakis in their texts and represent the general picture of womanhood in their works, that is, where the gender difference builds the basis for the construction of collective identities. This classification however does not apply to the role of woman, when she appears as an individual on which the existence of the hero depends. Hence the difference between woman as "genre" and the specific female characters, thus contributing to the establishment of male identity that aims at the normative *telos* of completeness. In Kazantzakis's work we encounter a classical Hegelian gender problematic, the traditional man-woman relationship -- with the possible exception of the widow Sourmelina in *Zorba the Greek* and Eminé in *Freedom and Death,* as I discuss later on. Woman is considered to be an inferior and at the same time a superior -- with qualifications -- being and this is an antithetical existence per se. According to this conception, it is from that immanent paradox of the female nature which results in her fatal influence on men. Man's incompleteness is normative insofar as he affirms in his thought the uncontrolled domination of emotion over reason as the regulatory practice that causes his "discontinuity" and "incoherence" which he seeks to counterpose through the relationship of domination with women: "A woman's purpose in life is to marry and reproduce; husband and child are her occupation and her joy. But man's purpose is domination -- to impose himself on the forces trying to suppress him" (Kazantzakis qtd. in Bien 1971, 256-57; Kazantzakis 1998, 70-72). Whereas the matrix of universal gender identities of the novels suggests as a norm that woman succumbs to the will of man, the articulation of concrete female identity such as in the character of Eminé fails to conform to this norm and augments the developmental failure of the male subject who in terms of sexuality experiences itself as a fragment.

As a divergent case in the work of Kazantzakis -- in his *Freedom and Death* -- and that is of particular interest to me, the main female character, Eminé, dominates by succumbing to man's will, but without casting off her femininity. She is the absolute female by "being" a man. She possesses male qualities and immoral thought -- that is, immoral in the context of the mores in place -- which are manifest in her sexual desires and practices. She defies the regulated limits between of gender roles and forces a subversive state of identity upon her environment.. Because she assumes a subject position -- a position ascribed to her by the authorial power of Kazantzakis -- she desires the man, whom she chooses and who henceforth becomes the object. Once he falls into her construction of love, he becomes undesirable for her. Eminé's equality and parallel acts with men is tied to the desire for power. Of course, this construction of behaviour and action in a woman suggests an ambiguous emotional state in the reader -- as intended by the author -- one

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that arouses the negation of the character. This dual role of woman -- her state of object as well as subject -- restores the withdrawn wholeness of her identity. The male, thus deprived from his dominance perceives the Other as a threat to his existence. What constitutes a greater threat to male existence other than the fear of castration understood metaphorically as the seizure of man's emphatic characteristics such as power and will? Nonetheless, the fear of metaphorical castration remains no obscure anxiety. Eminé modifies profoundly the meaning of the castration complex in that sexual relation with her proves fatal to men. Let us consider for example Nouri-Bey. During his duel with Manousakas he gets seriously injured in his genitals. There is no place for a non-sexual, non-male existence in the highly rigid gender phenomenology of Kazantzakis. A few days later the bey commits suicide. A neutral or androgynous state is not possible in Kazantzakis's thought and work and therefore the relation between men and women escalates into an agonizing existential struggle: Man has either to subordinate woman or -- if this proves impossible -- he must to eliminate her in order to restore the indisputable certainty of his existence. Kazantzakis explains: if man "devotes himself entirely to women he will be cowardly and degenerate" and a woman "becomes the greatest danger to his fulfillment and must be rejected" (qtd. in Bien 1971, 257; for the topos of the impossibility of harmonious co-existence between the genders, see also Dermitzakis <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol1/iss2/2/>).

Based on Kazantzakis's assertions and characters, Poulakidas and Rosenthal-Kamarinea draw a distinction between two main categories of men for which they claim overall validity in the writer's work: Men and the Other, whereby the Other consists of the masses which, in turn, has female characteristics. The latter include "cowardly intellectuals," men who are "dominated and controlled by women, who sap the manliness out of them" and "effeminate men" (Poulakidas 181). The first category includes all protagonists in the work of Kazantzakis, whether they belong to "fighters," the typical heroes of Kazantzakis (such as Zorba, Michalis, Polyxigis, Yanaros, Odysseus, Fotis, etc.) or to the "saintly figures" (e.g., Christ, Francis, Manolios). They all seek to build their identity -- collective and individual -- in opposition to the Other, especially to women, whom they consider implicitly and/or explicitly as potentially capable of debasing their "mission in life and sacred goal" of the "real man"; thus, "Kazantzakis's men are hard on women if their manliness is threatened" (Poulakidas 181). Women are victimized by husbands and lovers, their life is ruined by brutal brothers or hateful fathers. For instance, Captain Michalis kills Eminé; Zorba can never condescend to marry Bouboulina even though he is kind to her; and even Jesus in *The Last Temptation* has little to do with the Biblical figure: instead, he is a struggling man of substance, a man trying not to break his word, so he rejects the voice of the snake's advice that his mission is to marry Mary Magdalene. Whereas in the Bible Mary is saved from being stoned, in Kazantzakis's version Jesus visualizes her stoned to death. Obviously, for Kazantzakis this is the only viable way to resolve the emotional and sexual conflict. On the cross Jesus has a vision: he sees "that he had married not only one woman, but two sisters, Mary and Martha, who had given him many children with all the implied responsibilities and worldly worries" but when he awakes, he thanks God because the visualized earthly happiness has only been a dream (Poulakidas 181-82) . Jesus is relieved to realize that he has not been "a coward" or "a traitor" to manliness. Women are thus represented not as mere temptations or distractions but as the "greatest danger," "a psychological torment," and "an obstacle" that must be put aside and defeated (Kazantzakis 1984, 506-07). That is why the women in Kazantzakis work often suffer tragic deaths -- for instance, the widow in *Zorba*, Eminé in *Freedom and Death*, the four sisters in *Fratricides*, Mary Magdalene in Jesus's vision in *The Last Temptation*. For Kazantzakis, the hero, whether a fighter or a saint, fights for his own purpose, seeks fulfillment, struggles for identity, and he attempts, for instance in the case of Michaelis "to make us believe that Michalis is a national hero, whereas in truth he denies communal needs and fights for personal ones" (Bien 1987, 165).

The elimination of either the insubordinate object (the Other) or the Self is dictated by protocols of shame and honor prevalent in the social and cultural sphere of the protagonists. The "proud man," who suffers the loss of the Self caused by a merger with another Self, feels ashamed: But to be ashamed means to be put in the position of the object. Because only through the medium of another consciousness, can he achieve a state of his own object character. Hence,

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1065

shame before the Other is primordial, insofar as it proves the reciprocity of the object/subject character of the Self (see Sartre 221-23). Shame often evokes he feeling of guilt, a feeling that is the result of the active violation of principles of subject values and to which he feels himself bound. -- the ultimate principle being his obligation towards individuality. These two feelings should normally contribute to a better understanding of the Self and thus to the telos of identity. Yet they often evoke a distressed apprehension of their Self as a lesser creature and thus they evoke the possibility of failure. While femininity absorbs everything defined as not masculine in the novels of Kazantzakis, the conception of woman in Hesse's work is analogous to the inner multiplicity that characterizes the female. The discrepancy between the abstractness of a universal conception of woman as "genre" and the conception of the concrete individuality of one woman can be also be found in Hesse's work. Yet the female character never occupies the organizing center of the narrative -- even when Hesse emphasizes the individual woman (one exception may be in Hesse's short story, "Das erste Abenteur," see Tötösy 193-200). In Hesse's work, the significance of woman is based on her "mirror function" (Karstedt 269-71), on her importance for the unfolding of the individuality of the subject. She represents the Other as the Foreign and Unfamiliar, perceived not as a threat to man's existence but as his missing partt. She seems to be in conscious possession of the other side of man, that remains to be reached so that man may acquire the internal coherence and unity of his existence.

Hesse often refers to the Hegelian notion of "self-consciousness" as the goal that must be established -- by both parts -- in the master-servant relationship. For Hegel, servitude consists in the subtle way of succumbing, obeying, and learning, i.e., in a state of devotion to someone or something. In *Demian,* the master-servant relationship is transformed into a master-disciple relationship of a positive and reciprocal dependence. Mrs. Eve is the "symbol of undivided unity" (*Demian* 269) and perfection and yet only a reflection of Sinclair's internally multiplicitous Self (148-49). She is his "object of desire" and through a unity with her he can and will acquire the completeness of his Self. At the same time, Eve is *eo ipso* a subject that guides his life. Sinclair falls in love with her when he first sees a picture of her. As the epitome of woman she integrates in her character three functions with obscure and vague interconnections: that of the mother, the lover, and the prostitute. These three roles cannot be sharply separated from each other, inasmuch as the mother is the first object of love of the child and thus the first object of desire. The magic power of his will leads Sinclair to Mrs. Eve and when he finally finds her, just before fulfillment can be reached, she transforms him into a disciple: He cannot be a lover before he has first experienced the mental, intellectual unity with other individuals. Sinclair learns to approach harmony and completeness, not in the unity with the beloved, but in the mental community with equal individuals. Eve teaches him how to acquire the desired object by making it the nucleus of the actual presence of his Self, of his being. In *Demian* we have a woman whose function serves as a means to the *telos* of individuation.

The hermaphroditic state has fundamental importance in the novels of Hesse, while Kazantzakis's opposition to this state is obvious as a result of a conservative ideological and cultural heritage. Nevertheless, Reso Karalaschwili, for instance, states that complete human existence can be reached only through an "androgynous state of mind" (Karalaschwili 269). In *Demian*, this state is expressed in the transformations of the portrait of Beatrice, in the striking resemblance of the eponymous hero to his mother and in the fact that, although Eve is the personification of the ideal woman, her features are almost masculine. Of importance is that no stigma is attached to the androgynous or homoerotic behavior and no normative ban is imposed on any form of sexuality. Hesse avoids simplifying dual classifications such as "normal" versus "pathological," "allowed" versus "forbidden." This I understand as stressing the contingency of gender dichotomies. Kazantzakis, on the other hand, penalizes any mediocrity, indecisiveness, and any dubious behavior. In the work of Kazantzakis, the domains and concepts of the masculine and feminine identities are given as perennial and their strict limits can neither be defied nor disrupted. Women in Kazantzakis's work cannot defy limits without seriously traumatizing the existing social order. Whereas the gender relations in Kazantzakis's work can be described as heterogeneous and incompatible, the role of women in Hesse's work proves compensatory for man insofar as she

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1065

helps him reach completion and fulfillment. The difference between Hesse's and Kazantzakis's works exemplifies modules and models of gender relations as a state . This state is at times asymmetrical and antithetical as by Kazantzakis and at times equivalent and complementary as by Hesse.

In sum, Hesse and Kazantzakis ascribe in their works not a reality-related Self but the myth of the autonomous individual albeit when it comes to women, the two writers diverge somewhat. Experiencing the absence of identity -- endemic in the transitional era in which they live, namely modernity -- these authors tend to identify themselves with the protagonists. That is why the subject of the literary discourse of modernity is not necessarily a universally human situation (which would include the female). Rather, the subject in the literary discourse of modernity is mainly male. The fact that we have some exceptions such as Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Wolf, or others in virtually all modern literatures only proves the norm. Hesse's *Demian* and Kazantzakis's *Freedom and Death* exemplify the blueprint of a phenomenology of gender identity in modernity and expose the partiality of literary specificity of the Self's existence. This partiality tends to acquire an aura of inevitability if we consider the social practices, philosophical and ideological tendencies, and their interrelations within the experience of modernity. If the developing of Self aiming towards a complete identity is achievable only by men, this identity construct remains fragmented and elliptical because it excludes the female. This paradox and its literary representations as exemplified with Hesse's and Kazantzakis's two novels I briefly analysed explains the failure of the process of individuation in modernity and in the literature of modernity. In contrast, the literary discourse of postmodernism relinquishes this contingency and deconstructs -- through the analysis of language, for example -- the substantive appearance of identity and allows for an ontology of a strictly self-related subject: The postmodern self that "is" or often "is not" depends only on itself and language; subjects and objects are "semantically indifferent" (Blanchot 147-48, 9-17; see also see Zima).

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DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1065